

Information about
**'ACT' – Acceptance and
Commitment Therapy**



What is “ACT” anyway?

“ACT” stands for “Acceptance and Commitment Therapy”

This is a psychological therapy, usually delivered by psychologists who have been specially trained

We use this to help people with a wide variety of mental health problems, and those with long term conditions.

How does it work?

Basically, it helps people think differently about their issues and how to deal with them.

Instead of looking for ways to control, get rid of, or reduce symptoms, it encourages “letting go” of control when this is not helping, and “reinvesting” energy into living the way people want to.

Although this can be “counterintuitive”, it is a normalising therapy which accepts the idea of trying to get rid of unpleasant external and internal experiences as something we all do.

It is a compassionate, validating type of approach which seeks to acknowledge the efforts people put into trying to make the situation better for themselves.

It also actively encourages people to reflect on whether attempts to control, eliminate or reduce physical or psychological symptoms are working for them in terms of the effort put in, and the benefits to living well of doing so.

What techniques does it use?

ACT uses a range of methods and ideas to help people live with unpleasant experiences and focus on defining and living more in the way they want. ACT requests a “willingness” to live with such unpleasant experiences.

While a “talking therapy”, ACT’s power lies in the use of active tasks, demonstrations, acted-out metaphors and home-based work to create change.

For instance, mindful exercises help people sit and notice what's going on with unpleasant experiences. People gain insight into how reactions such as thoughts, feelings and impulses can make unpleasant experiences worse. Mindfulness does not seek to relax or distract.

Other techniques help people be less influenced by their thoughts, and more by what's important to them in life. ACT helps people define how they want to live and how to go about doing so.

ACT helps people become more "flexible" in their approach to problems and life, and move away from unhelpful strategies which seek to get rid of experiences that are not amenable to such control.

Further Information

If you have any questions please contact NHS GGC Pain Management Psychology on ☎ **0141 355 1492**

Further reading

Living Beyond Your Pain. Joanne Dahl & Tobias Lundgren. 2006. New Harbinger Publications, Inc

Video – Professor Tamar Pincus describes ACT in the context of chronic pain

Pain and Me: Tamar Pincus talks about chronic pain, acceptance and commitment - YouTube

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUXPqphwp2U>

SCAN ME



