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# Fostering flexibility in facing the lifespan challenges – a preventive eHealth ACT-intervention

dr. Tim Batink<sup>1,3</sup>, Prof. dr. Nele Jacobs<sup>1,2</sup>, dr. Sanne Peeters<sup>1,2</sup>, dr. Mayke Janssens<sup>1,2</sup>, dr. Johan Lataster<sup>1,2</sup>, dr. Jennifer Reijnders<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Department Lifespan Psychology, Open University of the Netherlands, Heerlen, the Netherlands <sup>2</sup>Department of Psychiatry and Neuropsychology, School for Mental Health and Neuroscience, Maastricht University, Maastricht, the Netherlands <sup>3</sup>U-center, Epen, the Netherlands

## Background

During our lifespan we will face a lot of changes in the different stages of life. Dealing with those changes can often be challenging, especially as we get older, and can lead to a substantial decline in experienced wellbeing. Developing psychological flexibility could be beneficial in dealing with the inevitable changes and challenges in life and can have a positive effect on wellbeing. The eHealth ACT-intervention was developed to foster both flexibility and wellbeing in the general population. The aim of the current study is to assess both feasibility and effectiveness of the eACT-intervention in the general population.

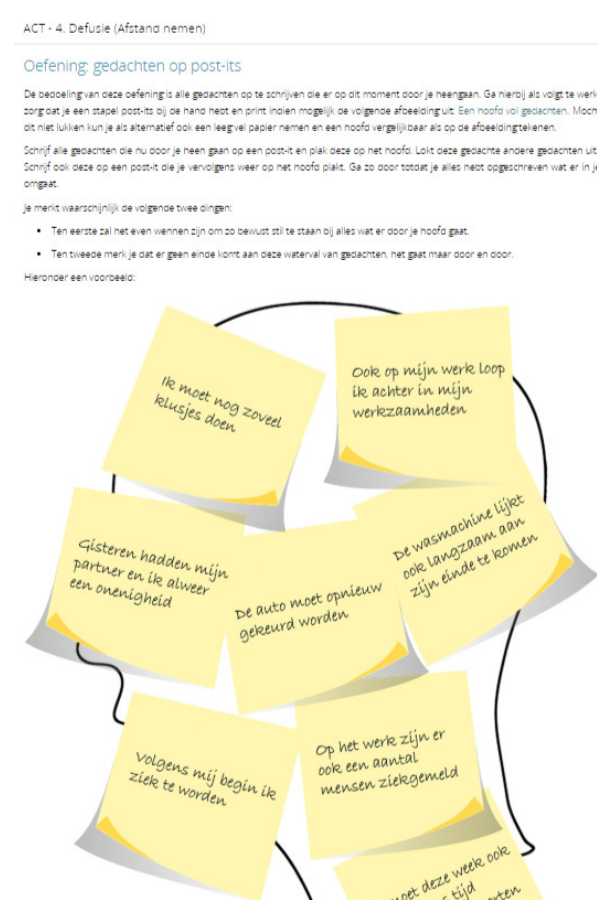
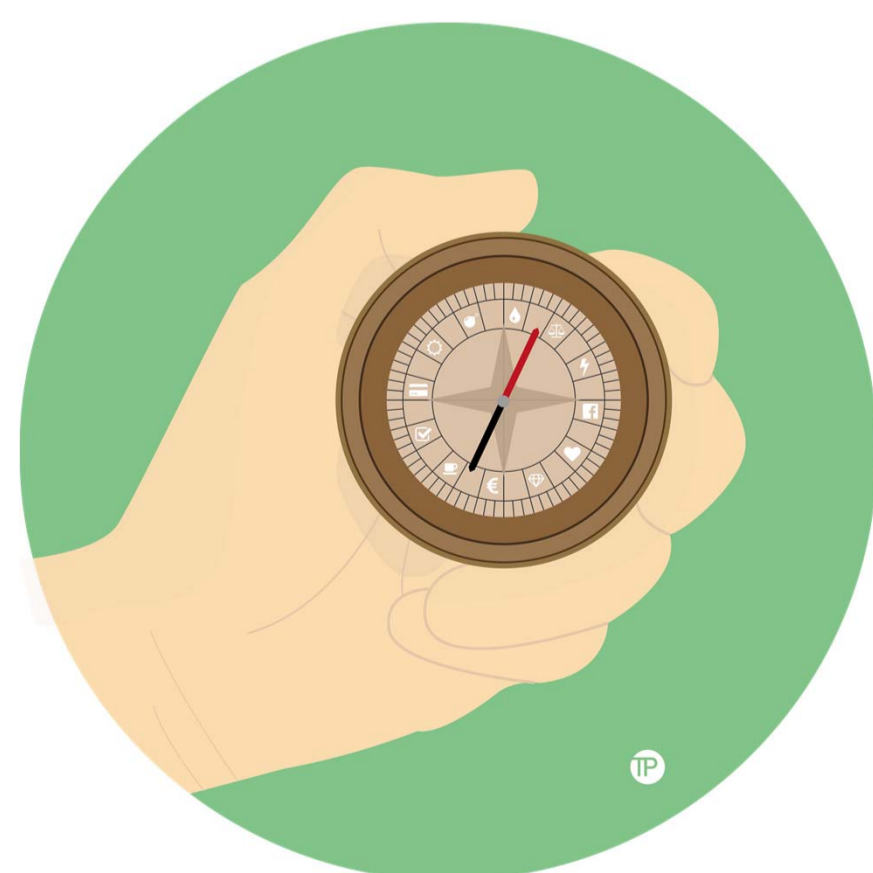
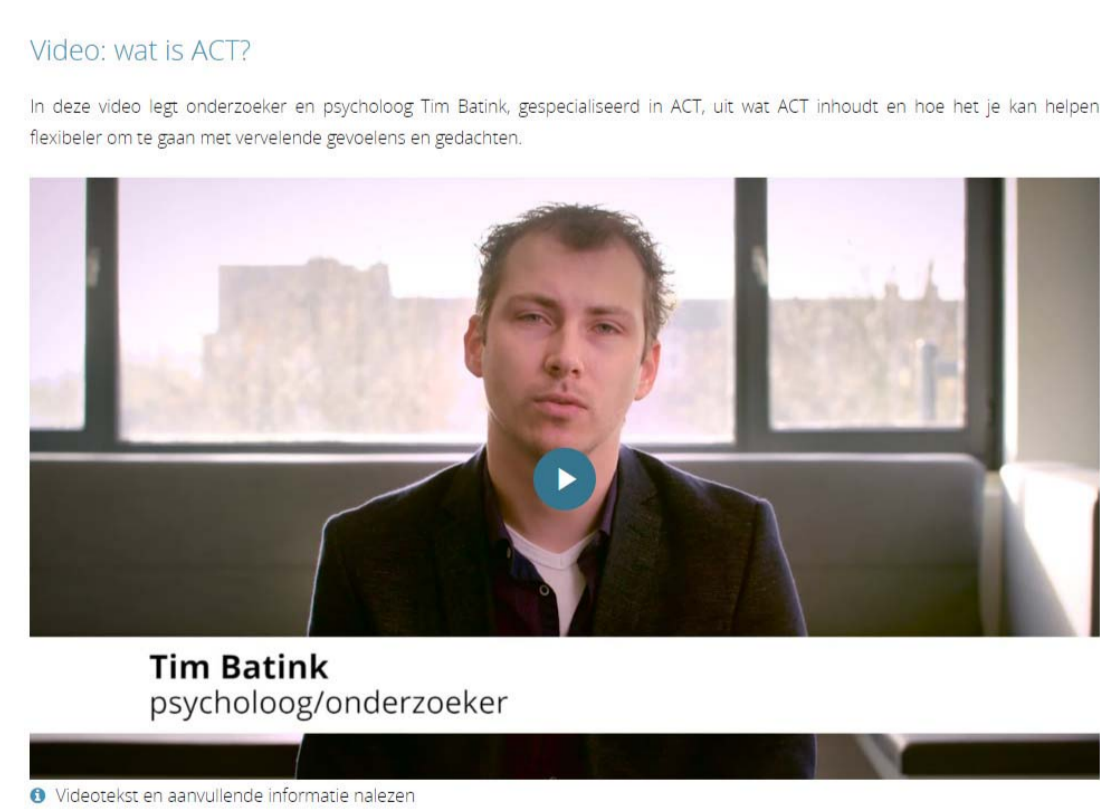
## Preventive eHealth ACT-intervention - From suffering to resilience

**Description:** The eHealth ACT intervention includes 9 modules. Every module consists of a short introduction of a specific ACT-skill, following a variety of exercises to support participants in developing these new skills. The eACT-intervention allows participants to develop these ACT-skills from anywhere they are in their own pace.

## ACT-modules:

1. Introduction ACT
2. Creative Hopelessness (*the struggle*)
3. Acceptance (*making room*)
4. Defusion (*taking distance*)
5. Self as Context (*identity*)
6. Present Moment Attention (*attention*)
7. Values (*orientate*)
8. Committed Action (*investing*)
9. Psychological Flexibility (*bringing it all together*)

**Components per module:** Video-introduction (8), illustrated ACT-metaphor (8) & ACT-exercises (20) : fill-in exercises, hands-on exercises and guided experiential exercises (audio).



**Duration:** 8 weeks (+/- 30 minutes per module).

**Accessibility:** PC, Laptop, Tablet & Smartphone.

## Two versions available:

- Stand alone module (automated).
- Flexible module (person tailored by clinician).
  - Order of the modules can be rearranged.
  - Exercises & metaphors can be added or omitted.

Available for clinicians via TelePsy eHealth platform.

## Methods

This study focuses on middle aged and older adults (40-75 years); who were recruited from the general population and were assigned to the experimental group (eACT) or the waiting-list condition ( $N=300$  total).

Both groups completed a pretest, a posttest and a follow-up survey (8 weeks after finishing the eACT-training) to assess both short and long-term effectiveness with measures on wellbeing (e.g. MHC-SF) and measures on psychological flexibility (e.g. AAQ-II) - *not reported here* -.

Usability was assessed by an self-designed usability self-assessment form, user friendliness was assessed by an in-depth interview based on a eHealth checklist developed by Anstey and Watson (2018) ( $N=23$ ).

## Results: Usability eHealth-intervention (Usability Questionnaire, $N=23$ )

- Participants: Male ( $N=6$ ) / Female ( $N=17$ ), age (55,6 years,  $SD$  8,95 years).
- $N=16$  completed 75-100% of the course,  $N=7$  completed 50-75% of the course.
- Participants spend on average 3,2 hours per module ( $SD$  2,4).
- The eACT-intervention helped participants dealing with their thoughts and feelings ( $N=16$ ) & helped them in investing in things that mattered to them ( $N=15$ ).
- The eHealth intervention was rated a 7,7 out of 10 ( $SD$  0,92).

## Strengths of the eACT-intervention:

- A clear and concise explanation of the ACT-components ( $N=18$ ).
- Comprehensible ACT-metaphors ( $N=18$ ).
- Applicable ACT-exercises ( $N=22$ ).
- Being able to do the online training in their own time and pace.

## Limitations of the eACT-intervention:

- Limited accessibility of the training (8 weeks).
- More time-consuming than initially indicated.
- Absence of reminders.
- Missing contact with a therapist or contact with fellow participants to discuss their experiences.

## Results: User friendliness eHealth-intervention (In-depth interview, $N=6$ )

**Functionality:** The intervention is self-explanatory, none of the participants needed the user guide. Upon completion, the completed module shifted in the overview of the training; which sometimes lead to selecting the wrong subsequent module. The inbuilt chat-function caused confusion for some participants (since it was not in use for the current study, but the built-in functionality was still available). The module does not support downloading the audio and video, nor facilitates printing the material that is offered in the module.

**Technology:** Some participants report not being able to play-back the audio and video-files. No other technical issues were reported.

**Privacy:** Personalized log-in with verification code fostered a sense of privacy. However it is not always clear to the participants, who could access their module.

**Presence therapist:** The absence of an therapist is not reported as being an issue by the participants.

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More information? Mail [tim.batink@ou.nl](mailto:tim.batink@ou.nl)