Mind Full or Mindful?
Flexible Living in a Stressed Out World

ASHLEY GREENWALD, PH.D., BCBA-D, LBA
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

JODIE SORACCO, PH.D., BCBA, LBA
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Circle: Introduce Yourself

1. Name, field of study, where you’re from

2. Name one thing that’s going on inside you right now: physical sensation, feeling, thought, image, memory

Disclaimer

- Today’s workshop is experiential in nature
- It may stir up some thoughts and emotions
- You are invited to participate and share during activities, but you never have to
- Out of respect for everyone in the room, please agree to confidentiality
Small Circles: Identify Group Norms

Identify some things that are important for you with regard to how the group behaves today:
• Participation
• Confidentiality
• Patience
• Listening
• Exiting

Special Thanks

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Psychological Flexibility
The ability to be in the present moment with full awareness and openness to experience and to take action guided by values.

Your body is present. Is your mind?
Past       Present       Future

Dave Rice
Mindfulness

Paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.

*Why is a dog more mindful than a person?*

Language - The Good

Language is useful:
- Communicate
- Predict and plan
- Solve complex problems
- Develop rules to regulate behavior
- Learn from people and cultures that no longer exist
- Remember cool stuff

Sweet Moment For Two
Language - The Bad
Language can create some challenges:
Create an idealized future
Form negative opinions about ourselves and others
Construct hateful and prejudice beliefs
Recall or relive traumatic events
Develop rules for acting that are harmful and ineffective
Language can make it difficult to maintain contact with the present moment

Difficult Thoughts
We are all faced with difficult thoughts and feelings

What are some that might show up for you?

Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE</th>
<th>WHAT IT FEELS LIKE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Stress Image 1" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Stress Image 2" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY: Draw It

“Mindfulness for Two” Activity

Person #1: Express the answers to the questions above (30 seconds)
  ◦ Don’t explain them, just express them

Person #2: Appreciate (30 seconds)
  ◦ Let go of nodding, smiling, hand patting, agreeing
  ◦ Don’t try understand, just listen nonjudgmentally

When I tell you to, we will switch roles
“Eyes On” appreciation

ACTIVITY: List It

Let’s make a list of everything we’ve done to feel better
How workable are these strategies?
  ◦ Short-term?
  ◦ Long-term?
  ◦ In the service of the life you want/your values?
Workability
(Drill this term into your mind)

"Is what you’re doing working to make your life rich, full, and meaningful?"

In other words, we want to know if a thought helps you move toward a richer, fuller, and more meaningful life.

To determine this, ask questions like these:

- If you let this thought guide your behavior, will that help you create a richer, fuller, and more meaningful life?
- If you hold on to this thought tightly, does it help you to be the person you want to be and do the things you want to do?

Acceptance and Commitment Training

RANDOM TRANSITION SLIDE
(…and things that Ashley and Jodie really value)
ACT Research

ACT has been successfully used to treat:

- anxiety and stress (Bond & Bunce, 2000; Teasby & Woods, 2007; Zettle, 2003),
- pain (Gifford, Wilson, & Nelson, 2000),
- substance use (Gifford, Kohlenberg, Hayes, Antonuccio, Pasewski, Rasmussen-Hall, &Phoe, 2005; Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Bosset, Pasewski, Betten, Bird, & Gregg, 2006),
- depression (Zettle & Hayes, 1986; Zettle & Reine, 1995),
- burn out (Hayes, Bosset, Rogers, Pasewski, Kohlenberg, Fischer, Masuda, Pistorello, Rye, Berry, & Niccolt, 2006).

The Ubiquity of Human Suffering

Society tells us a good life is a pain-free life

The perfect state of being is happiness

You can control unhappy feelings, and if you don’t, then you haven’t tried hard enough, taken the right medication, exercised enough, made enough money, etc., etc., etc., etc., etc.

Alternative Assumption: Destructive Normality

Normal language & cognitive processes often are destructive and can amplify or exacerbate normal processes into pathological suffering.

According to Relational Frame Theory (RFT):

Normal Language is the issue
Metaphors let the mind use its ability to take what it knows from one thing and apply it to another thing, which cuts down on learning and processing time.

Metaphors are symbols, like words and thoughts. Because we are working with relating to words and thoughts differently, metaphors are a natural compliment.

Messages are inherently softer, more subtle, and more individualistic (also fun and memorable!) than strict rules of performance.

Metaphors make abstract concepts concrete by providing a rich verbal context that evokes thoughts, feelings, and behaviors similar to those evoked by the actual situation.
ACT Model of Flexibility: Hexaflex

- Acceptance
- Contact with the Present Moment
- Psychological Flexibility
- Committed Action
- Self as Context
- Values
- Cognitive Defusion

Experiential Avoidance vs Acceptance
Experiential Avoidance

The mind is a problem solving device
- If there is a problem we want to fix it

**Problem = Something Unwanted**

**Solution = Avoid or Get Rid of It**

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Experiential Avoidance

Using "problem-solving mind" on internal world CAN MAKE THINGS WORSE

Trying to get rid of, suppress, avoid, or escape from unwanted “private experiences.”

**Problem:** I feel terrible

**Solution:** This makes me feel better

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Metaphor:

**Hungry Tiger**

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Acceptance

**WHAT IT IS NOT** | **WHAT IT IS**
---|---
Tolerating | An act
Putting up with | A behavior
Resignation | A move
Defeat | Openness, without defense
A “less than” alternative | Dropping judgment
Passive | Making room for painful feelings, sensations, or emotions

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Willingness

Being willing to experience whatever shows up (privately) as you take steps forward

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**Metaphor:**

**Ball in a pool**

**When would you use this?**
When escape and avoidance of experiences interfere with important actions, when there is a focus on getting rid of pain and unpleasantness.

**What’s the point?**
Helps in learning from pain and moving on.

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Processing Time
What is your personal takeaway from experiential avoidance vs. acceptance?

Fusion Vs Diffusion

Fusion
Cognitive fusion is when people are guided by the literal content of their thoughts rather than by their direct experience with the world

I used to think that the brain was the most wonderful organ in my body. Then I realized who was telling me this. —Emo Philips
Defusion

- Letting thoughts come and go rather than holding onto them
- Simply noticing thoughts and acting in the service of what matters to us
- Allowing thoughts to have less influence over our behavior
- De-literalizing language

Defusion is not about true or false

But rather . . .
- workable or unworkable
- in the service of dealing with things effectively, doing what you care about, having a rich, full, and meaningful life
Defusion
Looking AT thoughts rather than FROM thoughts

Metaphor:
Milk, Milk, Milk

WHEN WOULD YOU USE THIS?
When private events are functioning as barriers; the focus is on "my thoughts/feelings are a problem to be solved"

WHY’S IT USDA?
Focus on learning what works

Processing Time
What did you notice about that last activity in relation to what you learned about fusion and de-fusion?
Inflexible Attention vs Present Moment

Rumination/Fixation (Past or Future)

I used to have so much more, autonomy...

We have to be a 5 star school in 3 years!

Past/Future Attention Exercise

Metaphor: Walk the hallway

Notice each time your attention is repeatedly drawn to certain thoughts, memories or feelings.
Mindfulness

“Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally”
Kabat-Zinn, 1994

Living Flexibly in the Here and Now

Past is gone forever and the future is not here yet
In this perspective, time is not a thing—just a measure of change
“There is only now”

Human experiences consist of stories or memories of the past and construction of the future. The memories, stories, and constructions are PRESENT—the past and future can never be.

Present Moment Awareness

Metaphor: Senses

When would you use this?
When scattered, unaware, or moving inflexibly into the past or future

What’s the point?
Focusing on useful noticing
Processing Time
Where has your attention been today? Have you noticed when it wandered?

BREAK TIME

Self-as-Content vs Self-as-Context
Self-as-Content (a.k.a. Conceptualized Self)

The conceptualized self is the verbal content that we use to define and describe ourselves. Conceptualized Self can lead to “self as description.”

The Observing Self

A stable and continuous part of you that observes everything you experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AM</th>
<th>PM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sleepy</td>
<td>Why did I come to this school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache from last night</td>
<td>Headache’s back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much coffee!</td>
<td>antsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 AM</td>
<td>10 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe I have some ibuprofen in my bag</td>
<td>OMG! I forgot to call that parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only 16 more pages</td>
<td>It will probably be fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caffeine, please!</td>
<td>Anxious anticipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I good enough?</td>
<td>I hate grading!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 PM

Is that kid ever absent?

Still sleepy

Head still hurts, but better

4 PM

More caffeine!

May be I should have studied business

Am I still depressed?

My coffee is cold!
The Observing Self

- A stable and continuous part of you that observes everything you experience.

Forgot the assignments to grade!

Does my significant other feel this way?

thirsty

tired

Maybe I need something to calm me down

Head feels fine

Feeling content

Getting sleepy...

The flavor of spaghetti with meatballs

I want to call in sick!

That was a pretty good day

ZZZZZZ

Self-as-Content

How would you describe yourself?
- I am a person who...
- I am a person who does not...
- My least favorite part about myself is...
- I have been wronged because other people have...

Self-as-Context

Self-awareness
- the ongoing process of noticing experience and the present moment
The Observing Self

“The me who’s watching me”
Here’s me and here’s my thoughts and feelings
A stance which views the self as the “container” of all internal experiences
A you that’s “big enough” to hold whatever you experience
A self which is different from those experiences

Activity:
Brief Observing

Self-as-Context

Processing Time

The observing self is not the real self but merely a perspective one can take on thoughts and feelings that provides freedom to choose. Discuss.
Disruption of Values vs Recognition of Values

Some decide what they “should” value instead of exploring what they actually do value. Others may struggle with identifying values because they’ve never before been asked.

Avoidance and fusion tend to become so important and focused on that they take over the energy required to attend to the guiding values that can give a person’s behaviors and life meaning.

Disruption of Values

• What’s the point?
• Nothing matters.
• I don’t know where I’m going.
• I don’t know what to do.
• What should I do with my life?
• Everything seems meaningless... I feel disillusioned.
• Ever since (my divorce, my illness, I started using drugs, etc.), my life has been going nowhere.
Values in ACT are Freely Chosen

The way we want to interact with the world, other people, and ourselves
What we want to stand for in life
How we want to behave
What sort of person we want to be

Not about what you should do, must do, or have to do. But rather what you choose for yourself.

Disruption of Values Exercise

Metaphor: Flip the Coin (Card)

When would you use this?
Looking for meaning and self-direction

What’s the point?
Focus on chosen qualities of action; greater meaning and purpose by choice

Processing Time

Share out with your partner one of two things that you value and one or two things that might disrupt those values.
Inaction vs Committed Action

Fork in the road...where will it take you?

Barriers in the form of practical problems that you will face;
Experiences you have been trying to avoid or thoughts you have been fused with;
If you come to a fork in the road, commitment occurs in the very moment a person takes a step in one of two directions.

Committed Action

Committed action is a step-by-step process of acting to create a whole life, a life of integrity, true to one's deepest wishes and longings.
Commitment involves both persistence and change - whichever is called for in living one's values.
Committed action is inherently responsible - based on the view that there is always an ability to respond in any situation.
Committed Action

• Specific and measurable in some way
• Practical and within your abilities
• Encourage “public” commitment
• Linked to values and on target
• “Pivot from avoidance and redirect the yearning to be competent” (Hayes, 2019)

ACTIVITY: Eye Contact

WHEN WOULD YOU USE THIS?
Perfectionism and avoidance of failure; yearning for competence; procrastination; overwhelm

WHAT’S THE POINT?
Focus on building habits of values based action

Processing Time

When we are stressed, anxious, or burned out... can you be that person you want to be?
Can this be done effectively if we don’t also empathize with our experience and recognize our needs?
How will this apply to you?
ACT MATRIX: A CLINICAL TOOL

1. Who or what matters to me?

2. What shows up inside of me that can get in the way?

3. What could you be seen doing to move away from or under the control of that bottom left stuff?

4. What could you be seen doing to move toward who or what is important to you?

Quadrant 1: Who or what matters to me?

Examples: Family, Relationships, Being a Good Mother, Honesty, Trust, Health
Quadrant 2: What shows up inside of me that can get in the way?

1. Who or what matters to me?
2. What shows up inside of me that can get in the way?
3. What could you be seen doing to move away from or under the control of that bottom left stuff?
4. What could you be seen doing to move toward who or what is important to you?

Outer Experience

Examples: "Not good enough"; "No time"; "Not smart enough"; fear of failure

Inner Experience

Examples: avoid certain people, alcohol consumption, bury yourself in work tasks

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Quadrant 3: What could you be seen doing to move away from or under the control of that bottom left stuff?

1. Who or what matters to me?
2. What shows up inside of me that can get in the way?
3. What could you be seen doing to move away from or under the control of that bottom left stuff?
4. What could you be seen doing to move toward who or what is important to you?

Outer Experience

Examples: spending time with children; healthy exercise; trying something new

Inner Experience

Examples: avoid certain people, alcohol consumption, bury yourself in work tasks

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Quadrant 4: What could you be seen doing to move toward who or what is important to you?

1. Who or what matters to me?
2. What shows up inside of me that can get in the way?
3. What could you be seen doing to move away from or under the control of that bottom left stuff?
4. What could you be seen doing to move toward who or what is important to you?

Outer Experience

Examples: spending time with children; healthy exercise; trying something new

Inner Experience

Examples: avoid certain people, alcohol consumption, bury yourself in work tasks

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Addressing the “Stuck Loop”

1. Who or what matters to me?
2. What shows up inside of me that can get in the way?
3. What could you be seen doing to move away from or under the control of that bottom left stuff?
4. What could you be seen doing to move toward who or what is important to you?

Wrap up

Six Pivots from Pain to Purpose (Hayes, 2019)

1. See our thoughts with enough distance so we choose what we do next regardless of our mind’s chatter
2. Notice the story we have constructed about ourselves and gain perspective of who we are
3. Allow ourselves to feel even when thoughts are painful or create a sense of vulnerability
4. Direct attention in an intentional way rather than by mere habit; Noticing what is present here and now inside and outside of us
5. Choose qualities of being and doing that we want to evolve toward
6. Create habits that support those choices
**ACT in PBS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Family/Team Members</th>
<th>Schools/Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help people recognize and engage in adaptive behaviors.</td>
<td>Empower caregivers to provide care even in the fear of challenging moments.</td>
<td>Team building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-centered planning.</td>
<td>Diffuse from maladaptive stories they have created about their loved one.</td>
<td>Professional stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get out of maladaptive behavior patterns.</td>
<td>Accept their loved one for who they are.</td>
<td>Improving group functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective taking &amp; noticing toward/away.</td>
<td>Overcome personal stress.</td>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Help teams be more effective and values driven</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Interventions across tiers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Circle: Pivots and Committed Actions**

1. A meaningful takeaway from today's workshop.
2. Name one committed action.

**Reflection**

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Thank You

Ashley Greenwald, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA
agreenwald@unr.edu

Jodie Soracco, Ph.D., BCBA, LBA
soraccoja@vcu.edu

Resources


