



Religion and Spirituality and Transcendence

The Imperatives for RFT Based Responses to
Psychopathology and Psychotherapy

which Address - Workable Self Forgiveness.



My Practice Ground:

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Candidate PhD/Master of Clinical Psychology

General intake with emphasis on

- Chronic Pain
- Chronic Disease incl: HepC Hiv/Aids
- Liver Transplant Surgery Intake and Follow up
- Childhood Sexual Abuse, Domestic Violence
- PTSD
- Alcohol and Drug use - Therapy
- Ageing
- Relationships

Blame it on the Purple Book**

- The Purple Book** – has a lot to answer – and it stumps up.....
- Linking the function of language through relational framing and arbitrarily applicable derived relational responding to an effective unifying theory for psychology and spirituality.
- Highlighting the important role of Relational Frame Theory (RFT) in addressing the experiences related to of spirituality transcendence and what is termed God.

** Relational Frame Theory - a Post-Skinnerian Account of Human Language and Cognition edited by Hayes Barnes-Holmes and Roche

RFT and Transcendence

- RFT: provides a rationale for the utility of addressing the importance of spirituality and transcendence,
- highlights the need to develop exercises that evoke behavioural characteristics of spirituality and transcendence
- Why?

RFT and Transcendance

- Consider our limited resources
 - Common use of twelve step program
- Kelly Wilson, Troy Du Frene - *the wisdom to know the difference*
- What happens when someone cannot connect with a sense of God?
- Commonly – connect with Good , love , family etc
- Need to evoke the power of framing and perspective taking to extend and embed this

A Reminder of the 12 Step model

Step One

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Step Two

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

Step Three

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.”

the 12 Step model....

Step Four

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Step Five

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

Step Six

“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

the 12 Step model....

Step Seven

“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

Step Eight

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

Step Nine

“Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

the 12 Step model....

Step Ten

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

Step Eleven

“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”

Step Twelve

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs

Universality of Psychopathology – a clarion call for work on Self Forgiveness

- The purple book outlines the universality of psychopathology and the need for an effective psychotherapy.
- This identifies the need and universal implications for work which focuses specifically on self forgiveness in response to the pervasiveness of human psychopathology.
- Forgiveness and self forgiveness as therapeutic approaches have been either assumed as being part of self compassion, or
- as an area which is addressed by psychologists and counsellors from a religious context.

Values: a cause for ... and answer to... self blame

- Building on the work of this community of practitioners - notably in the area of Self Compassion, Self worth, Values.
- Self forgiveness is an additional pathway based on willingness and committed action extending approaches based on Self Compassion
- Primarily aimed at assisting those who are stuck in areas of intrapersonal conflict – leaning into - rather than avoiding these painful processes

Values – a cause and answer to self blame

- Self Forgiveness helps clients to identify and address:
 - Where they have not been able to uphold their values
 - To deal with areas where values based responses have been in conflict, or -
 - Where values based decisions have led to losses due to extraordinary and often unforeseeable circumstances.

Pseudo self forgiveness - Avoidance

- A key problem with self forgiveness is the assessment of its genuine nature
- Self forgiveness cannot be done in a way which is self excusing
- Self forgiveness must be focused on a values based acceptance of responsibility
([Fisher & Exline, 2006](#); [Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013 2014](#)).
- Taking values based action toward : repair, restoration and renewal

Ineffective responses to seeking forgiveness.....

- A shaming experience (we are broken) is perceived when we try to ineffectively respond to an aversive function which is an integral aspect of ourselves
- the RFT exercise : I must not be bad again ... I was bad then I am bad now....
- We are aware of these grave limitations and dichotomies within our responses.....
- No wonder we have sought to look to a god to forgive us
- RFT however allows all to access the experiential process of self forgiveness irrespective of belief or unbelief

Need for intrapersonal focussed Self - Forgiveness

- Most research to date has focused on Self forgiveness in the context of offense against the other
- What happens when one offends against the self? Consider the three verbal constructs of self :
 - Self as content
 - Self as process
 - Self as context

RFT base for self forgiveness....

- Kelly Wilson et al (2001) - RFT undermines “healthy Normality”
- suffering is part of the function of language
- arbitrarily applicable derived relational responding
- automatic and instant effects – constructive and destructive
- bidirectional transformation of function
- contact with both pleasant and unpleasant , workable and unworkable

Power of RFT

- Identifying, eliciting , building Values based decision making through frames of :
 - *Coordination , Opposition, , Distinction, Hierarchy , temporal relationship spatial relationship conditionality and causality*
 - *Deictic relations*, it is these frames built on I here Now that identify and build frames of reference from the perspective of the self as the viewer of events.
- This a key gate way to transcendent experiences
....

Power of RFT

We view all Stimulus from the perspective of :

I – YOU, HERE – THERE, NOW – THEN.

When meditatively experiencing I Here Now, in attitude of openness , interest and curiosity and suspending judgement a variety of experiences settle and I Here Now extends to:

all things all places all times
a transcendent and spiritual perspective

RFT – evokes experiences of transcendence and spirituality

- The process of suspending judgement, engaging in curiosity and perspective taking
- Evokes transcendent and spiritual experiences of :
 - The dropping of burdens
 - stillness
 - joyous relief,
 - being at peace,
 - renewal ,
 - starting afresh
- Such experiences while in themselves are rewarding , provide space and encouragement for further values based perspective taking and room for psychological flexibility and the increased capacity to take effective action.

Principles of Self forgiveness

- References the work of Russ Harris, Niklas Toerneke, Jonas Ramnerö Ramenero, Matthieu Villatte and Jennifer Villatte
 - Central role of values
 - Examining painful matters associated with decisions which may have been absent of values or of conflicted values...
 - acceptance and willingness of experiencing pain in the presence of values,
 - addressing shame, guilt, remorse and reparative action
 - within a framework of perspective taking present focused action and committed action to work towards rebuilding lives based on values.

therapeutic approach required for workable self forgiveness

- Application of RFT and derived therapies to develop:
 - Transcendent perspective taking and present moment experience;
 - Values based and compassionate response to shame guilt remorse and restoration;

Use Relational frames to

- build acceptance and willingness to open up pathways and getting unstuck from self blame based:
 - anxiety (worry) and depression (rumination);

therapeutic approach required for workable self forgiveness

- Relapse prevention is assisted by identifying stuck thinking and its secondary benefits that may have been “protecting” us.
- Providing opportunities for ongoing self compassion, self-respect leading to self acceptance and the conclusion –
- *now I can trust myself to take valued life action*

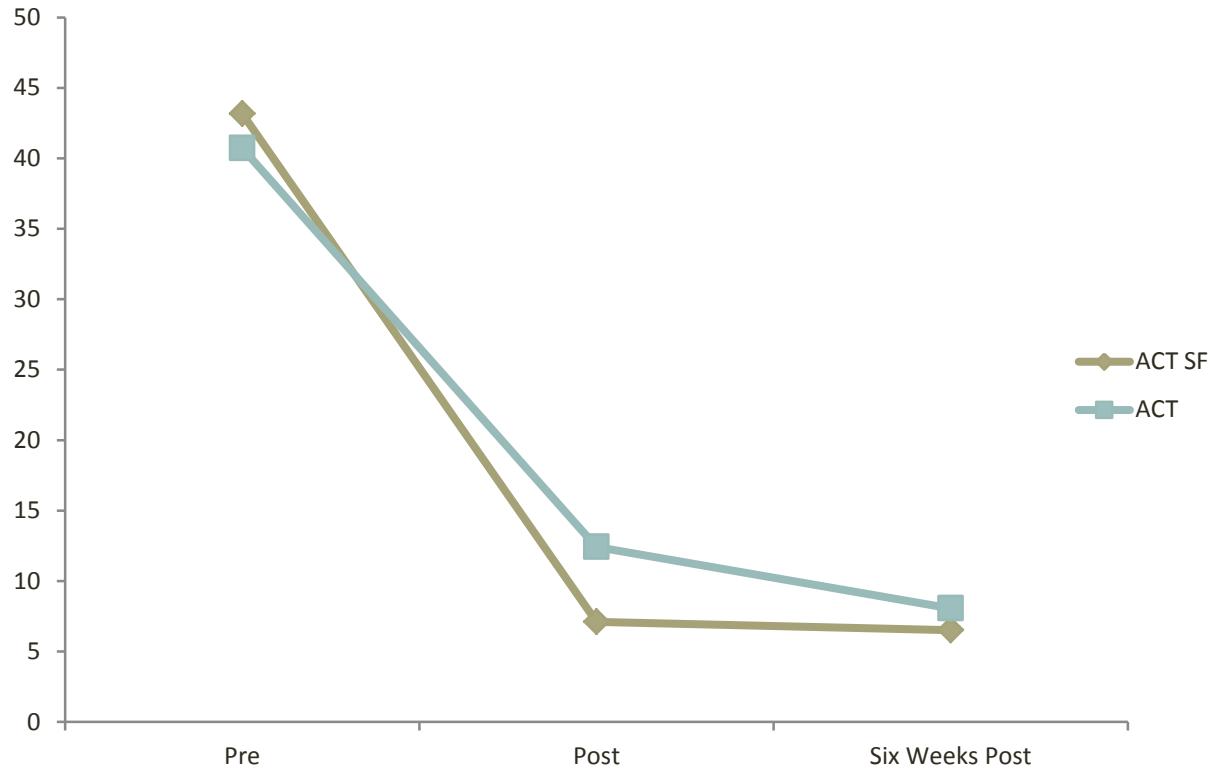
Principles based approach to self forgiveness

- The approach being developed in based on the inclusion of Seven Principles for self forgiveness :
 - **Identify our Burdens**
 - **Taking Perspective**
 - **Values and Pathways**
 - **Getting unstuck**
 - **Self Forgiveness**
 - **Values for Action**
 - **Take committed action based on self forgiveness**

Current tools extended.....

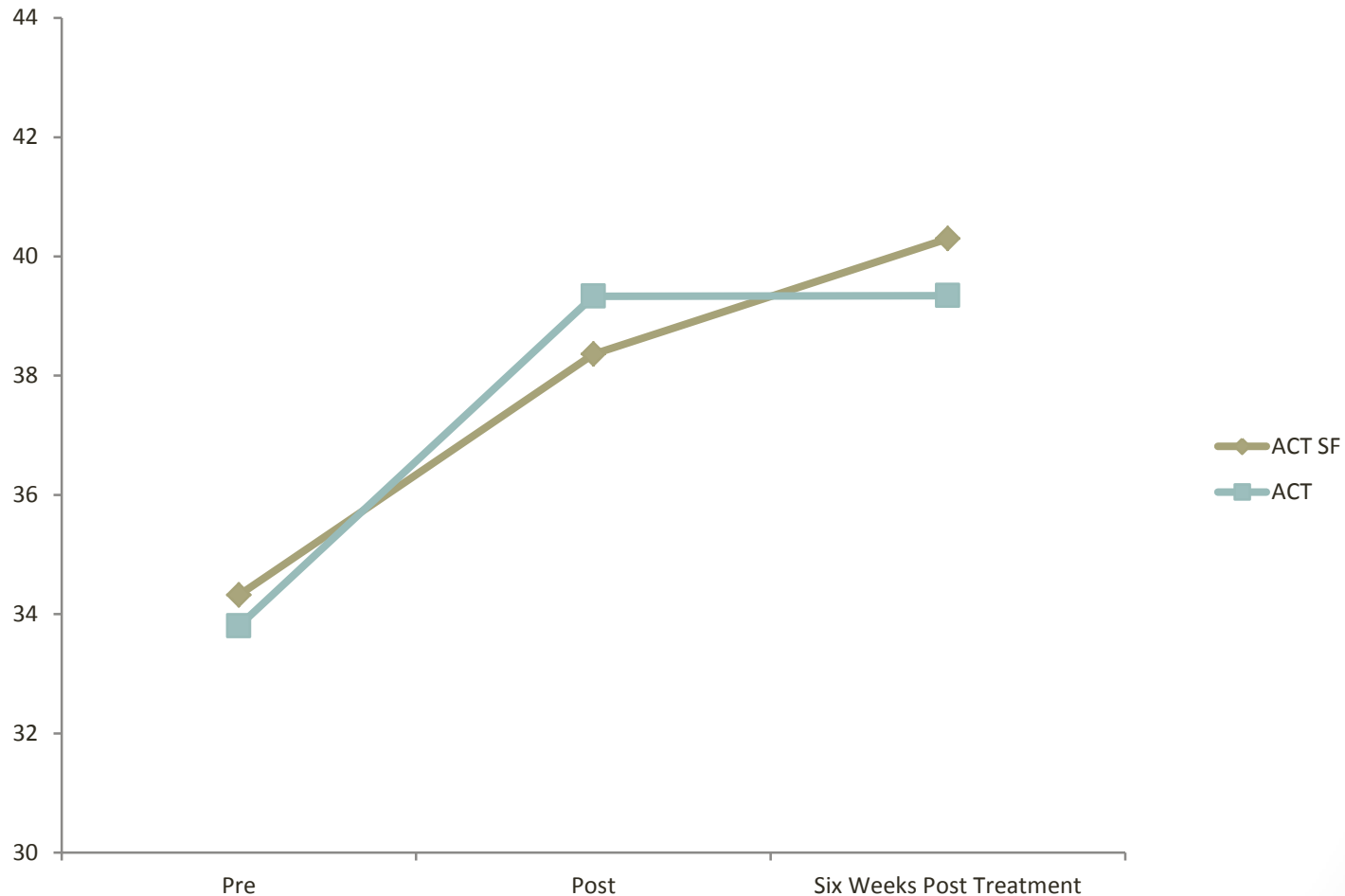
- Tools for self forgiveness are readily derived from existing ACT RFT approaches
 - Hexaflex – Acceptance/Willingness, Openness Expansion, Transcendence, Here and Now experience, Values and Committed Action
 - The Matrix – toward and away moves – Five sense versus in the mind
 - ABC
 - RFT

DASS 21 – Depression Anxiety Stress



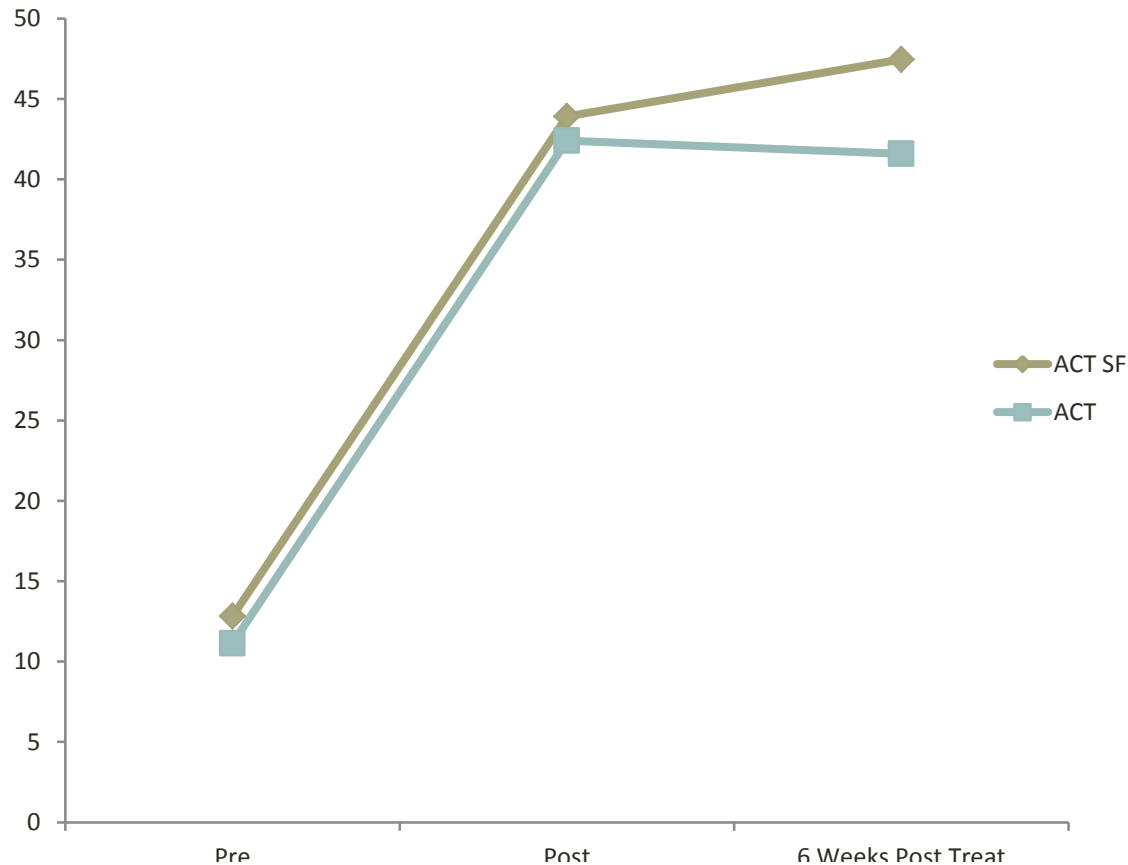
$N = 126$, ACT $n = 60$, ACT with Self Forgiveness $n = 66$,
 $F(1,28) p = 0.05$, Effect Size partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$, Power 0.51

Worthington Scale – Self forgiveness



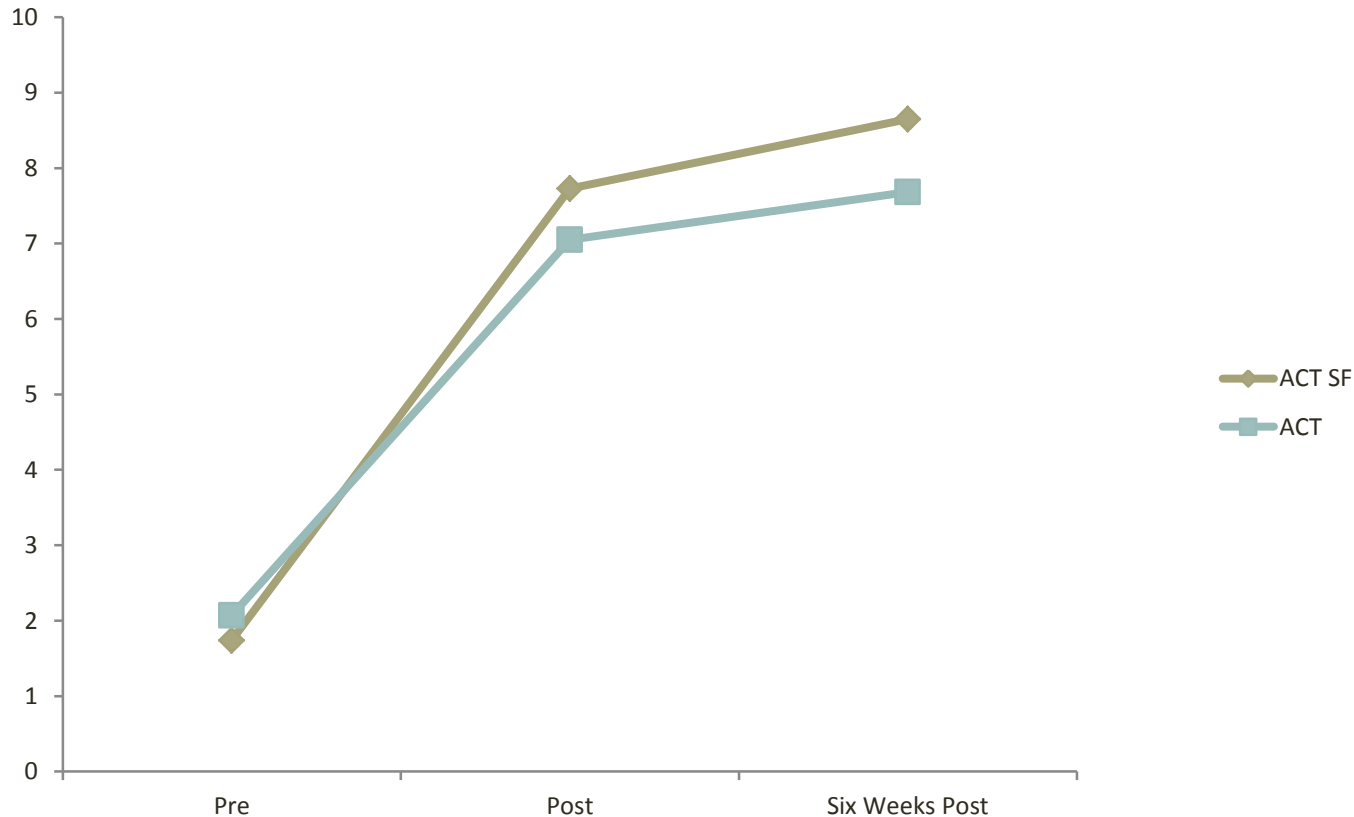
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 $F(1,28) p = 0.01$, Effect Size partial $\eta^2 = 0.8$, Power 0.90

Valuing – Smout, Davies and Burns



$N = 126$, ACT $n = 60$, ACT with Self Forgiveness $n = 66$,
 $F(1,28) p = 0.01$, Effect Size partial $\eta^2 = 0.13$, Power = .99

Trust - a measure of Self Forgiveness



$N = 126$, ACT $n = 60$, ACT with Self Forgiveness $n = 66$,
 $F(1,28) p = 0.00$, Effect Size partial $\eta^2 = 0.13$, Power 0.99

Anecdotal Evidence $n = 66$

- I am no longer caught by my past mistakes – (AoD)
- I am free from the prison of my childhood (CSA victim)
- I can make better decisions now (AoD)
- My family is now able to discuss with me how they were affected - it is now longer the ghost at the table (AoD)
- I no longer have to be perfect – I can be me (Chronic Disease)
- I know what my values are and don't live be those imposed on me (Chronic Disease)
- I am no longer defined by my disease – I am free to make choices based on my values (Chronic disease)
- My parent's mistakes are not mine - I am free to connect with my partner (Relationships)

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