

ACT in a *Nutshell...*

Welcome, thank you and
congratulations for connecting with
me through ACT in a Nutshell.



Introduction

MEET ANGELA



I am so excited to be sharing the ACT approach with you.

WHAT IS ACT?

If you're here you probably already know that ACT stands for **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy**.

So a little bit about me...

I am a trauma-informed counsellor and consultant in Central Victoria, Australia. I am passionate about supporting women in my private practice in Bendigo, Central Victoria. I also see clients in the 'online space', a practice that we all became oh so much more familiar with during 2020!

WHAT IS MY WHY?

Having worked in education for 25 years I've worked with many children who have had difficulty regulating their emotions and I've met hundreds of parents who feel challenged by the complexity of parenting in a world that seems to get crazier by the minute. Anxiety seems to be running the show and parents often feel at a loss as to how to manage their own emotional responses, let alone their child's. Supporting parents to soothe their own anxiety, understand their child's emotions and build emotional connection is a particular passion of mine.

WHY ACT?

While we like to think otherwise, life is not always a bed of roses; pain, loss, frustration, trauma, confusion, shame, disappointment and grief come to visit us all at some point. ACT recognises this and does not set up false promises that life will always be a bed of roses. ACT shows us a way to handle difficult thoughts and feelings more effectively so that they have less impact on our lives as we move in the direction of our values. I was first drawn to ACT whilst completing my Masters in Counselling. It deeply resonated with me as a profound approach that can help us deal with contemporary life yet also draws upon ancient wisdom of mindfulness and acceptance.

ACT has made a huge difference to my life both personally and professionally. It is so relevant and I personally and professionally use the principles of ACT every single day.

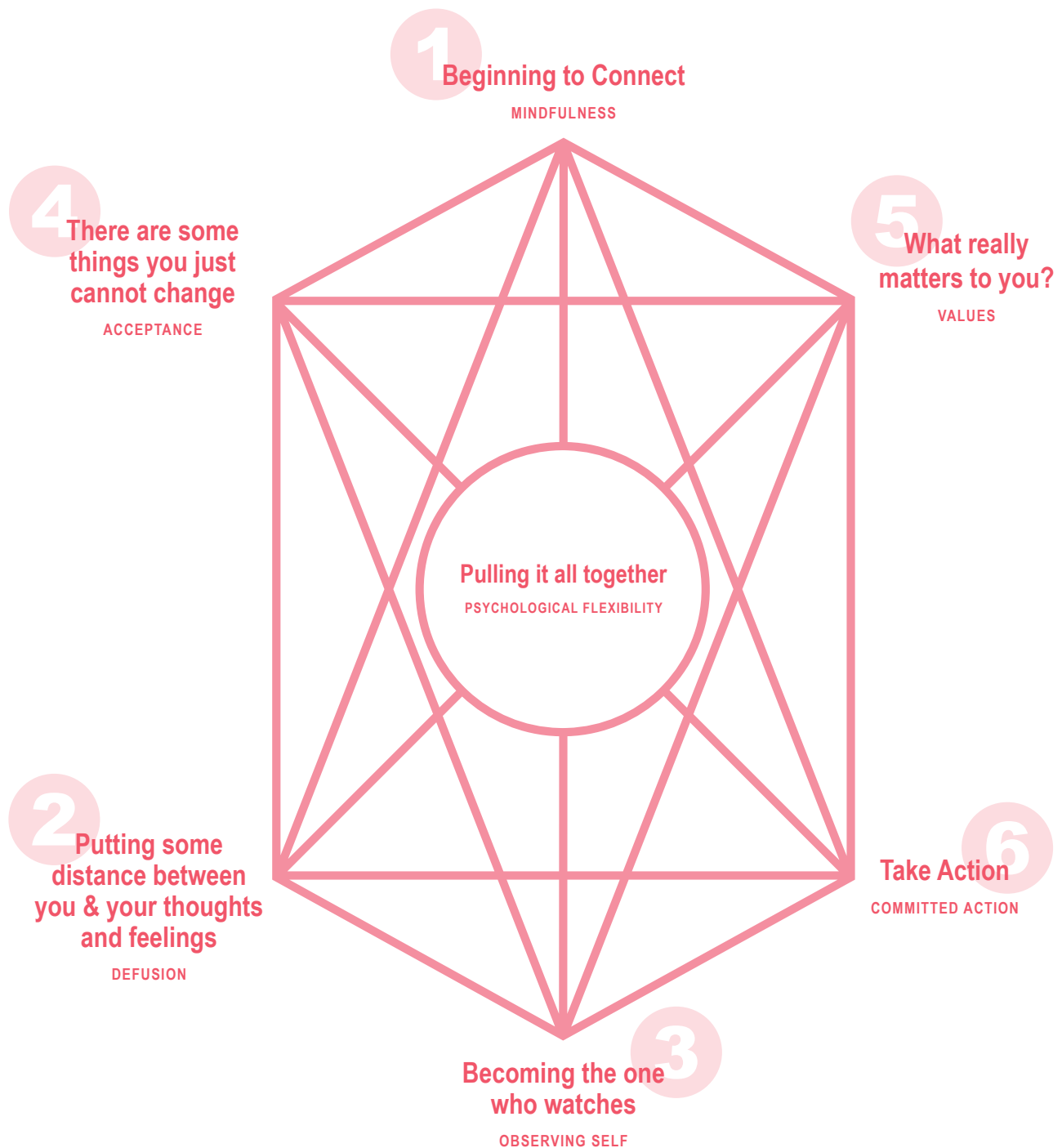
I am so excited to be sharing this approach with you and so, let's get started.

We're going to break it down into 6 pieces of a puzzle that when used flexibly as required will give you an approach that can be applied to any challenging thought, feeling, sensation or situation.

While I am delivering these in an order, ACT is definitely not a linear process. You see, ACT is all about building psychological flexibility, so the skills can be used flexibly. We bring them into play as required.

LET'S GET STARTED

Remember, these pieces can be used in ANY order.



1 Beginning to Connect

MINDFULNESS

Stop for a moment and notice what your mind is doing. Usually our mind is anywhere but in the present moment. So often we are going over past events, memories and feelings. Ruminating on how we would have liked things to be different. Alternatively our mind is racing ahead, worrying, planning, problem solving and rehearsing conversations that may never happen.

Although mindfulness has become a popular term I find sometimes people are confused between mindfulness and meditation.

For starters, you don't need to sit on a cushion in lotus position to be mindful. That is a common understanding of what meditation is - and even meditation has many different forms.

You also don't need to allocate specific time to be mindful although you could. The kind of mindfulness I encourage is becoming mindful during moments of your day. Check in when you are doing the dishes, driving the car or sitting at your desk and see where your mind is. Is it in the past? Is it in the future? There is nothing wrong with spending some time there. In fact, to function in our modern day world we often need to be doing all that planning and problem solving.

2 Putting some distance between you & your thoughts and feelings

DEFUSION

When we are fused with our thoughts and feelings they take over. We believe them and behave as though they are true. Learning to defuse from our thoughts and feelings means learning to put some space between ourselves and our unhelpful thoughts and feelings.

3 Becoming the one who watches

OBSERVING SELF

Most of us believe that there is just one self. This self is the one that thinks and it does such a great job of thinking. It thinks about the past, it thinks about the future. It engages in mental chatter and problem solving. Often, when it finds itself without a problem to solve, it finds one. It evaluates, it worries and it judges. Then it judges the worries and worries about the judgements. It holds tightly to these worries and judgements and

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creates much of our pain and suffering. Let's call this the thinking self.

There is another self though. The observing self. This self can witness thoughts and feelings from a distance and notices that they are constantly changing. ACT teaches us to connect with this observing self. Connecting with this observing self allows us to hold our experiences lightly rather than tightly.

4 There are some things you just cannot change

ACCEPTANCE

When uncomfortable thoughts, feelings and sensations show up, rather than trying to avoid them what ACT asks us to do is rather counterintuitive. ACT asks us to make room for the feelings. Breathe into the feeling and make space for it. We can acknowledge the feelings are there and allow them to come and go in their own time, hold them lightly or drop the struggle. It's never about 'just putting up with it'. ACT teaches that there are many different ways to think about the concept of acceptance.

5 What really matters to you?

VALUES

From the moment a client comes to work with me I am on the lookout for what truly matters to them. Sometimes, when people are in a lot of distress, they can feel so lost that they are not sure what matters anymore. I support people to reconnect to their values as these are like guideposts that can steer us towards living a rich and meaningful life.

6 Take Action

COMMITTED ACTION

Taking action is a big part of ACT. When we gently and compassionately unhook from difficult thoughts and feelings, become clear on our values, we can then take committed action TOWARDS what truly matters. Sometimes it can feel so overwhelming we don't know where to start. ACT teaches us that even very tiny, small steps can, over time, lead to a major change. When we do this we find that our relationship to ourselves, others and the world improves, our life becomes more meaningful and satisfying.

Pulling it all together

PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

So there you have it we have covered the 6 processes.

My hope for you now is that you are starting to **incorporate these into small moments of your day.**

Remember that you don't need to do them all, all of the time.

You can try these approaches when and how you choose. You can try them out on the little things first and stay curious.

Try noticing when you are hooked by your thoughts or your judgements. Gently and compassionately make room for this thought. Notice where your attention is, bring your attention to this present moment. Connect with your body, move it in some way reminding yourself about what you have control over. Connect to what truly matters to you in this moment. Is it the value of kindness, connection, compassion or self-care? Now take a step towards that value by deciding what action to take. Experiment and notice what happens as you increasingly use these processes in your life.

Change takes time

Growth is never linear. We can sometimes feel like we are taking two steps forward and one step back. Be kind, hold yourself gently and compassionately as you move towards embedding these skills and strategies into your life.

Ready to work with me?

It may be that you would like some individualised support, clarification or understanding about how to begin using ACT in your life.

Would you like to make a booking?

OR bit.ly/ChrysalisChat



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