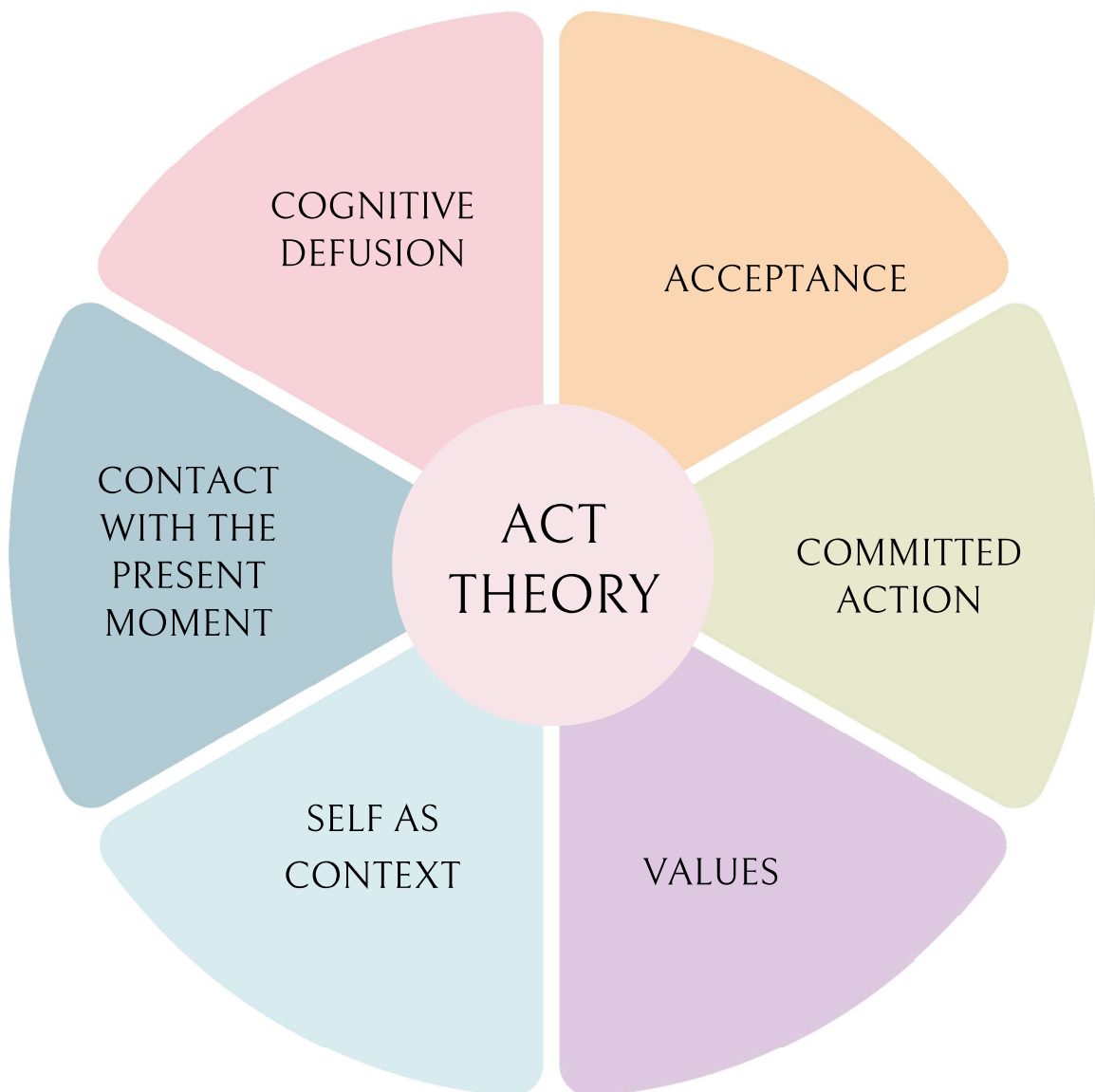


WHAT IS ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY?

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a contemporary type of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) that was created in the mid-1980s by Dr. Steven C. Hayes, a clinical psychologist and professor. Instead of pronouncing it as A-C-T, it's pronounced as "act." Dr. Hayes designed this therapeutic approach to blend mindfulness practices with strategies for behavioral change. The primary goal of ACT is to develop psychological flexibility, which means being fully present in the moment, adapting to changing situations, and staying true to one's core values.

ACT is built on six key processes that are categorized under two main themes: mindfulness and behavioral change. These processes work together to help individuals live fulfilling, meaningful lives, even when facing challenges.

6 CORE PROCESSES



ACCEPTANCE

In Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), acceptance involves acknowledging and making space for uncomfortable thoughts and emotions without resisting, analyzing, or avoiding them. This approach doesn't imply resignation or enduring unnecessary pain; instead, it recognizes that many personal struggles stem from trying to control or eliminate internal experiences that are inherently uncontrollable. By embracing acceptance, individuals can cultivate a willingness to face discomfort while pursuing their valued life goals.

EXAMPLE: OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Alex often feels anxious about speaking in public, causing him to avoid presentations at work. Through ACT, he learns that trying to eliminate his anxiety only makes it worse. He starts to practice acceptance by telling himself, "I am feeling anxious about this presentation, and that's okay. This anxiety is a part of my experience, but it doesn't have to stop me." Instead of avoiding the situation, Alex prepares for the presentation and faces his anxiety head-on. By accepting his anxiety and still moving forward, he gradually becomes more comfortable with public speaking, finding that he can perform well even when he feels anxious.

EXAMPLE: OVERCOMING FEAR

Emily suffers from chronic pain, which leads her to withdraw from activities she enjoys, like hiking and gardening. In ACT, she learns that her efforts to avoid pain are limiting her life. She practices acceptance by acknowledging, "I am in pain, and it's okay to feel this way. This pain is a part of my life, but it doesn't have to stop me from doing what I love." Emily starts to gradually reintroduce hiking and gardening into her routine, despite the pain. She finds that accepting her discomfort allows her to live a more fulfilling and engaged life.

ACCEPTANCE TECHNIQUES

ANCHOR BREATHING

When you're stressed, you're more susceptible to anxiety and overwhelm.

This can even lead to panic attacks when stress is prolonged.

When anxiety is aroused, grounding yourself through mindful breathing can help calm you. Anchor breathing is a breathing exercise that focuses your mind on your breath to keep you anchored in the present moment. Lying on your back or sitting in a chair, rest your hand beneath your naval and feel your belly expand as you breathe. Inhale slowly, taking in a deep breath, and pause for three counts. Exhale, letting the air out slowly and evenly through pursed lips, and then pause for three counts.

PASSENGERS ON THE BUS

The "Passengers on the Bus" is a ACT metaphor that describes how the decisions you make in response to your inner 'passengers' can either take you toward a life that you love or move you away from what's important. Visualize yourself as a bus driver with troubling thoughts and feelings as passengers. This helps in acknowledging but not driving your behavior based on those thoughts/feelings. Picture your thoughts and feelings as passengers on this bus. Some are noisy and disruptive. - Acknowledge their presence without kicking them off or allowing them to take the wheel. - Remember, you, the driver, steer the bus, regardless of the passengers' noise.

THE NOTICING SELF

Connect with the part of you that notices your thoughts and feelings, which helps create distance from those experiences. - Imagine there is a part of you that is thinking and feeling (the "thinking self") and another part that is simply observing (the "noticing self"). - Notice thoughts and emotions as they come without engaging or analyzing them. Just observe: "I notice I'm having the thought/feeling of..."

EXPLORING VALUES

As you examine the principles of those around you, including those you admire and respect, you can reflect on the origins of your own values. It's important to strive to embody your values actively, acknowledge them, and then implement them into your life.

My Mothers Values

My Fathers
Values

Person I respects
values

My personal
values

My social values

My friends values

A

Reactions and
be present

C

Choose a valued
direction

T

Take action

Identify the activating event				
Identify the unhelpful thought				
Accept your reactions				
Chooses a direction that you value the most				
Take action				