

Povzetki poglavij v angleščini/ Abstracts in English language

BASIC ASSUMPTION OF ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY AND MODEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

Gregor Žvelc

This chapter presents the fundamental assumptions of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) with emphasis on the model of psychological flexibility. The Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is a newer form of psychotherapy, which is part of the third wave of behavioural therapies. It is based on the processes of mindfulness, acceptance, commitment, and behavioural activation with the aim of increasing psychological flexibility. It is an evidence-based therapy, which is effective for different psychological disorders, as well as a process-based therapy, focused on the increasing therapeutic processes of psychological flexibility. The therapy is based on the philosophical assumptions of contextual functionalism and the Relational Frame Theory (RFT). In the chapter, we present the model of psychological flexibility, which is a model of psychopathology, mental health and clinical interventions. We present the basic processes of psychological flexibility: acceptance, cognitive defusion, contact with the present moment, self as context, values and committed action. We also present the corresponding processes of psychological inflexibility.

Keywords: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, third wave of behavioural therapy, functional contextualism, Relational Frame Theory, psychological flexibility

COGNITIVE FUSION AND EXPERIENTIAL AVOIDANCE

Neža Jus in Sanja Jurjevič

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy emphasizes the relationship between a person and their thoughts, which is often fused. We are so closely connected with our thoughts that we do not distinguish between ourselves (those who are doing the thinking), and the thoughts we are thinking about. This phenomenon is called fusion. When our thoughts override our behavior, this can lead to a variety of problems, including avoiding experiences, which we call experiential avoidance in ACT. Defusing techniques can help us in such situations. Defusing means separation, distancing from one's own thoughts. Using these techniques in therapy, we can help the client to step back and look at their own thoughts as what they really are: nothing more than just mental words or images.

Experiential avoidance is the process of psychological inflexibility, which is connected to numerous mental health problems. With experiential avoidance, we try to avoid, escape or change our internal experience. When experiential avoidance becomes our strategy for solving problems, we don't resolve them, we just deepen them. Using experiential avoidance as a strategy can increase the problems that we were trying to avoid in the first place.

Keywords: fusion, defusion, experiential avoidance, acceptance, ACT

LACK OF CONTACT WITH PRESENT MOMENT AND ATTACHMENT TO CONCEPTUALIZED SELF

Ana Gregorec in Urban Štiberc

The present moment awareness represents one of the six core processes of psychological flexibility and has a key role within the acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) framework. Contact with the present moment is characterized by attending to what is present in a focused, voluntary and flexible manner. Being absent in the present moment can cause a never-ending circle of judgments and evaluations regarding one's emotions, thoughts and feelings that can lead towards unnecessary psychological suffering. Most common failures of present-moment processes can be a result of skill deficits in present-moment processes or attentional rigidity. Excessive attachment to conceptualized self can also cause absence of present-moment awareness, which prevents the person to be truly present in the here and now. Conceptualized self includes all the different ways of saying who

we are while incorporating all the beliefs and concepts that the person has developed throughout his or her life. Self as a process, on the other hand, is a process of ongoing awareness that has a critical role in the therapeutic context and is closely related to a healthy and psychologically vital life. Self as a context is also related to psychological flexibility. It represents a part of us that is able to engage in taking different perspectives and takes on a role of the remote observer of events. ACT aims at undermining attachment to the conceptualized self and promotes self as a context and self as a process by means of mindfulness training and exercises. These teach us how to be in the “here and now” when this is helpful and thus help us maintain contact with the present moment.

Keywords: contact with present moment, conceptualized self, self as context, psychological flexibility

LACK OF VALUES AND COMMITTED ACTION

Borut Ambrožič in Jana Malovrh

In this paper two of the six processes of psychological inflexibility are presented—lack of contact with values and lack of committed action. Lack of values refers to the loss of contact with what is truly important to us in our lives. Lack of clarity and contact with our values therefore prevents us from using values to guide our actions. Values are directing the individual's life, clarifying what is really important and creating a sense of meaning. Within the acceptance and commitment therapy, clients identify their values, develop them and act in accordance with them. Values are closely related to the process of committed action, which relates to the process of an individual's activity of creating a full life, which is coherent with the deepest desires and aspirations. By acting in accordance with values, clients develop a wide range of thoughts and feelings that are both pleasant and unpleasant. Committed action means living in harmony with our values, even if it brings pain and discomfort. Without committed action rigid behaviour occurs, which can be expressed through behavioural avoidance (where an individual avoids situations that cause discomfort) and through behavioural exaggeration (where an individual acts impulsively and self-destructively). By establishing contact with values and building ways of committed action, we build psychological flexibility, which is the primary goal of the acceptance and commitment therapy.

Keywords: psychological inflexibility, values, committed action

THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP AND ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

Urška Baković in Andreja Špeh

The therapist-client relationship has the biggest influence on the clinical outcome. Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) provides guidelines for improving this relationship. ACT emphasizes the processes of psychological flexibility, which is the ability to be present in the moment with full awareness and openness for this experience. Therapist's role is to model the processes of psychological flexibility, since the client's acquisition of these skills is possible only through experiential learning. In order for the therapist to be connected with himself, he has to follow the basic processes of psychological flexibility. Furthermore, the therapist must be familiar with both positive and negative leverage points for the therapy to be efficient. It is also important that the therapist is aware that the client and himself are equal in dealing with the content of the therapy.

Keywords: acceptance and commitment therapy, therapeutic relationship, psychological flexibility, experiential approach, leverage points

CASE CONCEPTUALIZATION AND PLANNING OF THERAPY

Tjaš Debeljak in Tina Vardič

When it comes to therapy planning and implementation in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), the appropriate case conceptualization is crucial. It enables a functional analysis of client's current problems, which can then be incorporated into the framework of psychological flexibility model. The therapist understands the client in interaction with different environments and within different personal contexts, since both client's problems and also solutions occur in interaction with their environment. An individual's values are at the forefront in ACT, and both therapist and client are returning to them through the entire therapy. While doing case conceptualization, we need to identify external and internal events that have led to the weakening of certain psychological processes. We also identify ACT processes that maintain the current state and how powerful other processes are that could help us improve the situation. Several methods can be used for case conceptualization, such as the Hexaflex method, the Turtle method, the Psy-Flex method, and the ACT Advisor method. In addition to interviews, therapists can use the Acceptance and Action

Questionnaire for information gathering and assessing a client's psychological flexibility.

Keywords: case conceptualization, psychological flexibility, values, Hexaflex

COGNITIVE DEFUSION TECHNIQUES

Kristjan Černič in Tea Tomažič

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy attributes client unhappiness to identification with the contents of the mind – at least when it leads to dysfunctional behavior in particular circumstances. The therapeutic approach of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy can be understood as a collection of exercises, metaphors and procedures that address such problems. The main, core process that all the techniques focus on is called cognitive defusion. The process of cognitive defusion can include paradoxes, meditative and experiential exercises, metaphors and language conventions. Consequently, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy includes methods of language deliteralization, defusion metaphors and methods that allow the client to just observe his own thoughts. In this chapter, we will introduce some of these techniques and how the therapist can use them.

Keywords: cognitive defusion, observation of thoughts, deliteralization, defusion interventions

ACCEPTANCE FOCUSED INTERVENTIONS

Lana Bogdanović in Sara Hudoletnjak

The purpose of acceptance-based interventions is not to reduce emotional arousal, but to teach the client how to stay in the present moment with their personal experiences, while also functioning in a freer, flexible and value-based way. Although these interventions usually cause a reduction in symptoms, this is not their primary purpose. By practicing acceptance, we try to change the contextual relationship between the client and their pain in order to increase their psychological flexibility. A precondition for acceptance is willingness. Willingness refers to an individual's openness to a complete inner experience, while they simultaneously actively and intentionally move in the desired direction in life. Willingness develops through the process of accepting the present moment the way it is, including all the inner experiences that are present at that time. Willingness is a choice

which means that we can choose to be willing at any time. This chapter includes exercises and metaphors that the therapist can use in the process of acceptance. Some of them are: Quicksand, Tug-of-war with a monster, Accepting yourself on faith, Yes and no, Understanding the car, Polygraph, Looking for Mr. Discomfort, Physicalizing...

Keywords: present moment awareness, mindfulness, attention, mindfulness exercises

INTERVENTIONS FOCUSED ON PRESENT-MOMENT AWARENESS

Sabina Brodar Kaplja in Petra Eder

The processes for present-moment awareness are important for individuals who are too focused on the past or the future, and spend less time in the present. We enable them to accept what surrounds them and to get in touch with their feelings, thoughts or sensations. The processes are tightly connected with mindfulness, which applies to open or conscious awareness and attention. Some of these exercises are Clouds in the sky, Bag of chips, Choiceless awareness, Mindful listening to music, Mindful walking. Most of the exercises can be modified and replaced with different metaphors. Some of them an individual can use in everyday activities, such as eating. It is also important that the client acknowledges the use of these techniques and metaphors. Every exercise is designed so that the client is focused on the present experience, step by step. He enjoys the present moment without thinking of the past or future. The speed of the voice represents an important tool that can help with the process of present-moment awareness.

Keywords: present-moment awareness, mindfulness, attention, mindfulness exercises

PERSPECTIVE TAKING INTERVENTIONS – SELF AS CONTEXT

Nuša Klepec in Nina Malec

“Who are you?” – it’s a question that’s easily understood. However, scientists, philosophers, theologians, and other thinkers have been dealing with issues such as “What is ‘self?’” and “Who are we at our most basic level?” for hundreds of years. The acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)

distinguishes between three different ways of understanding the self: self-as-content, self-as-process and self-as-context. When clients are sharing self-created stories about themselves (their judgments, beliefs, thoughts, emotions, rules, memories, roles and impulses) they are speaking from a perspective of a conceptualized self (self-as-content). With the purpose to strengthen clients' psychological flexibility, we try to shift their perspective from the conceptualized self to the observing self. The following (self-as-context) represents a stable, unchanging perspective from which the client is able to observe their thoughts, emotions, memories, etc. Therefore, a certain distance from the content is possible and the client is not defined by their thoughts and emotions. In this chapter, different interventions are supplied, through which therapists can help clients connect with their observing self. The listed interventions can be used as a guideline for therapists in the implementation of therapy for a more flexible behavior in clients, which is also in accordance with their values.

Keywords: observing self, transcendence, perspective taking, interventions, metaphors

WORKING WITH VALUES IN ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

Mateja Kralj in Patricija Kerč

One of the components of the therapy of acceptance and commitment is working with values. Therapist's role is to help the client recognize his/her most important values and starts living according to them. But since the concept of values is strongly connected to other concepts, for example goals and emotions, the therapist must start to clarify the differences between them. After this step, the therapist can bring the client into the process of exploring values. The "Values Compass" approach or a structured 6-step process may be used as a guide with which the client recognizes their values and creates a plan for their further behaviour. Throughout the process of assessing values, the therapist must be aware of the many difficulties that are trying to dissuade the client from the things he wants. There are some directed questions and metaphors that can be used. When working with values, the therapist can also use some actual interventions, which help the client get in contact with the values.

Keywords: values, guidance, commitment, action, interventions

ENCOURAGING COMMITTED ACTION: METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Anja Cesar in Lejla Košmrlj

Committed action is a process in which we guide our client to set valued-based goals that are meaningful and can lead to attaining significant actions which enrich his life. The main goal of the process is to reach psychological flexibility in situations client perceives as threatening and therefore trigger a rigid response. In this chapter we present the process of committed action, starting with a selection of the most important values and goals and actions connected to these values, barriers which can come in the way while pursuing values-based goals, and also explain some methods and techniques the therapist can use in the process. We then describe the main exercises and metaphors that can be used to support committed action. In the next section we represent some behavioral techniques we can use in ACT. At the end of the chapter we define different interventions a therapist can use in the process of committed action, the goal we want to reach with these interventions and strategies with which to reach them.

Keywords: committed action, valued-based actions, barriers, psychological flexibility, behavioral techniques

ACT MATRIX

Natali Volarič in Nastja Tomat

ACT matrix is a diagram that shows the course of ACT. The matrix consists of two dividing lines. Horizontal line shows the difference between moving away and moving towards, vertical line shows the difference between inner and outer experience. The matrix enables us to arrange our experience in four quadrants – what is important to us, what inner experience prevents us from moving towards it, which actions we take to move towards it, and which actions we take to move away from it. We can see our experience from a distance, identify the important people and things, define the function of our actions and change them, if needed. The goal of the matrix is to increase psychological flexibility and valued living. Psychological flexibility is defined as an ability to move towards our goals in spite of the obstacles. The matrix focuses on six processes of psychological flexibility: being here and now, acceptance, defusion, perspective taking, values and committed action. It can be used with different clients, e.g. with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, and in different contexts, e.g. in school and at workplace. We

describe how to use the matrix with clients with eating disorders, in context of couples' therapy, and coaching. We describe two studies that examined the use of ACT matrix with chronic pain and a heterogeneous clinical sample. Both studies showed that using the matrix led to a positive outcome.

Keywords: ACT matrix, ACT, acceptance and commitment therapy

COMPASSION IN ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

Rebeka Brčvak in Rebeka Dragar

Compassion is a key process in psychotherapy. Compassion includes a number of emotional, cognitive and motivational elements. The process of compassion is characterized by mindfulness, awareness of suffering, understanding and feeling of suffering and its causes, and motivation for openness to suffering with the intention or desire to alleviate it. Compassion is in different ways connected with psychological flexibility. Psychological flexibility means contacting the present moment fully as a conscious human being, and based on what the situation affords, changing or persisting in behaviour in the service of chosen values. Psychological flexibility consists of six elements: acceptance, cognitive defusion, self-as-context, committed action, values and being present. Each element of the psychological flexibility model creates a different relationship with compassion, which results in different interventions and treatment. In the following text some interventions for enhancing compassion in psychotherapy are presented.

Keywords: acceptance and commitment therapy, compassion, psychological therapy, exercises