

# ACT Based Intervention for an Adult with Adverse Childhood Experiences



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## THE LESSER KNOWN - EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Unreasonable deprivation of his/her basic needs for survival such as food and shelter; or failure to give timely medical treatment to an injured child resulting in serious impairment of his/her growth and development or in his/her permanent incapacity or death. It is a act of omission or commission of the child's basic needs including physical, education, emotional and psychological.

## ACE

Adverse childhood experiences are stressful or traumatic experiences in childhood and may include emotional, physical, sexual abuse and/or neglect (Damodaran & Paul, 2019).

Many longitudinal studies have described the dose-response effect on the mental and physical health of the individual, including depression, asthma, PTSD, anxiety, chronic illness, autoimmune disorders, risky behaviors, substance abuse, disordered eating and increased risk for suicide.

## CASE STUDY

A 28-year-old female of Indian origin presented with the following concerns

- Disordered eating
- Social anxiety and generalized anxiety disorder
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Feelings of guilt, sadness, worthlessness, anger
- Inability to trust others, resulting in emotional self-isolation
- Feelings of rejection and loneliness
- Chronic pain and asthma
- Autoimmune disorders

## INTERVENTION

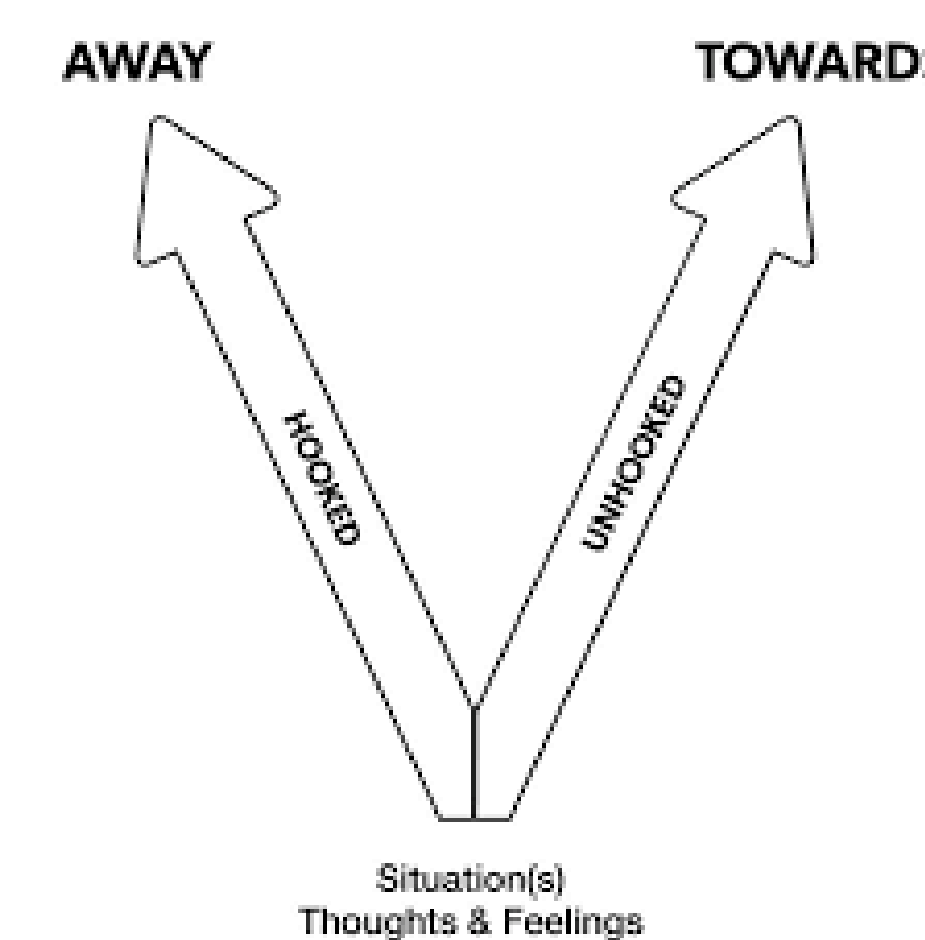
**Previous intervention:** Four sessions from a trained counselor, primarily for anxiety, where no mention was made of childhood experiences. The client had just only become aware that she had been brought up by a parent with a severe mental illness and she came to realize that her childhood experiences were not normal..



**Current intervention:**An Advanced ACT trained clinician who held a board certification in Behavior Analysis collected data on B-SA-AAQ, ACE-IQ, MPFI and the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire after the client reported childhood instances of physical and emotional abuse and neglect by the parent. The clinician worked with the client on revisiting unpleasant experiences in a safe clinical space, ACT based exercises including

- Away and Towards Moves
- Pushing the paper
- Dropping anchor
- Inner child exercises
- Compassionate conversations

ACT based work such as journaling and behavior contracts were used to help cope with emotional regulation on a daily basis.



## MEASURES USED AND OUTCOMES

The client had a global flexibility composite score of 2.9 and a global inflexibility composite score of 3.2 on the Multidimensional Psychological Flexibility Inventory (MPFI). She had an ACE score of 6. The scores of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire were in the moderate to severe range.

The client reported better control over her feelings, development of a microhabit of journaling, and defuse from the feelings of anger and regret at the sight of the parent. Improved relationship with food and an increase in acts of self-compassion were noted.

She continues to struggle with feelings of anxiety, sadness, reluctance to trust people, and feelings of regret over "why me" and memories, but reports increased self-awareness.

The client said "I can never erase the memories but I have learnt to live with them better"

## REFERENCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, April 10). *Adverse Childhood Experiences Resources | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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