

ESALEN INSTITUTE CONTINUING EDUCATION
MFT/LCSW/LPCC/LEP & RN

Leader Names: John Forsyth & Jamie Forsyth

Workshop Title: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Cultivating Psychological Wellness

Workshop Description:

Acceptance and mindfulness-based practices are rapidly making their way into mental health care, medicine, and society – both to alleviate human suffering and nurture psychological health and wellness. This body of work offers a fresh perspective on psychological suffering, and powerful clinical strategies that support meaningful life changes. In this workshop for mental health professionals, participants will learn about one approach and set of evidence-based practices called Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). ACT balances mindfulness and acceptance processes with commitment and behavior change in the service of living a more vital life.

Through lectures, live and video demonstrations, and practical experiential exercises, the group will be taught new ways to help their clients grow and live meaningfully without first having to defeat or eliminate sources of emotional and psychological pain. This work can be challenging for both therapists and clients because it calls on each to stand in difficult places and open up to that difficulty, both personally and professionally. Therapists are encouraged to engage with the material at a personal level, as it applies to their own lives, and also in the context of their mental health work. Mental health professionals, including graduate students and post-doctoral fellows, are invited to attend. Familiarity with ACT is not required.

Recommended reading: Forsyth and Eifert, *The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety: A Guide to Breaking Free from Anxiety, Phobias, and Worry Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*, 2nd Edition; Harris, *ACT Made Simple*.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Over the course of three days, participants in this workshop will:

1. Define the three pillars of ACT that guides its practice;
2. Define each of the six ACT processes within the ACT model of human suffering;
3. Define each of the six ACT intervention processes (i.e., the hexaflex model);
4. Link each of the six elements of the ACT model of human suffering with six central treatment targets of ACT in practice;
5. Describe the ACT therapeutic stance;
6. Explain a functional contextual approach to ACT case conceptualization;

7. Describe and conceptualize common mental health concerns (e.g., anxiety, depression) within an ACT framework;
8. Define creative hopelessness and exercises used to undermine control and struggle with psychological and emotional content within an ACT intervention context;
9. Identify exemplars of excessive struggle and avoidance and describe mindful and compassionate alternative behaviors;
10. Define and identify "fusion" and "experiential avoidance" and their role in various forms of human suffering;
11. Rehearse essential ACT intervention skills to cultivate psychological flexibility;
12. Deliver ACT values clarification exercises in dyads and small groups;
13. Apply ACT experiential exercises and metaphors in dyads and small groups;
14. Apply and integrate mindfulness and acceptance processes with commitment and behavior change processes in dyads.
15. Describe and conduct exposure-based strategies in an ACT consistent fashion;
16. Discriminate ACT consistent and ACT inconsistent strategies in clinical practice; and
17. Describe strategies to foster the ongoing development of ACT consistent clinical competencies.

COURSE CONTENT CITATIONS

Link to ACT RCTs (over 100 peer reviewed published trials):

https://contextualscience.org/ACT_Randomized_Controlled_Trials

1. A-Tjak, J. G., Davis, M. L., Morina, N., Powers, M. B., Smits, J. A., & Emmelkamp P. M., (2015) A meta-analysis of the efficacy of acceptance and commitment therapy for clinically relevant mental and physical health problems. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 84(30), 30-36.
2. Ruiz, F. J. (2010). A review of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) empirical evidence: Correlational, experimental psychopathology, component and outcome studies. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, 10, 125-162.

3. Eilenberg, T., Fink, P., Jensen, J. S., Rief, W., & Frostholm, L. (2016). Acceptance and commitment group therapy (ACT-G) for health anxiety: A randomized controlled trial. *Psychological Medicine*, 46, 103-115.
4. Kocovski, N.L., Fleming, J.E., Hawley, L.L., Huta, V. & Antony, M.M. (2013). Mindfulness and Acceptance-Based Group Therapy versus traditional Cognitive Behavioral Group Therapy for Social Anxiety Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 51(12), 889-898.
5. Hooper, N., & Larsson, A. (2015) *The research Journey of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
6. Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K., & Wilson, K. G. (2011). *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Second Edition: The Process and Practice of Mindful Change*. New York: Guilford.

Workshop Outline – 26 hours of learning

DAY 1 – Sunday (8:30 – 10pm)

ACT Model and Case Conceptualization / 1.5 hours

- Centering Exercise
- Why It's Hard Being Human
- Self-Assessment Exercise: Barriers to Being Known
- Pervasiveness of Human Suffering
- The Light and Dark Side of Language & Cognition
- ACT Case Conceptualization
- ACT Model of Human Suffering
- ACT Model of Psychological Health
- Self-Assessment Exercise: Eyes On
- ACT in a Nutshell Role Play Demonstration
- Pulling it All Together

DAY 2 – Monday (9:30am – 12:45pm)

Creative Hopelessness: Weakening the Struggle & Control Agenda / 3 hours

- Centering Exercise
- Rationale and Role of Creative Hopeless Work in ACT
- Exploring Workability
- Establishing Creative Hopelessness
- Exercise and Role Play: Tug of War with Anxiety Monster
- Exercise: Metaphors to Weaken Illusion of Control
- Exercise and Role Play: Chinese Finger Trap
- Exercise: Quick Sand and Swamp Metaphors
- Applying Creative Hopelessness Exercises in Dyads
- Pulling it All Together

- **Monday (4-6:30pm)**

Doing Effective Values Work in ACT / 2.5 Hours

- Centering Exercise
- The Nature of Values in ACT
- Distinguishing Values From Goals
- Connecting with Values
- Exercises: Funeral Meditation & Tombstone Exercise
- Values Clarification and Assessment
- Life Compass Cards
- The Values Directions Worksheet
- Pulling it All Together

DAY 3 – Tuesday (9:30am – 12:45pm)

Clarifying Values & Barriers to Valued ACTION / 3 Hours

- Centering Exercise
- Applying the Values Directions Worksheet and Life Compass Cards in Dyads
- Barriers to Valued Action
- Exercise: Barriers Clarification Using Barriers Worksheet in Dyads
- Using the Life Compass
- Dyad Practice Completing the Life Compass
- Exercise: Mindful Breathing
- Pulling it All Together

- **Tuesday (4-6:30pm)**

Cultivating Mindfulness & the Observer Self-as-Context / 2.5 hours

- Centering Exercise
- The Nature of Mindfulness in ACT
- Exercise: Getting in Contact with the Present
- Exercise: Take Your Mind for a Walk
- Cultivating an Observer Perspective
- Self as Context vs. the Conceptualized Self
- Exercise: The Documentary of You
- Pulling it All Together

DAY 4 – Wednesday (9:30am – 12:45pm)

Unhooking From an Unhelpful Mind - Defusion Work / 3 hours

- Centering Exercise
- Defusion: Overview and Purpose
- Mindful Defusion Exercise: Wise Mind
- Mindful Defusion Exercise: Chess Board
- Thoughts on Cards: Demonstration and Role Plays
- Additional Defusion Principles & Strategies

- Pulling it All Together

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- Wednesday (4-6:30pm)

Nurturing Acceptance, Self-Compassion, and Kindness / 2.5 Hours

- Centering Exercise
- Compassion and Kindness Defined
- Cultivating Compassion
- Exercise: Loving Kindness Walking Meditation
- Exercises to Nurture Self-Compassion
- Taking Care of Old Wounds
- Nurturing Acceptance in ACT
- Exercise: Holding Our Pain Gently
- Paths to Acceptance
- Exercise: Acceptance of Thoughts & Feelings
- The Practice of Forgiveness
- Pulling it All Together

DAY 5 – Thursday (9:30am – 12:45pm)

Cultivating Willingness & ACTION: Exposure in ACT / 3 Hours

- The Nature of Willingness
- Exercise: Trying vs. Doing
- Nature of Exposure Therapy & Its Role in ACT
- ACT Exposure in a Value-Guided Context
- ACT-Based Exposure: 7 Steps
- Exercise: Moving with Barriers in the Service of Values
- Detecting ACT processes in an Exposure Context
- Exercise and Demonstration of ACT-Based Exposure
- Discriminating ACT processes
- Pulling it all together

- Thursday (4-6:30pm) / 2.5 Hours

Making and Keeping Value-Guided Commitments / 3 Hours

- How to Keep Our Clients Moving Forward?
- Building Patterns of Committed ACTION
- Steps Toward Value-Guided Committed ACTION
- The Role of Behavioral Activation in ACT
- Distinguishing Good from Poorly Stated Goals
- Setting SMART Value Guided Goals
- Pulling it all together

DAY 6 – Friday (10am – 12pm)

Supporting Value Guided Action & The Journey Ahead

- What to do When Clients Feel Stuck

- Demonstration: Bus Driver Exercise
- Navigating Values Conflicts
- Exercise in Dyads: Making a Value-Guided Behavioral Commitment
- Fluid and Flexible Use of ACT
- Discriminating ACT Consistent vs. Inconsistent Moves
- Detecting ACT Processes & Intervention Pivot Points
- How to Dance Around the ACT Model
- Going Forward – Developing ACT Competencies
- Self-Assessment of Where You Stand
- Common Therapist & Client Problems When Using ACT
- Next Steps: Developing ACT Competencies
- Wrap Up

This course meets the qualifications for 26 hours of continuing education credit for: LMFTs, LCSWs, LPCCs, and/or LEPs as required by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences; RNs as required by the California BRN. Esalen Institute maintains responsibility for this program and its content. You may contact us at CE@esalen.org. We encourage you to be in touch with our office with any grievances in a timely manner.