



# Training the Therapist to be a Therapist using ACT and Mindfulness

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# Objectives

- 1) Highlight the importance of the therapeutic stance when working from ACT
- 2) Train the participants in aspects of the therapeutic stance





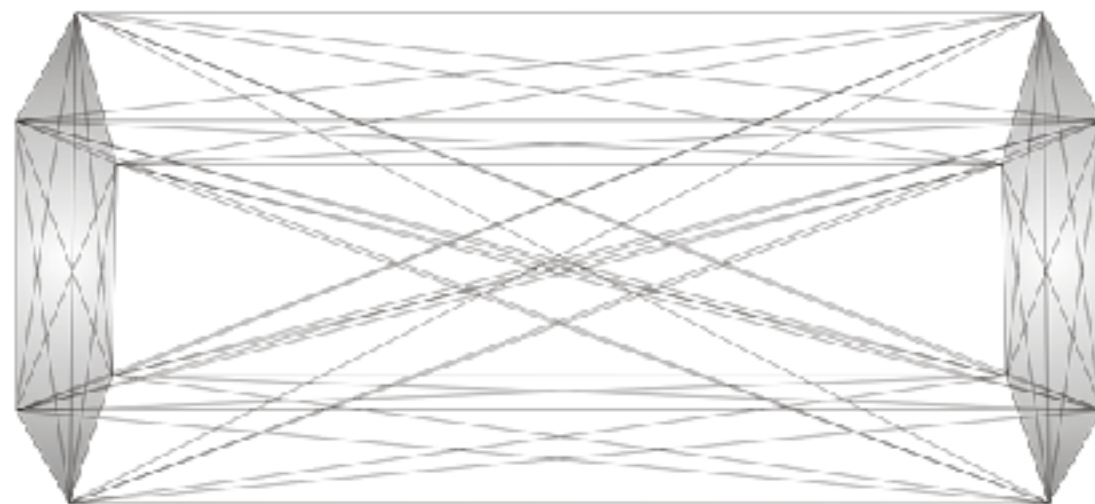
What is the ACT therapeutic stance about?

# A Model of the ACT Therapeutic Relationship

...as it currently stands

Practitioner  
Psychology

Client  
Psychology

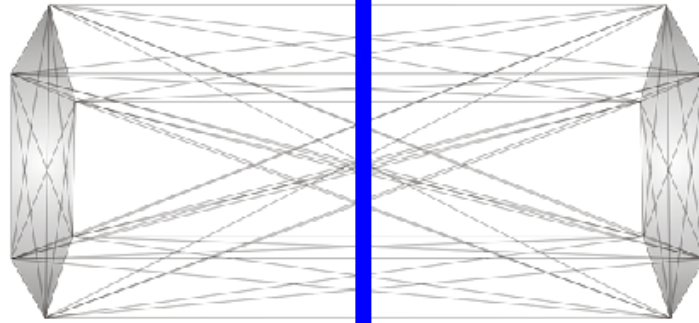


Therapy Interactions

## A Model of the ACT Therapeutic Relationship

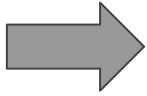
Practitioner  
Psychology

Client  
Psychology



Therapy Interactions

YOU



# Stance

It is a place occupied by experience and body

*Defined in Two Ways*

*Both are Relevant*

1. **An adopted position with respect to experiencing mental or emotional events**
  2. **As a “position of the feet.”**
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# The 'adopted' stance

1. Requires awareness
2. Is Intimately linked to the ACT Core Competencies for the Therapeutic Relationship

## The ACT therapist

- a. Speaks to the client from an equal, vulnerable, compassionate, genuine, and sharing point of view
- b. Is willing to self disclose about personal issues when it serves the interest of the client
- c. Avoids use of “canned” ACT interventions, is flexible and ready to change course
- d. Tailors interventions/behavioral tasks to fit the client’s experience, language practices, social, ethnic, and cultural context
- e. Models acceptance of challenging content
- f. Always brings the issue back to what the client’s experience
- g. Introduces experiential exercises, paradoxes, and/or metaphors as appropriate
- h. Does not argue with, lecture, coerce or attempt to convince the client
- i. Uses ACT relevant processes in the moment and **in the context of the therapeutic relationship**



# The “position of the feet”

1. Is explored through **being bold** - taking action, stepping forward even when difficult
2. Is about **speaking from the heart** - connecting to self and other at the level of feeling with an authentic, simple, and sincere presence





# The ACT therapeutic stance is and can be cultivated

It entails bringing:

1. Awareness and compassion to your own experience
2. Stepping forward in your life; and
3. Holding that others can do the same
4. It is embodied and it is about *presence*



You are “communicating” that you are firmly here. Like the presence of a tree. Solid and firmly rooted in the ground, it does not lose its “treeness” despite the changing seasons and weather. It is here - present. You are whole and nothing can be said or felt that strips that wholeness. You remain rooted.

The stance is interwoven, tied together - feet and heart - in whole cloth by the threads of what it means to engage in a relationship designed to compassionately support another being in creating a meaningful life.



# Today's Focus: The ACT Experiential Stance

- Openness
- Curiosity
- Engaged



# 1. SELF AWARENESS

The therapeutic stance involves being able to recognize your personal capacity to be open, aware, and engaged in the therapy

It means understanding your behavior, knowing when you are fused, avoidant, or out of touch with your values

But self-awareness also means being connected to and aware of how others perceive you and the impact of your behavior on others, in the moment, and across time.



Exercise: Self-Awareness expanded



## 2. Exercise: discovering your embodied stance

In pairs.

One is the therapist

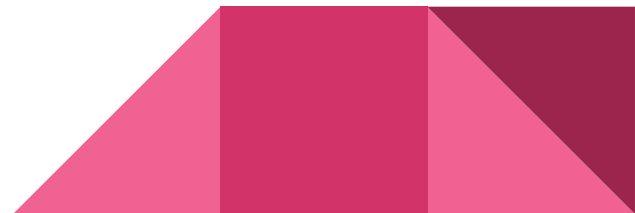
One is the client

The therapist does what they know to do with the client and practices self awareness. The client notices the embodied therapeutic stance.



# Self reflective questions

1. What I'm bringing to this relationship?
2. What role does your impact play in creating a holding space?
3. Are you experienced as open?
4. And based on what you learn, is there anything you want to change?
5. Is there anything that keeps you away from a “rooted” presence? And it is something you want to work on?



Engaged!



# 3. Exercise:

In pairs

On a piece of paper write down a list of things you struggle in therapy with your clients. Explore different areas

- Extrapersonal

Example: aggression

- Intrapersonal

Example: anxiety, incompetence

- Interpersonal

Example: get quiet in therapy





# Exercise (cont)



# Debriefing



Larger perspective

Listening with awareness

Speak from your heart

Be bold

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# Reflective questions

1. What have you learn about listening with awareness and speaking from your heart?
2. What would be a bold move(s) for you in your therapeutic work?
3. What would be the barrier to making that move(s)?
4. How do you think you would change as a therapist if you made that move(s)?



I am invested and persistent in supporting them in taking action and responsibility in their lives, in acting on the freedom that is available to them.

Dr. Robyn Walser

# ACT implemented on ourselves

Awareness of ourselves and ACT core process implemented on ourselves in session moment by moment.

- Noticing - Detecting
- Implementing
- Reading consequences

It is a psychological flexibility dance!



The therapist maintains a stance that instigates and reinforces psychological flexibility...and has heart

