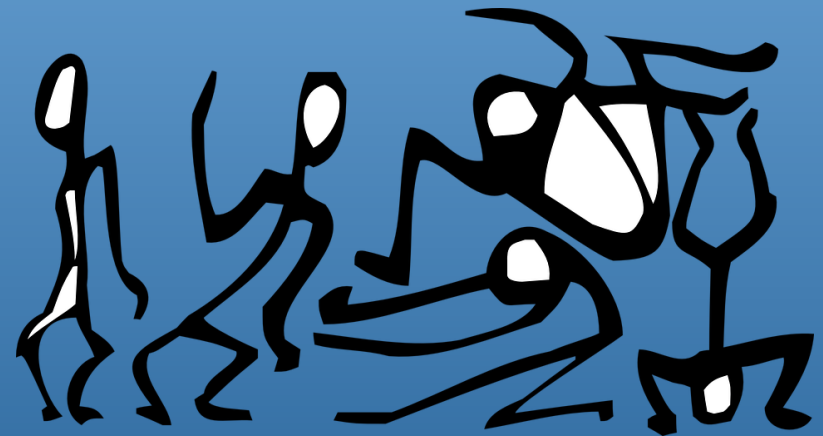


Lou Lasprugato, MFT

Rikke Kjelgaard, M.Sc

Thomas Szabo, PhD.,  
BCBA-D

# **SHAPING PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY WITH REAL-TIME FUNCTIONAL FEEDBACK**



# DISCLOSURES

- Relevant (financial) relationships:
  - **Lou Lasprugato** is an integrative psychotherapist at Sutter Health's Institute for Health & Healing and provides training events for Praxis CET.
  - **Rikke Kjelgaard** is chief rock'n'roller at Rikke Kjelgaard Consulting and provides trainings for Praxis CET.
  - **Tom Szabo** is employed at Florida Institute of Technology but lives in Las Vegas, Nevada. He has visited Florida once. He also provides trainings for Praxis CET.
- Presenters have not received any commercial support for this workshop
- All photos and images within presentation are cited, labeled for reuse or used with permission

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Apply an integrated approach of behavioral intervention and functional analysis to guide clinical conversations
2. Demonstrate how to shape psychological flexibility through modeling, evoking, and reinforcing within therapeutic exchanges
3. Deliberately make use of observed and verbalized functional feedback to sharpen clinical skills and inform interventions

# ACT FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT

## Being Present

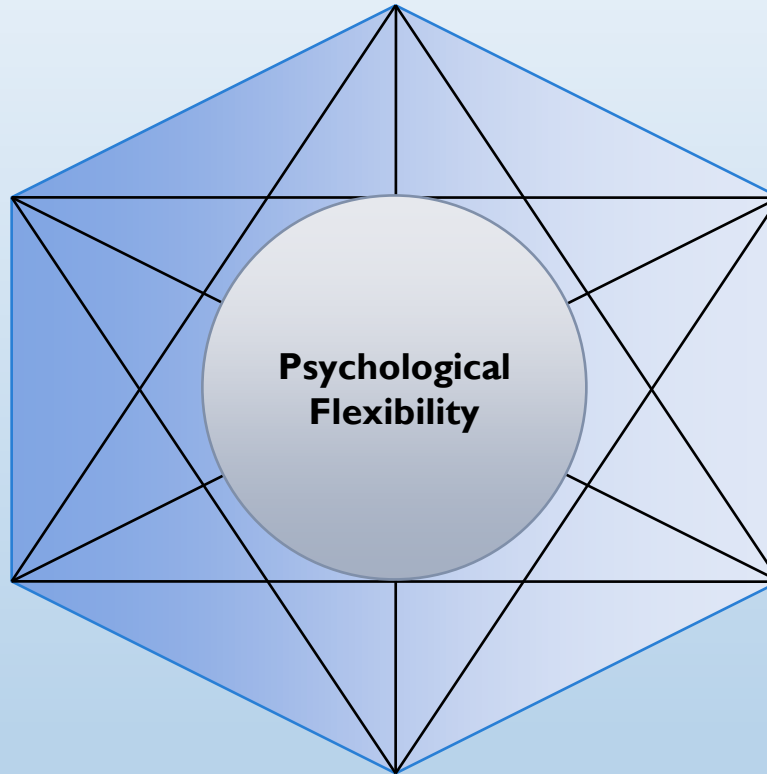
Focus on the here-and-now

## Acceptance

Be willing to experience difficult emotions

## Values

Discover what is truly important to you



## Defusion

Observe your thoughts without being ruled by them

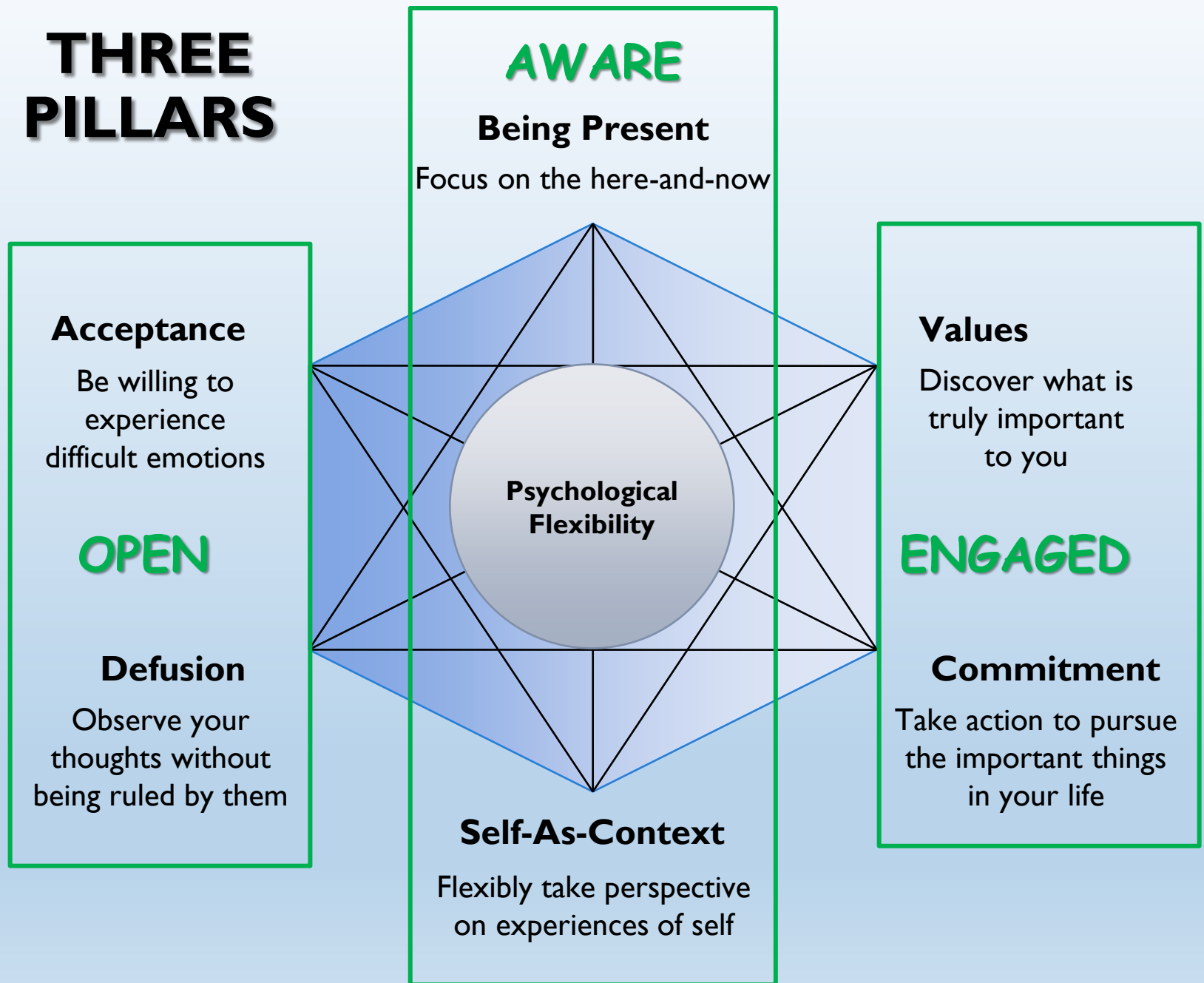
## Commitment

Take action to pursue the important things in your life

## Self-As-Context

Flexibly take perspective on experiences of self

# THREE PILLARS



# “TELLS” AND “READS”

- **Tells** are vocal statements that give you a good sense where to begin intervening
- **Reads** are corresponding physical gestures that can be used to assess where on the hexaflex to begin your work

## Common "Tells"

### Not Being Present

She hurt me back then and I still can't get over it, this thing is coming up and that's occupying my focus now, I'm too scattered, I'm completely unfocused

HEXAFLEX

### Experiential Avoiding

Can't have this emotion, memory, or bodily sensation, hurts too much



### Aimlessness

I don't see any point in this, there's nothing for me in this, what is the use, it doesn't matter, whatever

### Fusing

Have to, should, shouldn't can't, I expect, they expect, it's supposed to, this is how it is

### Rigid Perspective

I am a \_\_\_\_, she is that way, their character is like that, it's just my nature that I am...

### Not Taking Action, Acting Small

I'm not gonna, let's not even try, you can if you want but I'm just going to do what feels good

## Compare those to...

### Accepting

It hurts but I can be with it; my memory of this makes me tremble, so I pause and then I'm okay with it; I sweat, but that's just what it costs to have an amazing life

### Defusing

I'm noticing I think this way; I *think* this, but it may not be that way; they want this, and I can say that I do not

### Being Present

It's been like that in the past and who knows what it'll be like now; I'm very focused on this but I can take a break from it; I've been scattered and can learn to focus



### Taking Perspectives Flexibly

I have been this way, but I can be different now; they see me this way, but that's just in this context; I'm like that sometimes I guess

HEXAFLEX

### Valuing

This is what I live for; I cherish this; I yearn to be; I want to show up this way

### Committing

I'm gonna because it matters; this is what I'm going to do by this date and time and here's how you'll know



**IT'S NOT *SUPPOSED* TO BE THIS HARD.**

**I'LL *NEVER* GET THIS RIGHT.**

***I'M JUST LOUSY AT THIS.***

***I FEEL TOO FRUSTRATED FOR THIS.***

**WHAT'S *THE POINT* OF ALL THIS?**

**I'M NOT *GONNA DO THIS!***

# PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLEXIBILITY

## Common “Reads”

- Nonexistent, rigid or shifting eye contact
- Holds back tears
- Inappropriate smiling
- Condescending tone of voice
- Monotone tone of voice
- Fast pace when speaking
- Raises shoulders
- Shallow breathing
- Leans away
- “Closed” bodily posture (for instance: arms crossed)
- Clenched jaws or facial expression
- Changes the topic when it’s difficult
- Leaves the room when it’s difficult

# PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

Compare  
those to...

- Flexible eye contact
- Allowing tears to flow
- Smiles when in contact with something important
- Softer tone of voice
- Animated tone and cadence of voice
- Slower pace when speaking
- Relaxed and/or open bodily posture
- Deeper breaths
- Leans forward
- Relaxed or flexible facial expression
- Stays on the topic (and in the room), even though it's difficult



# SHAPING BEHAVIOR

Differentially reinforcing steps (i.e. successive approximations) of the targeted or desired behavior

B.F. Skinner, 1943



# SHAPING IN SESSION

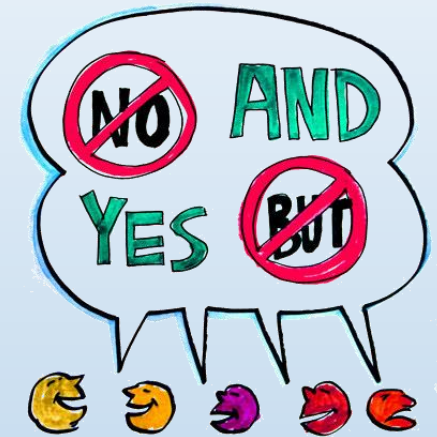
- **Modeling:** displaying openness, awareness, and engagement through verbal and bodily expressions
- **Evoking:** creating a context for an event to occur through reflections, questions, and invitations
- **Reinforcing:** differentially acknowledging successive steps of workable behavior while passively ignoring unworkable behavior

# MODELING: THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

- Alliance: evidence suggests benefits are derived from *transference of flexibility skills* from therapist to client
  - Walser, et al., 2013; Gifford, et al., 2011
  - “Sadness showed up for me as you shared that.” (Open)
  - “I’m noticing the two of us working together.” (Aware)
  - “It’s important to me that you feel heard.” (Engaged)
  - Physically leaning in, slowing down pace, unhooking from unhelpful thoughts, and expressing compassion (Combo)

# VALIDATE AND EVOKE

- **Aware**
  - **Present:** What's showing up now?
  - **Self:** What would the 'future you' say?
- **Open**
  - **Defusion:** Are these familiar thoughts?
  - **Acceptance:** Can you stay with that feeling?
- **Engaged**
  - **Values:** What qualities do you want to bring to...?
  - **Action:** What could you do to move toward...?



# REINFORCEMENT MATTERS

- Evoke + reinforce *more effective* than evoke alone
  - Haworth, et al., 2015
    - “You’re holding these thoughts about yourself more lightly than when we first met.” (Open)
    - “When you pause and observe what’s happening, that gives you more freedom to choose.” (Aware)
    - “Your perseverance really paid off!” (Engaged)
    - “By noticing and making room for anxiety, you were able to do what matters to you.” (Combo)

# REAL-TIME FUNCTIONAL FEEDBACK

"Deliberate practice involves feedback and modification of efforts in response to that feedback."

K. Anders Ericsson, *Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise*



# FUNCTIONAL INTERVIEW

## Antecedents

Situation  
Relevant history  
Private events

## Behaviors

What the person  
does (in presence  
of As and due to  
history of Cs)

## Consequences

Effects of B  
(payoffs/costs) in  
the context of A  
and a history of C

Interval	ACT Process	Tells and Reads
1	<u>Open:</u> Accept / Defuse <u>Aware:</u> Now / Self <u>Engaged:</u> Values / Action	It's horrible...EA I'm not sleeping...CA I'm totally stressed out...EA I feel like a policewoman...Selfing Other people... Selfing
2	<u>Open:</u> Accept / Defuse <u>Aware:</u> Now / Self <u>Engaged:</u> Values / Action	I feel ashamed...EA Other people...Selfing Why can't I be more like...Selfing Why am I not better...Selfing & Fusion
3	<u>Open:</u> Accept / Defuse <u>Aware:</u> Now / Self <u>Engaged:</u> Values / Action	I don't interact with my boys...CA I don't really see them except when yelling...CA They're scared (good perspective taking!) This makes me so sad – they must be so horrified (Accept)
4	<u>Open:</u> Accept / Defuse <u>Aware:</u> Now / Self <u>Engaged:</u> Values / Action	I am so not the mom I wanna be...Selfing Beating myself up...CA Why can't I be kinder – I'm not who I wanna be...Selfing
5	<u>Open:</u> Accept / Defuse <u>Aware:</u> Now / Self <u>Engaged:</u> Values / Action	I'd be asking them and doing with them... if I were.... (Beginning to get more in touch with self in context) Before COVID, I was... Now <> Selfing



## Model

## Evoke

## Reinforce

Open

When I feel locked into the suffering of this moment, I try to zoom out (+ Aware)

Can you talk about this experience of shame that is “horrible”?  
There’s something playful in the way you said it, is that accurate?

I want to thank you for sharing that.  
I can see in your face that it’s difficult to share about that, so thank you.

Aware

I’ve also noticed myself comparing myself to others  
I see myself making those kind of comparisons.

Can you talk about what it’s like to see yourself making those kind of judgments and comparisons?  
What is that experience like?  
I wonder if you can imagine yourself seeing...from a distance...zoom out.

Tom laughs with Rikke (and says “that’s interesting”) as she shares about view from helicopter (+ Open).

Engaged

You’re reminding me of what I love most about my father. He’s kind in that way and has a willingness to be present with me.

If you were being the ‘you’ that you see yourself being when all of this is not present - who is that?  
To get in touch with the ‘you’ that you want to be?  
Would you be willing to try this tmrw morning?

Text me after you do that and I’ll text you back to let you know that I appreciate you following through.

1	<p><u>Open</u>: Accept / Defuse</p> <p><u>Aware</u>: Now / Self</p> <p><u>Engaged</u>: Values / Action</p>	<p>It's horrible...EA Other people... Selfing</p> <p>I'm not sleeping...CA</p> <p>I'm totally stressed out...EA</p> <p>I feel like a policewoman...Selfing</p>
2	<p><u>Open</u>: Accept / Defuse</p> <p><u>Aware</u>: Now / Self</p> <p><u>Engaged</u>: Values / Action</p>	<p>I feel ashamed...EA</p> <p>Other people...Selfing</p> <p>Why can't I be more like...Selfing</p> <p>Why am I not better...Selfing &amp; Fusion</p>
3	<p><u>Open</u>: Accept / Defuse</p> <p><u>Aware</u>: Now / Self</p> <p><u>Engaged</u>: Values / Action</p>	<p>I don't interact with my boys...CA</p> <p>I don't really see them except when yelling...CA</p> <p>They're scared (good perspective taking!)</p> <p>This makes me so sad – they must be so horrified (Accept)</p>
4	<p><u>Open</u>: Accept / Defuse</p> <p><u>Aware</u>: Now / Self</p> <p><u>Engaged</u>: Values / Action</p>	<p>I am so not the mom I wanna be...Selfing</p> <p>Beating myself up...CA</p> <p>Why can't I be kinder – I'm not who I wanna be...Selfing</p>
5	<p><u>Open</u>: Accept / Defuse</p> <p><u>Aware</u>: Now / Self</p> <p><u>Engaged</u>: Values / Action</p>	<p>I'd be asking them and doing with them... if I were....</p> <p>(Beginning to get more in touch with self in context)</p> <p>Before COVID, I was... Now &lt;&gt; Selfing</p>

# SKILL-BUILDING PRACTICE

- Objectives:
  - Practice shaping psychological flexibility through modeling, evoking, and reinforcing
  - Watch for Tells and Reads to inform interventions
- Format (groups of 5):
  - Lead therapist, client, and three monitors who code Tells/Reads and interventions
  - Monitors available as back-up to lead therapist *if requested*

	Model	Evoke	Reinforce
Open	When I feel locked into the suffering of this moment, I try to zoom out (+ Aware)	Can you talk about this experience of shame that is "horrible"? There's something playful in the way you said it, is that accurate?	I want to thank you for sharing that. I can see in your face that it's difficult to share about that, so thank you.
Aware	I've also noticed myself comparing myself to others I see myself making those kind of comparisons.	Can you talk about what it's like to see yourself making those kind of judgments and comparisons? What is that experience like? I wonder if you can imagine yourself seeing...from a distance...zoom out.	Tom laughs with Rikke (and says "that's interesting") as she shares about view from helicopter (+ Open).
Engaged	You're reminding me of what I love most about my father. He's kind in that way and has a willingness to be present with me.	If you were being the 'you' that you see yourself being when all of this is not present - who is that? To get in touch with the 'you' that you want to be? Would you be willing to try this tmrw morning?	Text me after you do that and I'll text you back to let you know that I appreciate you following through.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION

Lou Lasprugato - [loulasprugato@att.net](mailto:loulasprugato@att.net)

Rikke Kjelgaard - [hello@rikkekjelgaard.com](mailto:hello@rikkekjelgaard.com)

Thomas Szabo - [tszabo@fit.edu](mailto:tszabo@fit.edu)

