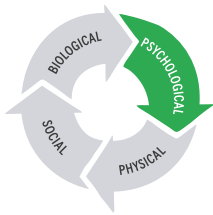


# Acceptance and commitment therapy



The main focus of this treatment is on psychological factors.



Remember one thumbs up means that enough people have done research to show that this approach does work.

### What is it?

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, which is pronounced as the word 'act') is aimed at helping you to take active steps towards building a rich, full and meaningful life, and at the same time, helping you to develop psychological skills to be able to deal with painful thoughts and feelings, in better ways so that they have much less impact and influence on your life.

### What does it aim to do?

The core skills that ACT focuses on include:

1. Defusion: which means distancing yourself from, and letting go of, unhelpful thoughts, beliefs and memories.

2. Acceptance: which means making room for painful feelings, urges and sensations, and allowing them to come and go without a struggle.

3. Mindfulness: which kind of means being in the moment (the 'here-and-now'), and being open to and interested in your experiences.

At the same time, ACT will help you to clarify what is truly important and meaningful to you – i.e. your values – then use that knowledge to guide, inspire and encourage you to change your life for the better.

Unlike CBT approaches it doesn't focus on the content of distressing thoughts, but just on accepting them and not letting them get in the way of your goals

### Does it work?

There are now at least four RCT studies that have looked at ACT for unusual distressing experiences and psychosis. These studies have shown that ACT is helpful for reducing the distress that comes with the experience of psychosis.

“ ACT helped to focus on what's important to me rather than all the other stuff that goes on in my head. It gave me that time and space to say 'hang on a minute' and let it go by, rather than getting carried away with thoughts. It gave me a breather where I was able to pause. This really helped me to get my life back on track again. ”

Louis, 29

👉 ACT can make a real difference to people's lives. Understandably, distressing psychosis has a major impact and people often get very caught up in struggling with the experience. ACT helps to gently and slowly introduce additional skills and ways of responding to these experiences that allows the person to manage them more effectively.

At the same time, ACT is very good at helping people to reactivate their lives by developing goals that are clearly linked to what is important to the individual. In this way, recovery becomes not just about escaping distress, but about rebuilding a purposeful life. 🗨️

Dr Joe Oliver, Clinical Psychologist

In a US-based study, ACT has also been shown to help people keep out of hospital for longer. Although still early, ACT appears to be useful in helping people develop better psychological health and wellbeing by using the core skills (the defusion, acceptance and mindfulness ones we mentioned above) which help with recovery.

Additionally, there are several studies underway that are looking at the effectiveness of ACT in groups. Early evidence suggests that ACT groups may be both helpful and useful.

### **The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)**

NICE does not yet recommend ACT for unusual upsetting experiences.

### **How can I get this treatment?**

ACT is a newer treatment for unusual upsetting experiences. Although some NHS services do offer ACT, it is not yet common place. It is possible to get ACT from an independent therapist, who specialises in ACT.

You can check the main international ACT website which has a list of ACT therapists in the UK – [contextualscience.org](http://contextualscience.org) – or the register for the British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapists at [cbtregisteruk.com](http://cbtregisteruk.com)

### **✓ Main pro**

ACT can help you to think more about actively building a meaningful life, and also learning skills to help lessen the impact of your distressing experiences.

### **✗ Main con**

ACT is not yet commonly available in the NHS. The evidence, whilst promising, is still in the early stages so it is not yet possible to say who may benefit more from ACT treatments.