Disclosures

- Dr Rachael Skews

- Relevant Financial Relationships:

  - Employed in, and research funded by, the Institute of Management Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London (www.gold.ac.uk/institute-management-studies)

- Relevant Nonfinancial Relationships:

  - Hon Secretary of the International Society for Coaching Psychology (www.isfcp.info)

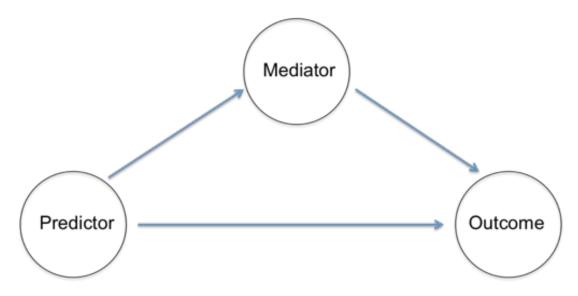# Evaluating Alternative Processes of Change in ACT-informed Workplace Coaching

Dr Rachael Skews,

Dr Jo Lloyd & Prof Frank Bond

Institute of Management Studies

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The Research Context

To enhance our understanding of processes of change, research studies should investigate more than one potential mediator (Johansson & Høglend, 2007; Kazdin; 2007)
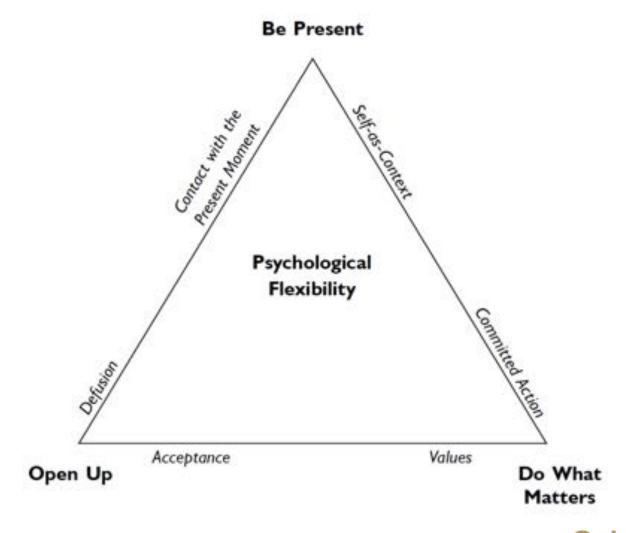
Possible Processes of Change in ACT-informed Coaching

1. Acceptance and commitment (ACT) based coaching has a theoretically sound mechanism of change (i.e. increases in psychological flexibility)

2. Other dominant explanations in the coaching literature lean on the contextual model, and hypothesise that factors common to all interventions, such as the coaching relationship (i.e. working alliance), account for change

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Psychological Flexibility

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The Contextual Model & the Coaching Relationship

– Specificity is an unnecessary condition for change in psychotherapy if all treatments are equally efficacious (Wampold & Imel, 2015)

– The Contextual Model (Wampold & Budge, 2012): The relationship (i.e. working alliance) is the main variable that accounts for change

– The working alliance model: The collaborative alliance between a client and a helping professional, focusing on agreement of goals and tasks, and the quality of interpersonal bond.

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The Relationship from a CBS Perspective

– What is important is the **function** of the relationship in satisfying the goals and values of the therapist and the client, rather than the properties or **form** of the relationship itself (Vilardaga & Hayes, 2010)

– The impact of the relationship occurs, not as a result of the properties of the relationship, but through reinforcing specific targeted behaviours in interpersonal interactions between the therapist and the client (Follette, Naugle, & Callaghan, 1996)

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Augmenting Coaching

– Technology-enabled innovations will impact behaviour change interventions:

  – Skills training & coaching

  – Triage processes (i.e. matching clients & coaches)

  – Virtual reality interventions

  – Coach-bots and AI

9 https://pocketconfidant.com/

10   (www.betterup.co; www.cai-world.com/online-collaboration-coaching)

Bravely is a new kind of benefit in support of workplace health—connecting employees with professional coaches for confidential conversations in the moments they need them most.

(workbravely.com)

Implications

1. Once we understand the mechanisms of change, then we know how to make coaching more effective

2. If psychological flexibility acts as a mechanism of change, then we can design coaching interventions accordingly

3. If effective coaching interventions are not dependent on the coaching relationship (i.e. a human-human interaction), then we are more likely to be able to develop effective non-human interventions

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Parallel Mediation Study

Comparing the indirect effects of two mediators representing different explanations of the process of change in ACT-informed coaching

Hypothesis - Increases in general mental health, generalised self-efficacy, goal-directed thinking, and goal attainment that result from ACT-informed coaching will be mediated by increases in psychological flexibility but not by working alliance

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Parallel Mediation Study - Method

$N = 65$ (the intervention arm of an RCT study)

Participants: UK large public sector organisation; grade 6/7 (middle management); 72% female; mean age 41

3 x 90-minute coaching sessions

No T1 measure of WA as no relationship at baseline.

- T2 completed 1 week prior to session 2
- T3 completed 1 week prior to session 3
- T4 completed 4 weeks after session 3

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Parallel Mediation Analyses

Outcome Variable	Mediator Variables	Bootstrap Estimate		BCa 95% CI	
		Effect	*SE*	Lower	Upper
General mental health	Psychological Flexibility				
T2 – T4	T2 – T3	-.0194	.0307	-.0720	.0501
T2 – T4	T2 – T4	-.0425	.0356	-.1231	.0170
	Working Alliance				
	T2 – T3	.0263	.0333	-.0400	.0924
	T2 – T4	-.0383	.0418	-.1222	.0406
Generalised self-efficacy	Psychological Flexibility				
T2 – T3	T2 – T3	-.0290	.0156	-.0676	-.0043
T2 – T4	T2 – T3	.0453	.0158	.0170	.0792
T2 – T4	T2 – T4	-.0690	.0235	-.1229	-.0302
T3 – T4	T2 – T3	.0163	.0148	-.0139	.0454
T3 – T4	T2 – T4	.0517	.0238	.0114	.1046
	Working Alliance				
	T2 – T3	.0006	.0199	-.0385	.0401
	T2 – T3	.0242	.0182	-.0161	.0571
	T2 – T4	-.0468	.0254	-.0977	.0039
	T2 – T3	.0248	.0185	-.0128	.0614
	T2 – T4	.0490	.0251	-.0060	.0943

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Parallel Mediation Analyses

Outcome Variable	Mediator Variables	Bootstrap Estimate		BCa 95% CI	
		Effect	*SE*	Lower	Upper
Goal-directed thinking	Psychological Flexibility				
T2 – T4	T2 – T3	.1329	.0653	.0331	.2821
T2 – T4	T2 – T4	-.2787	.0730	-.4501	-.1563
	Working Alliance				
	T2 – T3	-.0352	.0792	-.2072	.1092
	T2 – T4	-.0575	.0870	-.2368	.0991
Goal attainment	Psychological Flexibility				
T2 – T3	T2 – T3	-.3535	.3377	-1.0943	.2427
T2 – T4	T2 – T3	.8356	.5447	.0381	2.1028
T2 – T4	T2 – T4	-1.1322	.6245	-2.6741	-.1562
T3 – T4	T2 – T3	.4821	.5835	-.4588	1.8341
T3 – T4	T2 – T4	.1754	.6450	-.9980	1.5562
	Working Alliance				
	T2 – T3	-.7683	.6180	-2.0199	.4361
	T2 – T3	-.2494	.4979	-1.2756	.6996
	T2 – T4	-.0487	.6764	-1.2209	.4180
	T2 – T3	-1.0178	.6325	-2.3744	.1213
	T2 – T4	-.3851	.6867	-1.8476	.8723

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Conclusions

– No evidence of mediation by working alliance in these data

– Psychological flexibility mediated generalized self-efficacy, goal-directed thinking, and goal attainment

– These data suggest that increases in psychological flexibility are a more likely mechanism of change in ACT-based coaching

– This leaves the door open for non-human coaching interventions

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Dr Rachael Skews

Institute of Management Studies

Goldsmiths

r.skews@gold.ac.uk

@RachaelSkews

RCT Study

$N = 126$ (ACT = 65, control = 61)

Participants: UK civil service; grade 6/7 (middle management); 71% female; mean age 41
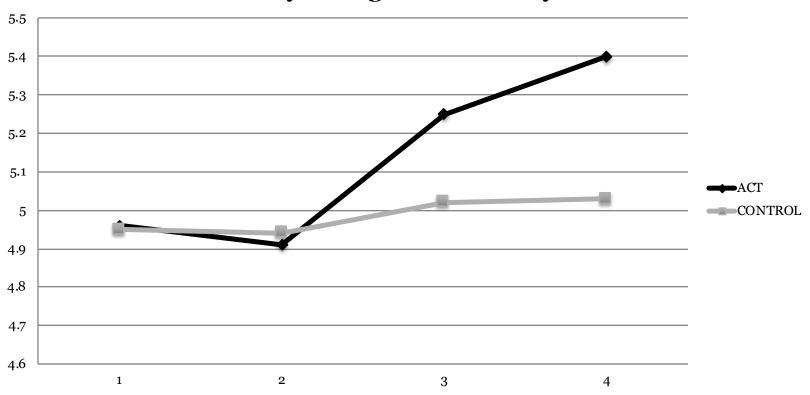
3 x 90-minute coaching sessions

Measures taken:

- T1 completed 1 week prior to session 1

- T2 completed 1 week prior to session 2

- T3 completed 1 week prior to session 3

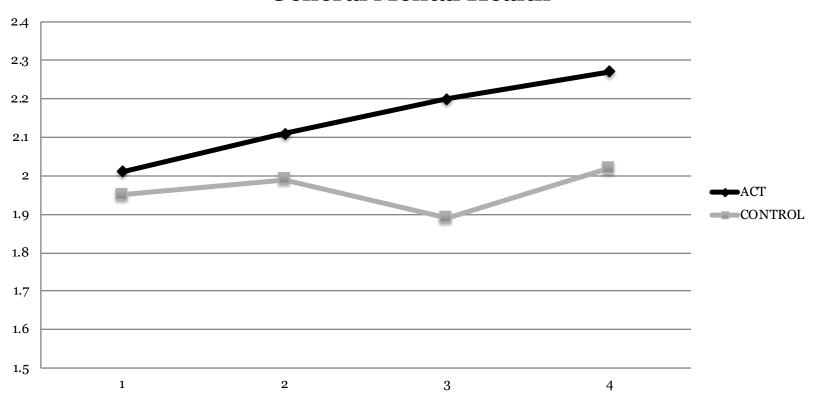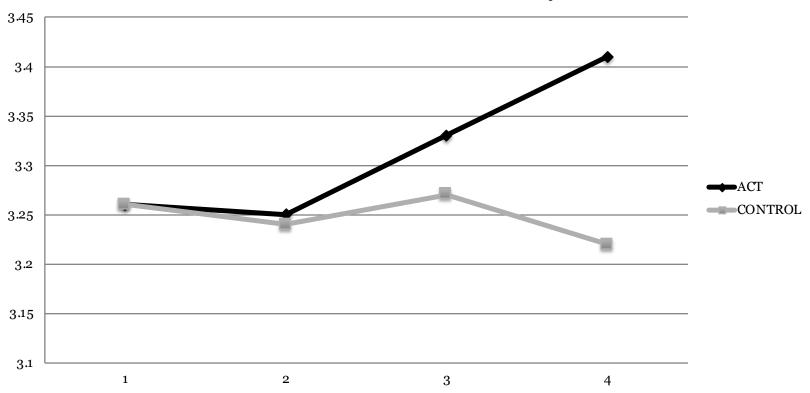- T4 completed 4 weeks after session 3

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

RCT Results

Psychological Flexibility

RCT Results

General Mental Health

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

RCT Results

Generalised Self-Efficacy

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

RCT Results

Goal-Directed Thinking

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

RCT Results

Goal Attainment