

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to  
Promote Psychological Wellness Amongst  
Mental Health Providers

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# Disclaimer

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I, CPT Qwanquita T. Wright, have no relevant financial or non-financial relationships to disclose relating to the content of this training.

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# Burnout

- Burnout: “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that occur among individual who do people work.”<sup>5</sup>
- A recent study showed an increase of 37% among health care staff experiencing burnout and distress.<sup>3</sup>
- People oriented professions hold a higher risk of burnout, stress, anxiety depression, negative attitudes, negative behaviors toward patients, increase health challenges, and interpersonal difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

# Conceptualizing ACT

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a transdiagnostic approach to treatment, rooted in rational emotive behavioral and cognitive behavioral theory.<sup>2</sup>

Psychological flexibility, “the ability to persist or to change behavior in a setting of competing psychological influences, guided by values and goals dependent on what the situation at hand affords.”<sup>2</sup>

How we ACT is an independent characteristics that is interdependent upon our values and commitments.

How is your organization addressing burnout and other workplace challenges?

How does your organization support or promote psychological wellness?

# ACT in the workplace

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A growing body of evidence indicates that workplace support programs based on ACT principles and interventions are effective in improving employees' psychological wellness and decreasing burnout. <sup>4</sup>

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ACT is about taking off the mask we put on to try and connect with others, it is about moving away from the need to belong and moving closer to our true belonging.

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Teaches us psychological skills to handle painful thoughts and feelings effectively in such a way that they have much less impact and influence on how we respond to workplace stress and systematic challenges.

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Helps us to clarify what's truly important and meaningful to us—that is, clarify our values—and use that knowledge to guide, inspire, and motivate us to set goals and take action that enriches our life outside of the workplace.

# ACT in the workplace

Brings awareness to our fears and rigidity, moves us closer to psychological flexibility

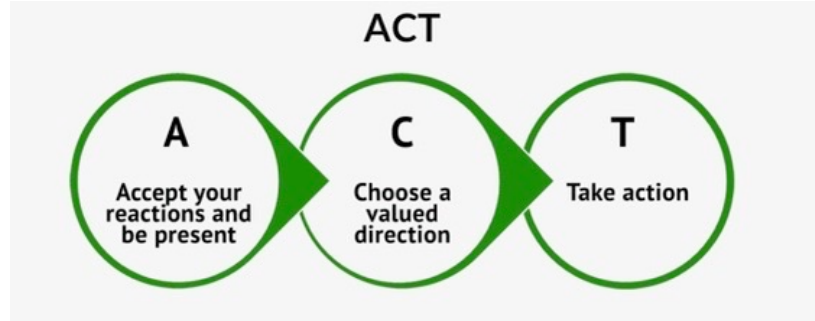
Aims to reduce distress and burnout and improve general psychological health and well-being.

Promotes new behavioral and emotional patterns, influencing individuals to make contact with the present.

People with higher levels of psychological flexibility better utilize resources, experience a decrease in medical errors, and greater level of control, and experience greater improvements in mental health and absence levels.<sup>1</sup>

# How we ACT.....

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- **Accept:** We are more flexible in our workplace when our decisions on how to act aligns with our personal values and goals.

- **Choose:** Adopt an open, non-judgmental mindset where the focus becomes on internal experiences and how they play out in the workplace.

- **Take Action (move):** Consistently focus on personal values and commitments, let go off the rope link



# Work-Related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never true	very seldom true	seldom true	sometimes true	frequently true	almost always true	always true

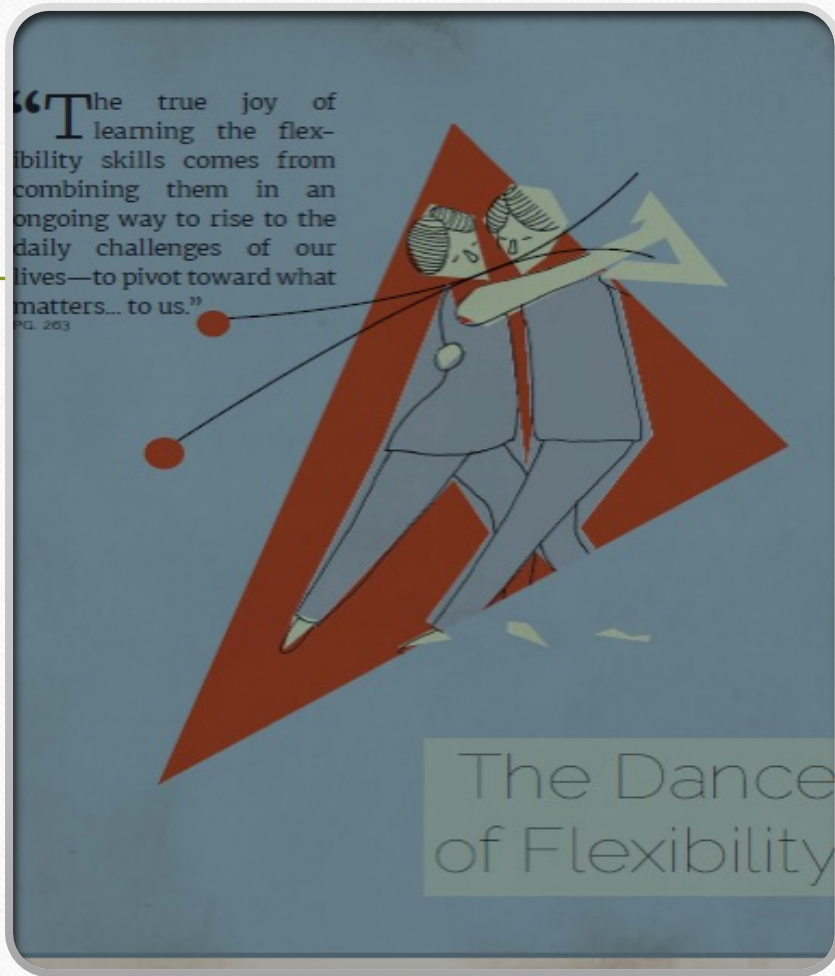
## WAAQ items

1. I am able to work effectively in spite of any personal worries that I have.
1. I can admit to my mistakes at work and still be successful.
1. I can still work very effectively, even if I am nervous about something
1. Worries do not get in the way of my success.
1. I can perform as required no matter how I feel.
1. I can work effectively, even when I doubt myself.
1. My thoughts and feelings do not get in the way of my work.

# Are you flexible or inflexible?

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- Where do you fall on your list of priorities?
- How do you promote psychological wellness among your team?
- How do you practice living in the present?
- What tug of war game are you playing?
- How do you normally respond to change?
- How do you respond to system challenges?



# Steps to Flexibility

- Create an action plan.
- Identify what moves you closer and what moves you further away from your values and commitments.
- Bring awareness to experiences that trigger certain responses.
- Pay attention to your barriers and boundaries.
- Get out of your head and get into the present moment.
- Drop the rope, the past is the past.

# Moving Forward

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- Increase acceptance of setbacks, changes, and challenges in the workplace.
- Increase openness and the continued pursuit of valued living and working.
- Reconnect with your own personal values and commitments.
- Focus on small changes to bring long term improvements in overall well-being and functioning.
- Take non-judgmental stances.
- Leave comparison in the past.
- Challenge your organization to establish a program that works but doesn't exhaust the team.



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# References

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