

The ACT of Self Forgiveness

A Gateway to Psychological Flexibility?

A Case Study



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

<http://www.brendanwakes.com.au/bellarine%20peninsula.htm>

Grant Dewar M Psych (Health)

Health Psychologist

Candidate PhD/M Psych (Clin)

University of Adelaide



Introduction

- Possible framework
 - Informing ACT and Self forgiveness
- Opportunities for health – chronic disease
- Effective measures

Case Presentation

- A 46 year old female
- Experiencing chronic pain
- Self identified as a recovering alcoholic
- Attending as part of a court diversionary program- sentencing suspended
- Anxiety, Depression, SES stressors
- Triggers for alcohol use

Therapeutic needs

- Client wanted permanent strategies to maintain sobriety
- Constantly anxious about triggers – legal consequences
- Depressed over life course
- Fears for relationship with children
- Lack of life partner
- Social withdrawal
- Client had withdrawn from 12 Step program – overbearing sponsor

Familial and Social History Information

- Chaotic childhood and adolescence
- Removed from Australia -> Germany -> age 3
- Role confusion of parent/grandparent
- Rejection and isolation
- Self reported promiscuity and unsafe behaviours
- Youth Detention age 12-16 Germany
- Return to Australia age 18
- Marriage - make own family a 'fresh start'

Familial and Social History Information

- Chronic pain associated with first birth,
- Crushed by “failure” of her dream birth - it was going to make everything right...
- Marriage collapsed – social network encouraged drinking
- Second child not expected - unknown initially 13 wks. due to amenorrhoea associated with AUD
 - unwanted until birth– but then reawakens the dream
- Shame regret guilt

Medical and Psychiatric History

- Initial substance use then long term alcohol use
- Short periods of remission
- Spinal Disc damage due to Lumbar Puncture
- 2 Children,
- State funded rehab/detox, 12 step program,
- Returned to use- Driving offence B.A.L. 0.224 mg/dL
- Alcohol Dependence – Court Intervention

Employment History

- Has bookkeeping qualification
- Casual work
- Marginal jobs
- Contract cleaning
 - threat of closure redundancy

Course of Treatment and Assessment of Progress

- Motivation to Change
- CBT
- ACT
- Focus on Self Forgiveness

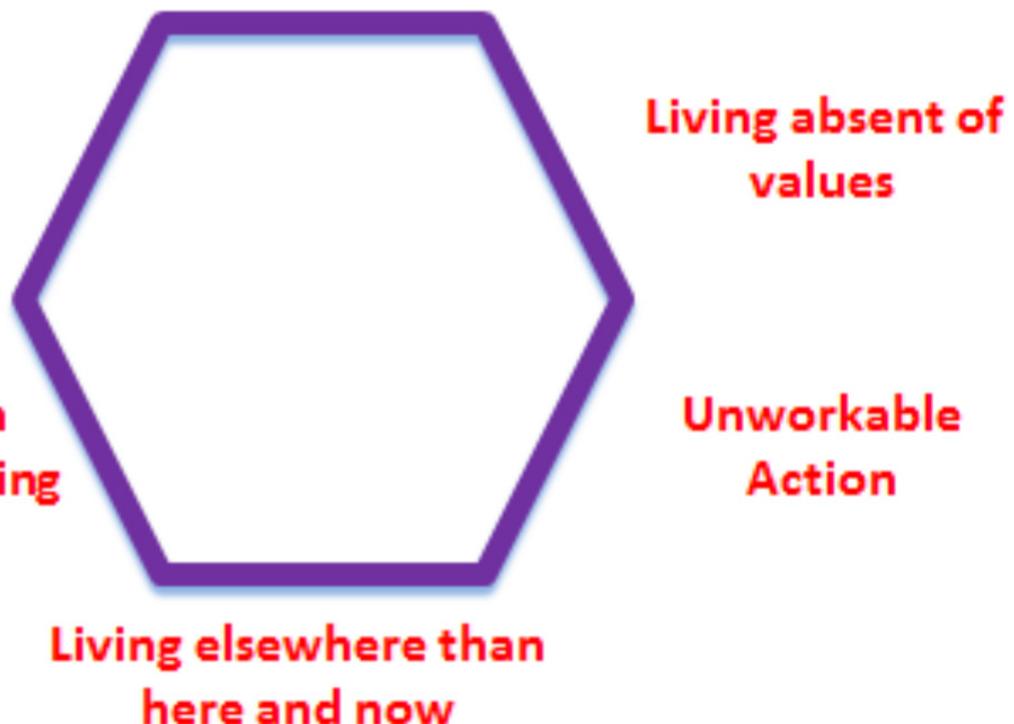
Assessment Clinical Interview

Self-Report Measures

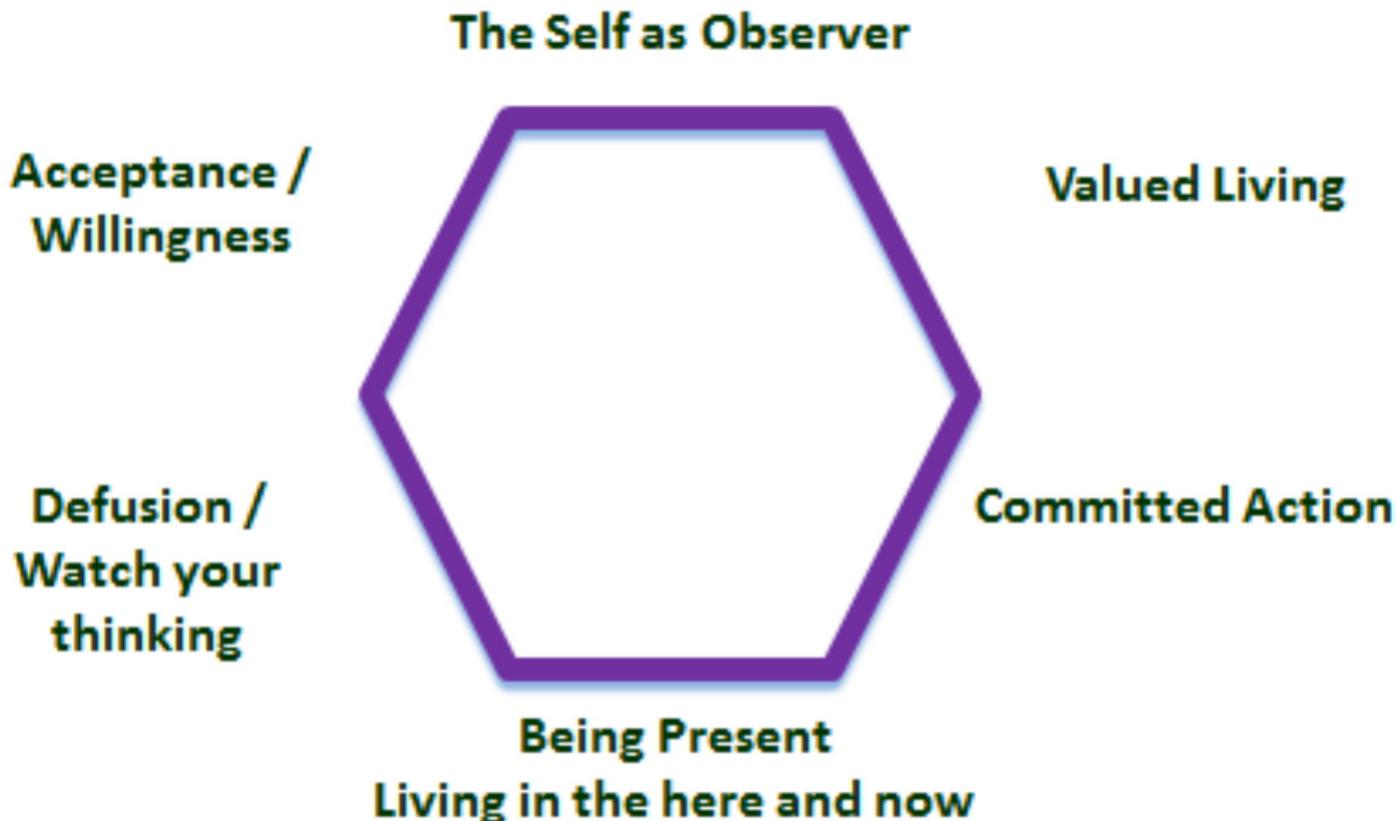
DASS21	(Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995)
Heartland Forgiveness Scale	(Thompson LY et al., 2005)
State Self Forgiveness Scale	(Wohl, DeShea & Wahkinney 2008)
Self Forgiveness Scale	(Wenzel & Woodyatt, et al., (2012)).
Self Forgiveness Self Report	(Dewar, Delfabbro, Venning & Strelan 2013)
AAQII	(Bond et al. 2011)
CFQ13	(Gillanders, et al. 2012)
MAAS	(Brown & Ryan, 2003)
Valuing questionnaire	(Smout & Davies 2009)

The basis of suffering

The Idealised Self



THE PRINCIPLES OF ACT



Developed from ACT in a Nutshell © Russ Harris 2008

www.actmindfully.com.au

russharris@actmindfully.com.au

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SELF FORGIVENESS

- Who am I to forgive myself?

The remembering vs. experiencing self
(Kahneman and Tversky)

The organising vs. the integrating/meaning making self
(McGilchrist)

Self as Story vs. Self as Context
(Hayes and Others)

SELF FORGIVENESS

- Shame
 - Self oriented
 - I Am Broken
- Guilt
 - Action oriented
 - What have I Broken?
- Remorse
 - Contrite regret – wanting to put wrongs right

SELF FORGIVENESS

- Compassionate Presence - Restoration
 - Acknowledge states which have not accorded with values
 - Acknowledge shortfalls in action not in accordance with values
- Reparation
 - Action that lives out values – focus on restoration
- Maintaining valued state

Fusion

- I must always be positive
- I must have a perfect household
- This will affect all I am and everything I do into the future
- I must live a life limited by chronic pain

Getting Unstuck

- Normalisation of actions in context
- Motivational enhancement
 - benefits and drawbacks of self medication
- Normalisation of anxiety depression and anger
- Normalisation of Self – I am OK

Avoidance

- I must
- Avoid thoughts about my past
- Bury my shame
- Avoid confrontation with my children because I have put them through so much already

Acceptance/willingness

- Radical self acceptance: Embrace of whole self: child, adolescent, adult
- Open, interested, curious, nonjudgmental examination of incidents which provoke shame and guilt
- Taking responsibility for all actions

Life as a story

- Dysfunctional parents
- Abandoned child
- Search for intimacy - Wild Child - adolescence
- Prince Charming
- The perfect marriage birth, parenthood and household
- Loss of the love of my life
- Neglectful parent

Self as Observer

- Body Scan
 - Management of anxiety and triggers
- Observation of story
 - Sitting with the abandoned child – embracing in safety
 - Sitting with the person who is drunk and alone
- Ownership of Consequences
 - Decisions and actions involving Children

Being elsewhere

- My life has always been crap and will always be crap
- I will have the worst possible outcome at court
- I fear what will happen to my children and my relationship with my children

Being Here and Now

- Being in the moment
- Dropping coulds shoulds woulds and perfect/positive idealisation
- Breathing – noticing thoughts with return to present moment
- Breathing into pain

Absence of Values

- Perfection and positivity is the aim of the game
- I must have a perfect house
- I must live up to other's standards
- I must not be like my mother

Values

- Identifying what others expect of me vs. Owning my own stuff
- Getting in touch with: what I value

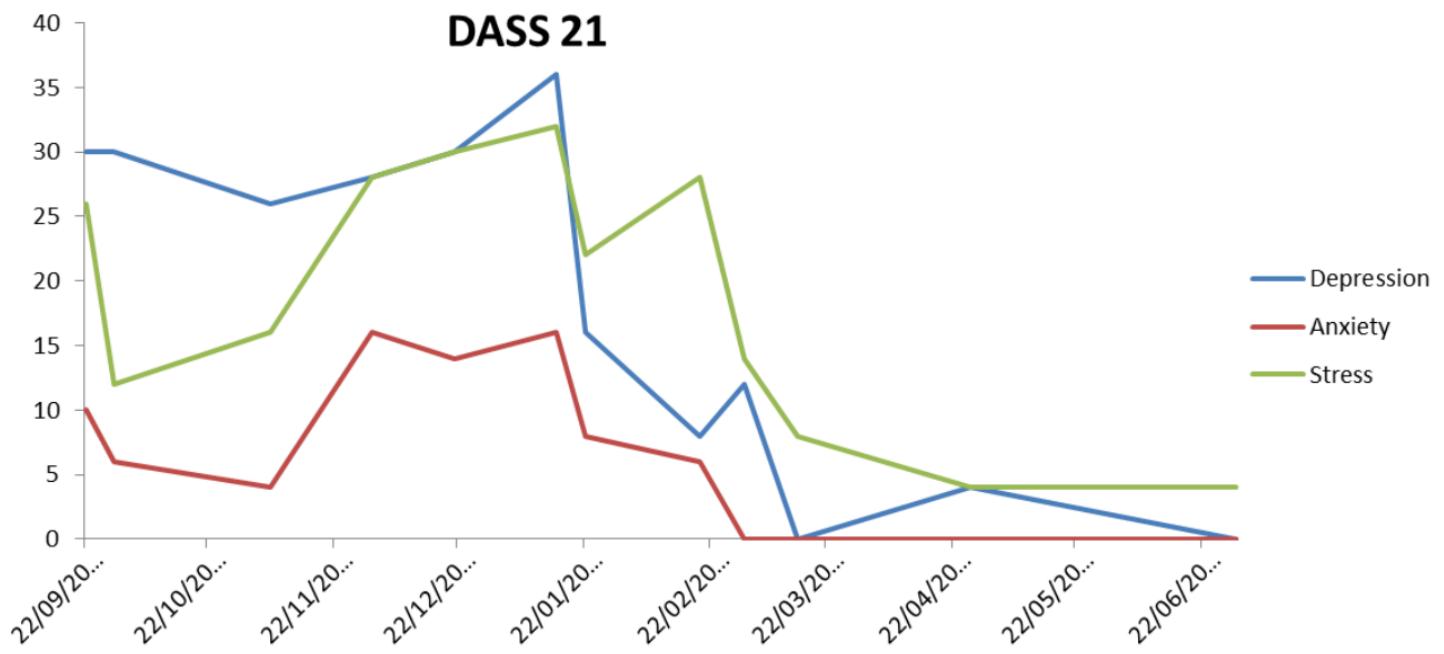
Unworkable Action

- Self medication with alcohol
- Arguments
- Inability to set appropriate boundaries and standards

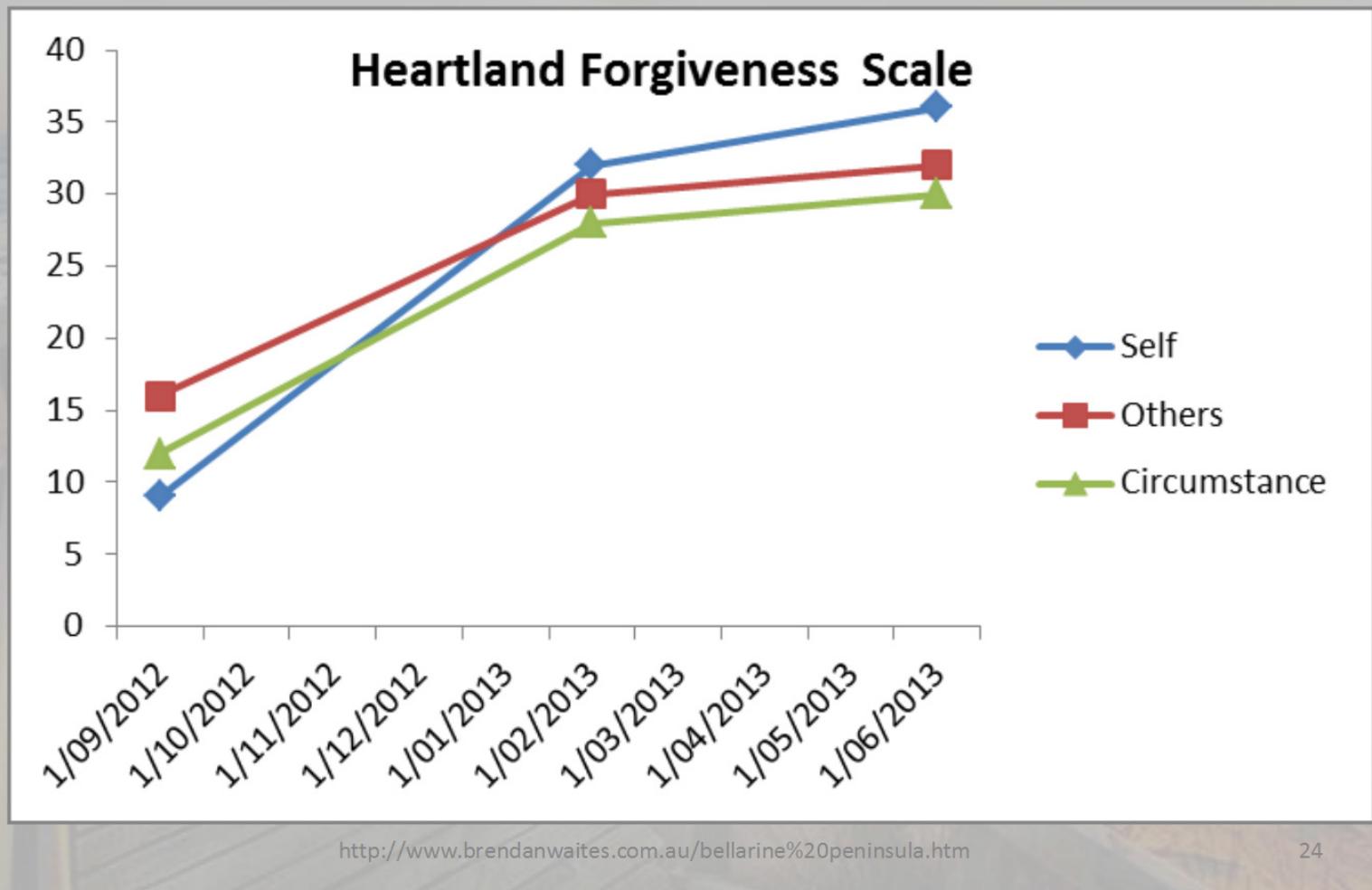
Committed Action

- By owning who I am and what I have done I can face taking action on:
 - Inappropriate behaviour in adolescent children and setting boundaries
 - Seeking new work
 - Dealing with ongoing and present major issues: police matters, grief, loss of income, chronic pain

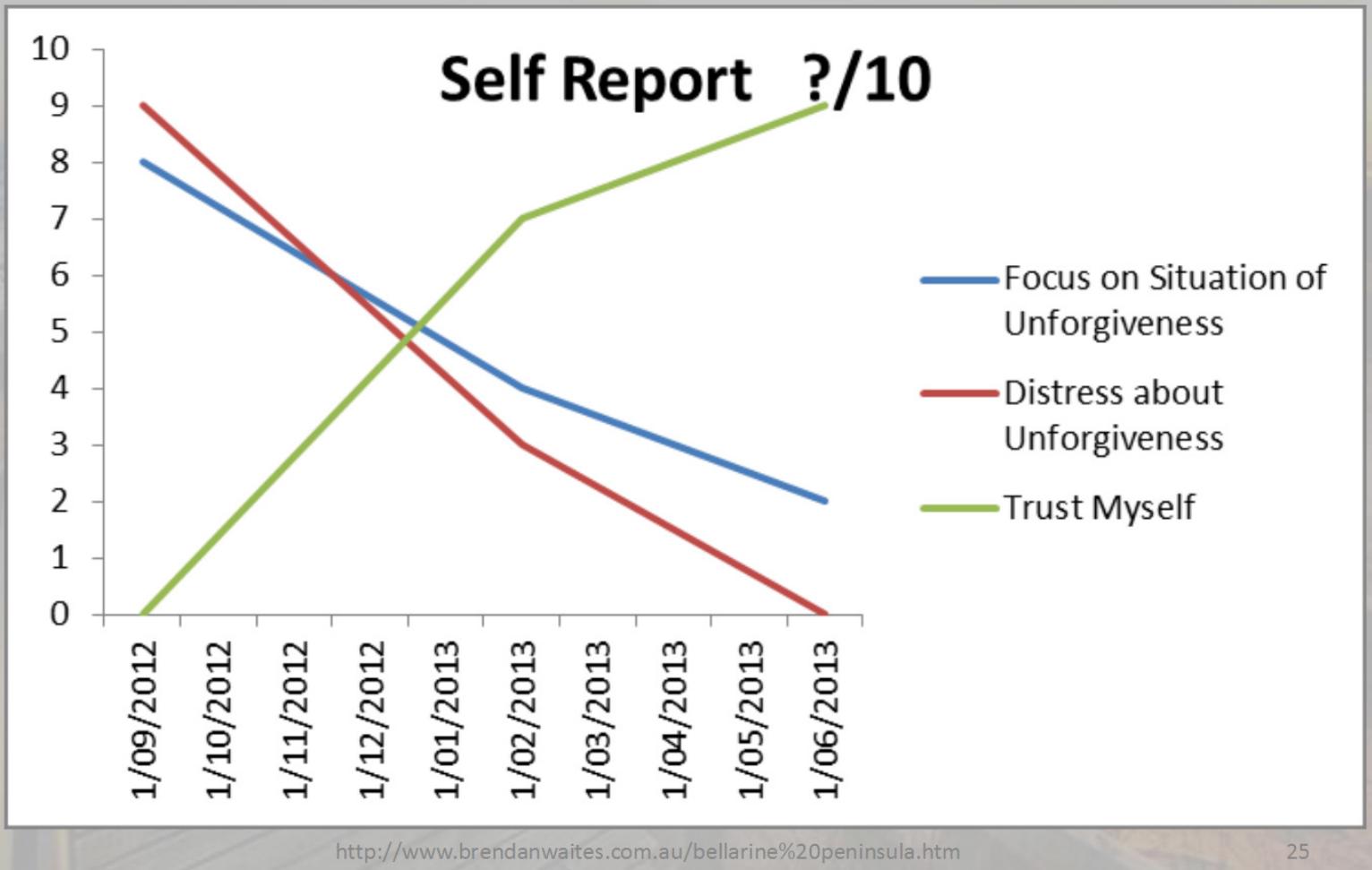
Measures



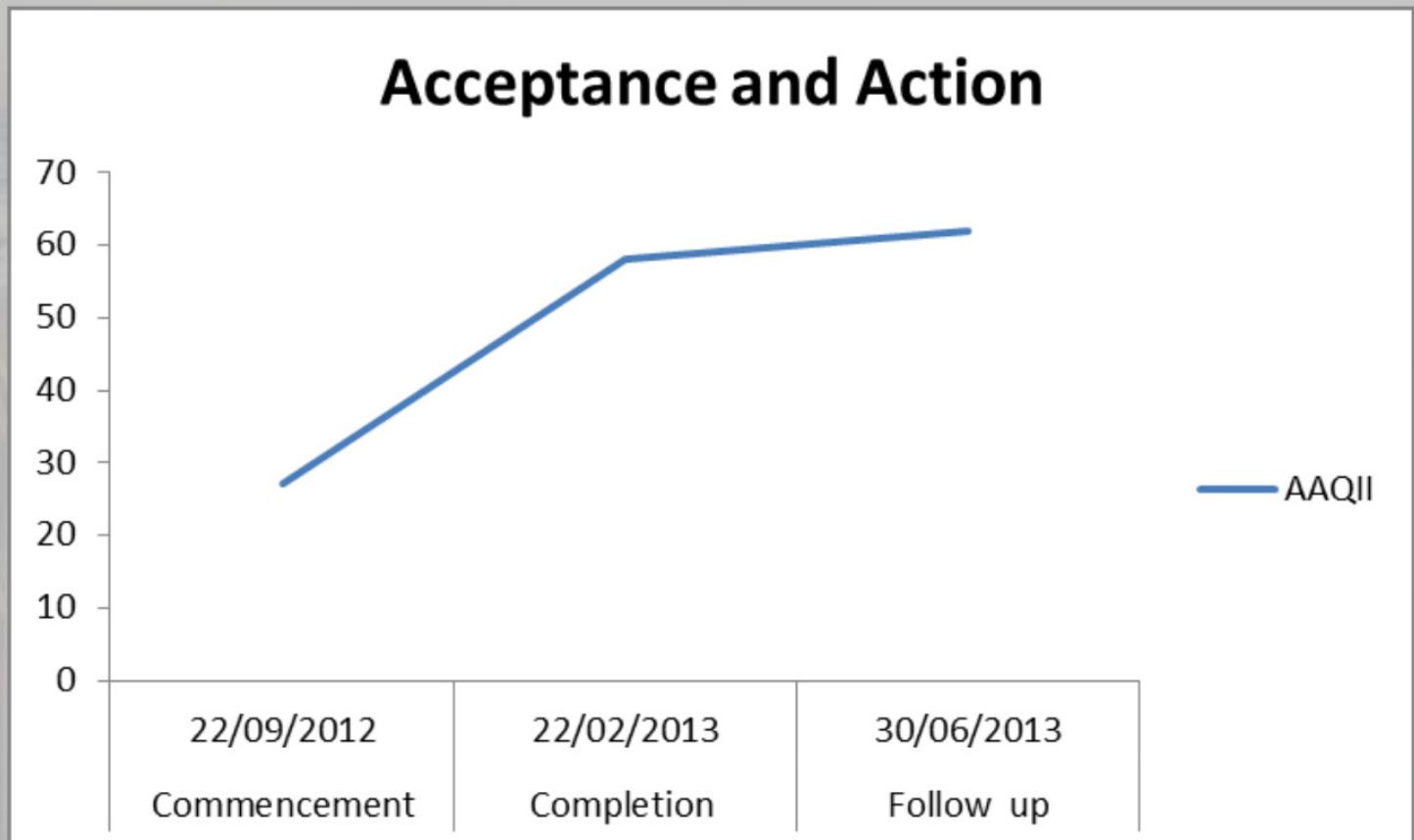
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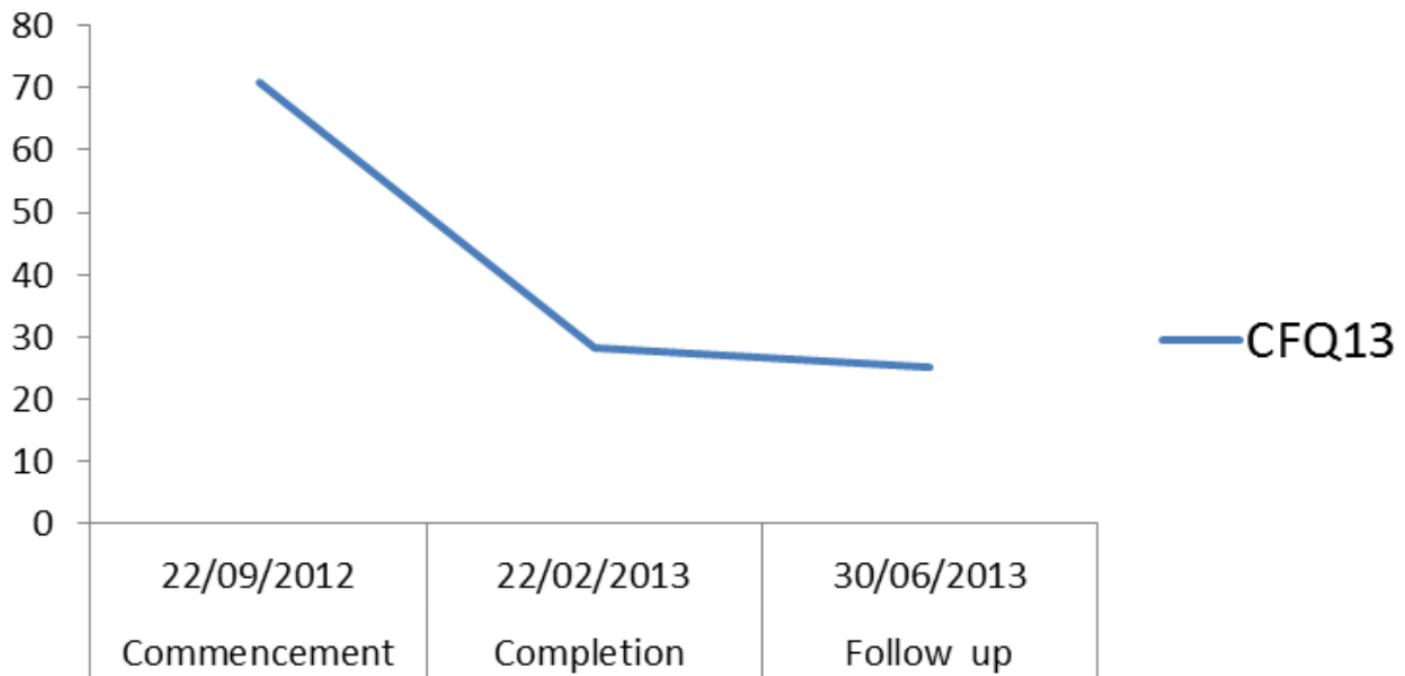


Measures



Measures

Cognitive Fusion



Managed Care Considerations

- Need for interaction with court appointed case workers and presentation to magistrate
- GP reporting
- Medicare funding - bulk billed with no co-payment

Follow-Up

- **Presentation at court**
 - Taking ownership of actions
 - Explaining application of therapy
 - Outline of life plans based on values
- **Outcome**
 - Sentenced to time served in diversion program
 - Minimum fine payable by instalment
 - Restoration of licence with breath interlock

Treatment Implications of the Case

- ACT with a focus on self forgiveness provided the means to stop triggers/taking away the hot buttons
 - Now I trust myself in good times and bad
 - I fully accept who I am
 - I can face the world without having to hide
 - I can take action
 - I can adjust to and cope with pain and setbacks
 - Strength in vulnerability (Brown)
- Still facing major challenges but no longer need the bottle



QUESTIONS?

Brief Practice?

THANK YOU!

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