

### ACT via Internet:

- a Randomised, Controlled Pilot Trial of a Web-Based ACT Program for the Prevention of Mental Health Problems for University Students

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### Educational Objectives

- ✓ I want to give a short background on why work with ACT for young adults.
- ✓ I want to give a short summary on research we have done on ACT in group-format.
- ✓ And the main objective is to give you ideas about how to set up a study to investigate effects of ACT over Internet. And I want to share pitfalls we have experienced.



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### Why ACT for young adults?

Psychological health among young adults in Sweden.

#### Sources:

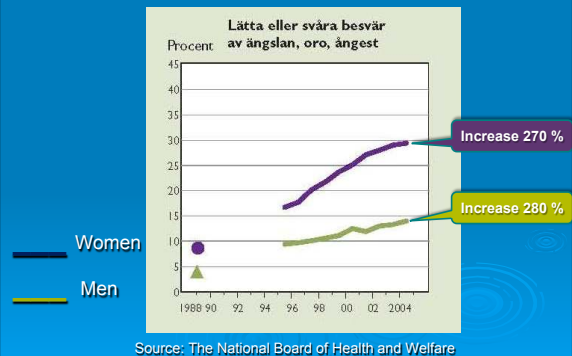
The Swedish national Council of Health & The National Board of Health and Welfare



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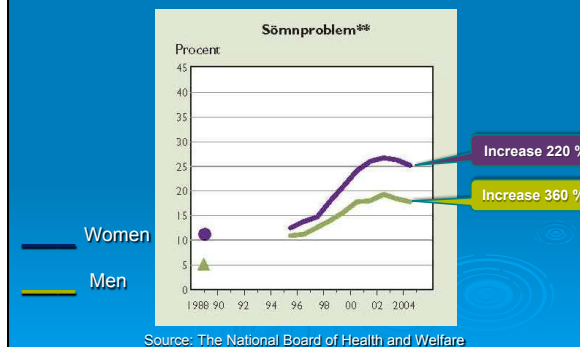
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### Problems with anxiety and worry Woman and men 16–24 year 1988–2005\*

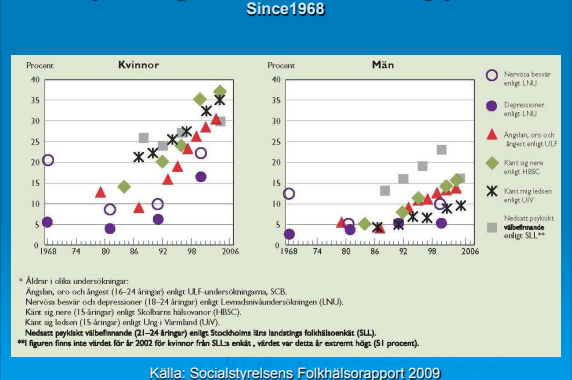


### Sleep problems

Age 16–24 year, 1988–2005\*.




### Psychological ill-health among youth Since 1968



## Girls are more stressed

**ttela.se**  
 Publicerad 24 augusti 2010  
 Uppdaterad 27 augusti 2010



**Tjejer stressade på gymnasiet Men föräldrar stressar killarna mer**

Att flickor klarar sig betydligt bättre än killar i skolan är ett faktum. Men studien visar att flickor är mer stressade av lära och prov än killar. Och killar är mer stressade av de egna kraven.

I en färsk undersökning gjord av Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB) uppger nästan tre av fyra gymnasieelever att de känner sig stressade på grund av prov eller lära. Mindre än halften av pojkarna tiller sig stressen av samma anledning.

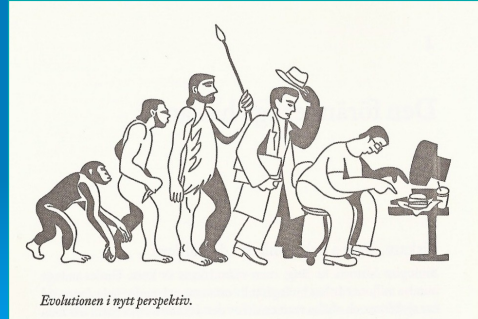
En annan markant skillnad mellan killarna mellan om det gäller stress på grund av krav på sig själv. 61 procent av tjejerna känner sådan stress. Motsvarande siffra för killarna är 37 procent.

ÅKE - Skolans Lärare

SKOLA

- 75% of girls suffer from stress from homework and tests (45% of boys)
- 61% girls suffer from stress from demands on themselves (37% of boys)

## Evolution in a new perspective - We are facing new kind of threats

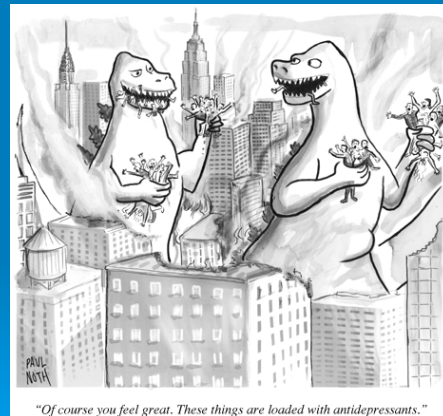


## Food for thought...

*In our development we are in a head on collision with evolution, with language we can literally stress ourselves to death.*

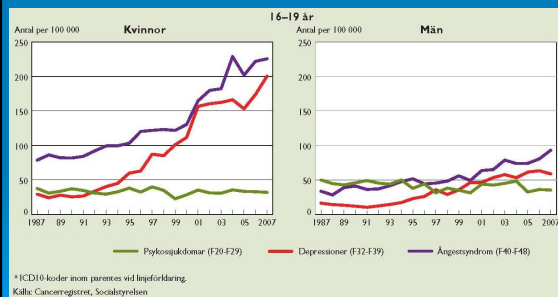
*We need to learn strategies that are working so we can cope with how we are "linguaging" with ourselves.*

- Fredrik Livheim



But these are "only" self reports!!!

## Hospital care among youth for different psychological illnesses 16-19 year, 1987-2007.



Källa: Socialstyrelsens Folkhälsorapport 2009

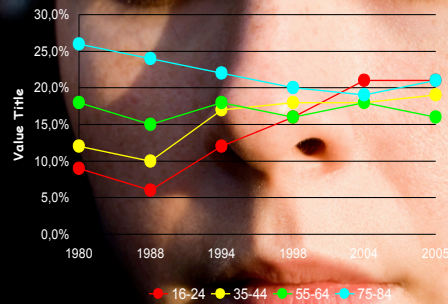
## Minority groups particularly vulnerable

Several studies show that minority groups are at greater risk for poor mental health compared to society's majority population. These include:

- ✓ ethnic minority groups
- ✓ sexual minority groups

(tex. Halpern D. 1993, Hegna, Kristiansen & Moseng 1999, Wichstrom & Hegna 2003, King et al 2003, Winzer & Boström 2007)

## Problems with anxiety and worry 1980-2005



## Studies we have done on a manualized group-format of ACT in Sweden

- ✓ These studies are made on a group-format (not Internet) close to Frank Bond et als "ACT at work".
- ✓ Most of them are randomized, controlled trials (RCTs).



## What is already done on ACT-groups?

- Summary of studies

**Summary:** 10 studies completed, 6 ongoing on right. Done:

1. RCT on 230 upper-secondary students, 2004 & 2006 (Livheim 2004, Jacobson & Wellin, in preparation)
2. RCT, ACT for stressed teachers, 2007 (Altbo & Nordin)
3. ACT for youth at alcohol clinic & BUP 2008 (Stavenow)
4. RCT on 106 social workers 2009 (Brinkborg et al, published 2011)
5. RCT for 32 screened 14-16 year olds in school (submitted 2012, F. Livheim, L. Hayes et al)

## What is already done on ACT-groups?

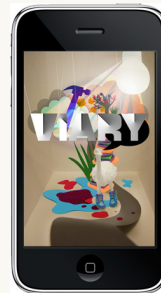
- Summary of studies

**Summary:** 10 studies completed, 6 ongoing on right. Done:

6. RCT for 24 screened 14-16 year olds in school (Björklund & Wall 2010)
7. Tested in large company (Andemark & Rasmussen 2011)
8. RCT for 54 stressed teachers (Hydman & Larsson 2010)
9. Pilot study for parents of children with severe autism (Holmberg-Bergman & Ippalainen)
10. RCT for 113 student-nurses at Karolinska Institute (Djordjevic, Frögéli et al, in preparation)

## Tested ACT via Iphone

Now revised and tweaked more as behavioural activation and follow up homework ([www.hoastoolshop.com](http://www.hoastoolshop.com))



## Going on right now...

### Ongoing:

1. National Institute of Public Health replicates the school study from 2004 & 2006
2. Being tested in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (slightly revised version)
3. Being tested in the National Board of Institutional care (slightly revised version)
4. Tested by the University of Linköping for chronic pain.
5. Being tested in primary care as 1st-line psychiatry.
6. More studies are planned (Denmark? Finland? etc...)



## And now, at last!!!

### ACT via Internet:

*- a Randomised, Controlled Pilot Trial of a Web-Based ACT Program for the Prevention of Mental Health Problems for University Students*



## The study: **Background**

- ✓ The increasing amount of stress and psychological suffering among young adults in Sweden.
- ✓ In Sweden 93% of the population is using Internet, especially young people are especially frequent users.
- ✓ If an Internet version for helping students deal with psychological distress proves effective it can easily be spread in large scale and students also can avoid long wait-lists or the possible stigma associated with contacting student counselling services



## The study: **Design**

- ✓ 100 students was planned to be randomized to either:
  - a) ACT over Internet (n=50) or
  - b) Psychoeducation about stress over Internet (n=50)
- ✓ A one-year follow up is planned

### The first hardship:

- It has been extremely difficult to recruit participants! Today we have 21 in ACT and 2 in control group.

- The study needs to be done again coming autumn



## The study: **Control-intervention**

- ✓ Both control and ACT is eight 45 minute sessions spread out over 8-10 weeks.
- ✓ Control group gets psychoeducation about stress and lifestyle.
- ✓ Control group has a discussion Forum with new topics each week. Moderated by us, but no active involvement from therapists.



## The study: **ACT-intervention**

- ✓ Both control and ACT is eight 45 minutes sessions spread out over 8-10 weeks.
- ✓ The content is a for Internet modified version of our ACT-group format "ACT- to handle stress and promote health". Modifications are among other:
  - a) Less material
  - b) Video and audio-files replaces some text.
- ✓ Homework is given every session and followed up by personal e-mail feedback by CBT/ACT therapists in training.
- ✓ Two 20 minutes sessions by phone is given beginning and end of the intervention by CBT/ACT therapists

## The study: **ACT-intervention**

On an already existing platform at the University "Its learning"

Module 1: Stress

Module 2: Human language and avoidance

Module 3: Control versus acceptance

Module 4: The life-compass

Module 5: To live the life I want to live

Module 6: How our thinking creates suffering

Module 7: Defusion and communication

Module 8: Compassion and relationships



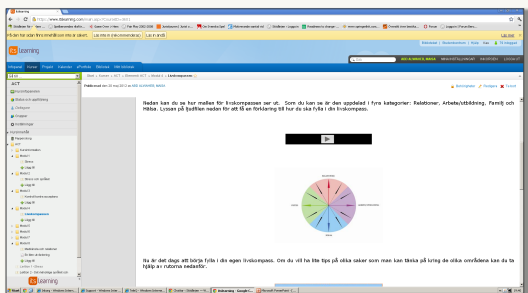
## Module1: Stress

- Introduction to stress w. pictures, text and audio files



## Module 4: The life-compass

- Metaphor, audio, exposure, guided exercise



## Module 5: To live the life I want to live

- The life-compass with pictures, text and audio files



## Cool, nice things with Internet

- ✓ Can get ACT (or other interventions) out in large scale
- ✓ Very cost effective, and do not take so much time per participant
- ✓ When the material is in place, it works endlessly
- ✓ It is easy to update or make modifications
- ✓ Questionnaires are administered electronically (cannot skip questions + gets entered into files directly)



## Pitfalls and difficulties we encountered

- ✓ Really big difficulties recruiting participants
- ✓ Really big difficulties keeping the participants through the intervention
- ✓ Tricky to at a low cost making the material juicy, interactive and engaging
- ✓ To create an own platform for an Internet intervention can be really expensive and also difficult to get it so safe that it fulfils ethical standards for confidentiality. Use an existing platform if you can or share that journey with someone in similar situation.

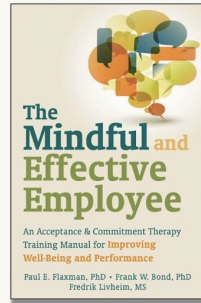


### Things we will do different in the future (that could be something to learn from?)

- ✓ More advertising before recruitment
- ✓ Open information sessions before recruitment
- ✓ Call every, or every other week to participants
- ✓ Automatically delivered e-mails every week
- ✓ In the phone calls, remind of the purpose of the study
- ✓ Make more interesting material



### The Mindful and Effective Employee: - An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Training Manual for Improving Well-Being and Performance



By: Paul Flaxman,  
Frank Bond &  
Fredrik Livheim

New Harbinger

### Two heartwarming comments

#### Man from Irak, 42 year:

*I have been struggling with difficult memories from the war and suffers from Post Traumatic Stress. I have both gone to psychologists and been given medication by a doctor, but nothing has helped me. But this course has really helped me and now I have tools to get by in life.*

#### Girl 15 year, gone via Child and youth psychiatry:

*Spread this all over Sweden, schools, workplaces, day care centers. And the world will become a better place! Hugs, good luck! And best wishes! 😊*



### Educational Objectives (did we succeed?)

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## Thank you!

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