Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is... built on empirically based principles... aimed to increase psychological flexibility... using a mindfulness-based approach... with behavior change strategies

...built on empirically based principles

- Severe substance abuse
- Social phobia
- Depression
- Smoking
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Chronic pain
- Panic disorder
- Medical problems
- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Psychosis
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Workplace stress
- Trichotillomania
- and more...
...built on empirically based principles

Test Anxiety
Mathematics Anxiety
Public Speaking Anxiety in College Students
Enhancing Psychological Health of Students Abroad
Eating & Weight Concerns
Smoking
Substance Abuse

...aimed at increasing psychological flexibility

Psychological flexibility is:
...contacting the present moment fully
...as a conscious, historical human being,
...and based on what the situation affords
...changing or persisting in behavior
...in the service of chosen values
Mindfulness:  
...is much easier learned by experience  
...involves:  
  paying attention in a particular way;  
  on purpose,  
  in the present moment,  
  and nonjudgmentally  
~Jon Kabat-Zinn

Behavior change strategies include:  
Applied Behavior Analysis strategies  
  ➢ Contingency management  
  ➢ Level systems  
Traditional Behavior Therapy strategies  
  ➢ Flooding  
  ➢ Exposure & ritual prevention  
  ➢ Social skills training  
  ➢ Behavior activation

Eysenck defined behavior therapy as  
“the attempt to alter human behavior and emotion  
in a beneficial manner according to the laws of  
modern learning theory” (1964, p. 1).
What is ACT?

ACT is a functional contextual therapy approach based on Relational Frame Theory which views human psychological problems dominantly as problems of psychological inflexibility fostered by cognitive fusion and experiential avoidance. In the context of a therapeutic relationship, ACT brings direct contingencies and indirect verbal processes to bear on the experiential establishment of greater psychological flexibility primarily through acceptance, defusion, establishment of a transcendent sense of self, contact with the present moment, values, and building larger and larger patterns of committed action linked to those values. (Hayes, 2005)
Looking at thoughts, rather than from thoughts

**DEFUSION**

Self-as-Context

The sense-of-self that is a consistent perspective from which to observe and accept all changing experiences

**Values**

- Chosen life directions
- Values give life meaning
- There is a distinction between a value and a goal
Intimate relationships
Family relations
Social relations
Employment
Education and training
Recreation
Spirituality
Citizenship
Health/physical well-being

Committed Action

Overt behavior in the service of values
Committed Action

Overt behavior in the service of chosen values

Create an empirically-supported treatment plan

Establish measureable responses

Choose to make a commitment

Commitment

- noun  

1: action aimed in the direction of what you care about, even in the presence of obstacles
Mindfulness practice is based on the premise that only in the experience of the current event can one accurately perceive what is really happening and engage in valued actions.
The ACT Question

(1) Given a distinction between you and the stuff you are struggling with and trying to change
(2) Are you willing to have that stuff, fully and without defense
(3) As that stuff is, and not as what your language says it is,
(4) And DO what takes you in the direction of what is vital and meaningful at this time, and in this situation?
(5) Values
(6) Contact with the present moment

Acceptance vs. Experiential Avoidance

Defusion vs. Cognitive Fusion
Self as Context
vs.
Attachment to conceptualized self

Committed Action
vs.
Persistent Inaction,
Impulsivity or Avoidance

Values Clarification
vs.
Lack of Values Clarity,
Dominance of Pliance and Avoidant Tracking
Contacting the Present Moment vs. Weak Self-Knowledge; Dominating Concept of the Past and Feared Future

“Mindfulness can be understood as a collection of related processes that function to undermine the dominance of verbal networks... These processes include acceptance, defusion, contact with the present moment, and the transcendent sense of self.”
– Fletcher & Hayes (2005, p. 315)

“An operational working definition of mindfulness is: the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.”
Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145
Mindful action is defined as purposeful, present focused, committed responses, maximally influenced by relevant stimulus events, and unimpeded by private events.
I am here now, accepting the way I feel, and noticing my thoughts, while doing what I care about.