

ACT Based Workshops for Psychological Skills Development

NECHA/NYSCHA Combined Conference

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Session Overview

- ▶ A quick overview of Acceptance & Commitment Theory
 - ▶ Background and description of the RIO Model
- ▶ Practical considerations in design and implementation
 - ▶ Outcomes and lessons

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What is Acceptance & Commitment Theory? (ACT)

“ACT is a therapeutic approach that uses acceptance and mindfulness processes, and commitment and behavior change processes, to produce greater psychological flexibility.”

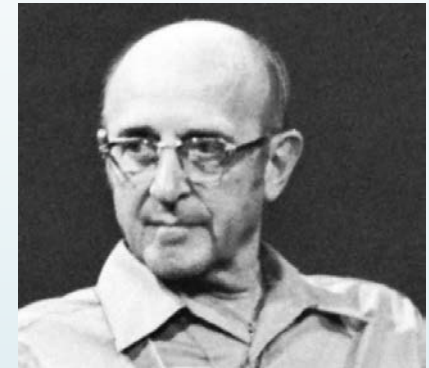
ACT in Context



What is ACT?

“BF Skinner meets Carl Rogers”

Behavioral Activation +
Motivational Interviewing +
Mindfulness
(Blend, salt to taste....)





Where did ACT come from?

ACT has been called a “third wave” behavioral therapy; placing importance on changing the way individuals relate to their experience as opposed to changing the content of their experience.

Other “third wave” behavioral therapies include DBT, MBCT and FAP.

*Be
Present*

Contact with the
Present Moment

*Do
What
Matters*

Acceptance

*Open
Up*

Values

Psychological
Flexibility

Defusion

Committed
Action

Self-as-Context





What is Psychological Flexibility (PF)?

- Contacting the present moment fully as a conscious human being, and based on what the situation affords, changing or persisting in behavior in the service of chosen values
 - Holding one's thoughts and feelings lightly in the service of freeing us up to focus on values and goals of importance to us
 - As opposed to control and avoidance strategies
- PF as a transdiagnostic prevention strategy
 - Evidence that PF is a protective factor across many psychological issues
 - PF (measured by AAQ II) outperformed ACT/SAT scores as a predictor of four year (or less) graduation rate

ACT Strategies

- ▶ Experiential Exercises
 - ▶ Defusion
 - ▶ Mindfulness
 - ▶ Self-as-context
- ▶ Metaphor
 - ▶ Person in a hole
 - ▶ Tug of war with a monster
- ▶ In vivo acceptance work
 - ▶ Grounding
 - ▶ Physicalizing





RIO Overview

- ▶ Three session, skill based workshop
 - ▶ **R**ecognition, **I**nsight, **O**penness
 - ▶ Developed at Cal Poly
- ▶ Dr. Geneva Reynaga-Abiko, greynaga@calpoly.edu
- ▶ *“RIO is a 3-week psychoeducational seminar designed to help students clarify their concerns and develop a clearer sense of what they would like to change in their lives.”*

Recognition

- Mapping the internal landscape
 - Thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, impulses
 - Backpack metaphor
 - 3-minute breathing space
- Highlighting avoidance as a coping strategy
 - Completely logical and often ineffective...sometimes problematic
- Finger trap metaphor
 - Highlighting the importance of making space
- Defusion – “I’m having the thought that...”



Insight

- ▶ Moving around within the internal landscape
 - ▶ Intro to psychological flexibility
 - ▶ Mapping – recalculating metaphor
- ▶ Leaves on a river exercise
 - ▶ More depth with defusion
- ▶ Tug of war with a monster
 - ▶ Letting go
- ▶ Guided meditation around counseling issue



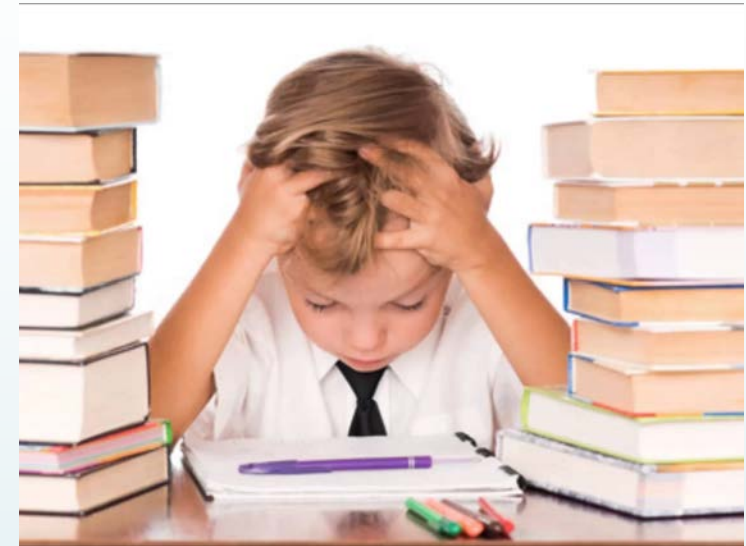
Openness

- ▶ In a world where you could choose to have your life be about something, what would you choose?
 - ▶ Gravestone exercise
- ▶ Introducing values
 - ▶ Heading west metaphor
- ▶ Values compass exercise



Assigning Homework

- ▶ [RIO Workbook](#)
- ▶ [Therapy Assisted Online \(TAO\)](#)
 - ▶ <https://thepath.taoconnect.org/>
- ▶ [Free Videos \(Russ Harris\)](#)
 - ▶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=93LFNtcR1Ok
 - ▶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCp1116GCXI
 - ▶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz_nexLqY_8



Practicalities of implementing RIO (...or something like it)

- ▶ Structuring the sessions
 - ▶ 6-8 students “feels” right
 - ▶ Multiple sessions to accommodate student schedules
 - ▶ Setting ground rules
- ▶ Securing staff “buy in”
 - ▶ Addressing staff concerns
 - ▶ Reworking content with staff input
 - ▶ Staff training
- ▶ Promoting student involvement
 - ▶ Eligibility/appropriateness for group
 - ▶ Presenting workshop to students





Practicalities (cont.)

- ▶ Working out the “bugs”
 - ▶ Promoting student retention
 - ▶ Student evaluation follow through
- ▶ How RIO fits into overall clinical service delivery
 - ▶ Basic training for counseling
 - ▶ Break from individual therapy
 - ▶ Supplement to individual or group work



Outcomes



- ▶ Since last December, we've run 9 cohorts (average 8 students) of the workshop
 - ▶ An average of two students don't start or finish the 3 sessions
 - ▶ Currently we're getting about 10% of students seeking help in the SDCC into RIO groups
- ▶ Student evaluations (16)
 - ▶ Range 3.6 – 4.9 (5 pt scale)
 - ▶ Average 4.3
 - ▶ "RIO helped me" 4.2
- ▶ Staff impressions



Summary

- Biggest obstacle will probably be your staff & your self
- Remain flexible as to how the workshops might fit into your overall clinical delivery approach
- Running RIO workshops may be something that certain staff are more open to and skilled at
- Solicit student feedback and adapt program to your campus/students