

## Creating Compassionate Cultures: Acceptance and Commitment Training in Human Service Settings



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## Caring for One's Communities:



IF YOU WANT TO BE A  
TRUE PROFESSIONAL,  
YOU WILL DO SOMETHING  
OUTSIDE YOURSELF.  
SOMETHING TO REPAIR  
TEARS IN YOUR  
COMMUNITY, SOMETHING  
TO MAKE LIFE A LITTLE  
BETTER FOR PEOPLE  
LESS FORTUNATE THAN  
YOU. THAT'S WHAT I  
THINK A MEANINGFUL  
LIFE IS - LIVING NOT  
FOR ONESELF, BUT FOR  
ONE'S COMMUNITY.

## Objectives

- Define behavioral inflexibility and explain why it may be a common experience among direct-care staff in human service agencies
- Explain the role of relational framing in giving rise to experiential avoidance in the work place
- Discuss how Acceptance and Commitment Training might improve psychological flexibility and satisfaction in the work place.
  - *ACT IS ABOUT HEALTHY, ADAPTIVE LIVING*

## Some Background on Private Events in Behavior Analysis

## B. F. Skinner on Private Events

- Private events are behavior occasioned by external environmental stimuli that happens to occur at the covert level – nothing mystical or magical about the fact that they occur covertly (1957; 1953)
- Thinking is behaving (1953)
- *“Events at the covert end have no special properties, observe no special laws, and can be credited with no special achievements” (1957; p. 438)*



## The Debate on Private Events

- Because they are private, they are unobservable, “guessed at, inferred, hypothetical constructs” -- not amenable to measurement (Baum, 2011)
- We should study private events, and establish reliable overt indicators (Palmer, 2011)
- Levels of analysis – both independent and dependent variables (Anderson et al., 2000)

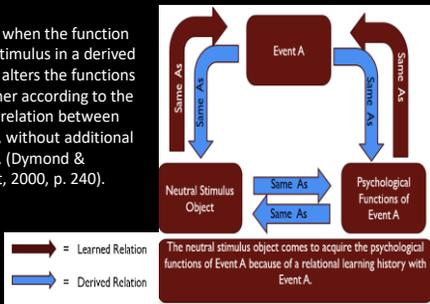
## Human Services Workplace Stress:

- Up to 1/3 of front-line staff report stress levels indicative of a mental health problem (Hatton et al., 1999)
- Work may be tedious, monotonous, or frustrating = inadequacy
- Staff shortages, lack of high quality training
- Clients’ well being is affected by staff interactions

## Relational Frame Theory Foundation: Why Language Cuts Both Ways

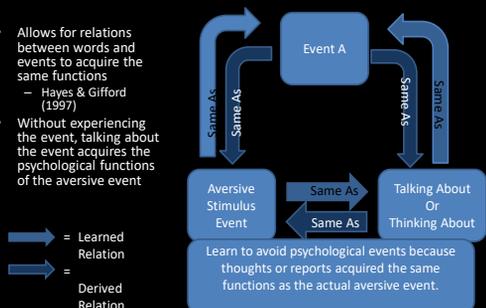
## Transformation of Stimulus Functions

- “Occurs when the function of one stimulus in a derived relation alters the functions of another according to the derived relation between the two, without additional training, (Dymond & Rehfeldt, 2000, p. 240).



## Transformation of stimulus functions and experiential avoidance

- Allows for relations between words and events to acquire the same functions – Hayes & Gifford (1997)
- Without experiencing the event, talking about the event acquires the psychological functions of the aversive event



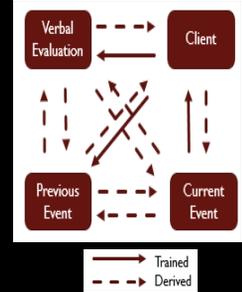
## Literality of relational networks

- Literality (Hayes & Wilson, 1994)
  - “Responding to verbal formulations in some ways as if one were responding to the actual contingency,” (p. 290)
  - “The domination of derived over direct stimulus functions is based, we argue, on the domination of contextual support for literal responding,” (p. 290)



## Role of Language in Caregiver Interactions:

- Plays a critical role in quality of life of the client
- Interactions are often difficult to maintain due to
  - Previous learning history with problem behavior (Shapiro, Brown & Biegel, 2007)
  - Verbal evaluations that come to dominate other functional variables (Hayes & Wilson, 2003)
- This previous learning history can generate the evaluation, “The client is...”
  - Contextual cue “is,” may detach the caregiver from the context
  - Caregiver may become rigid, and avoid interactions with the client



## Interacting with Indirect Functions of Stimuli Hurts.

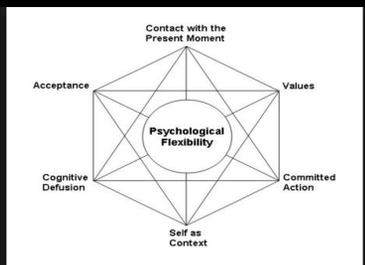


## Experiential Avoidance Hurts.



## Acceptance & Commitment Training:

*Reduce the literal and evaluative functions of language*



## Goal of ACT is to increase Behavioral Flexibility



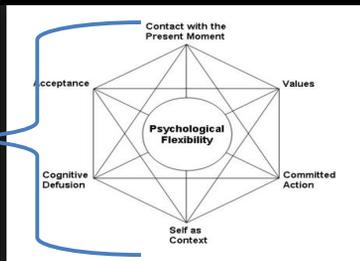
## Behavioral Inflexibility in Staff

- Focusing on behavioral flexibility in the workplace may help reduce a number of common organizational problems (Bond et al., 2010)
- We spend many hours of our lives at work!
- *Clients' well being is affected by staff interactions*



## ACT with Human Service Agency Staff: *Mindfulness*

### Notice Five Things



### ACT perspective on mindfulness:

- “.....accepting, open contact with the present moment and the private events it contains as a conscious human being experientially distinct from the content being noticed.”
- Empowers valuing and committed actions.”  
*(Fletcher & Hayes, 2005)*

### Evidence for the Efficacy of Mindfulness with Parents & Staff:

- Individuals with profound multiple disabilities showed increases in affect associated with happiness after staff received mindfulness training (Singh et al., 2004)
- Aggression, noncompliance, and self-injury all shown to decrease in children with ASD after parents received mindfulness training (Singh et al., 2006)





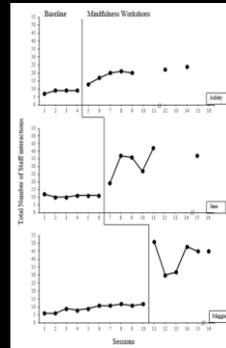
- Evaluate the effectiveness of mindfulness on direct care staff interactions with adults with developmental disabilities
- 5 mindfulness exercises :
  - Notice Five Things (Harris, 2008)
  - Mindfulness of the Body (Harris, 2007)
  - Eating Raisins (Hayes and Smith, 2005)
  - Mindfulness of Domestic Chores (Harris, 2008).

## Method

- Participants
  - Three direct care staff
- Setting
  - A five building DT & residential facility
- Variables
  - Independent Variable
    - Mindfulness Exercises
  - Dependent Variable
    - Interactions with clients
- Sessions
  - Observations sessions were the first 15 min when the clients came to the workshop
  - Design
    - Multiple Baseline across direct care staff

## Procedure

- Sessions took place 15 min before clients arrived at the facility
- Workshops consisted of two staff members, one who was participating in the study and one that was not participating in the study.
- Sessions begin with a short discussion of the purposes and definitions of mindfulness.



- Immediate increase in interactions for all three participants
- Maggie increased interactions by 39 instances
- All three participants demonstrated maintenance

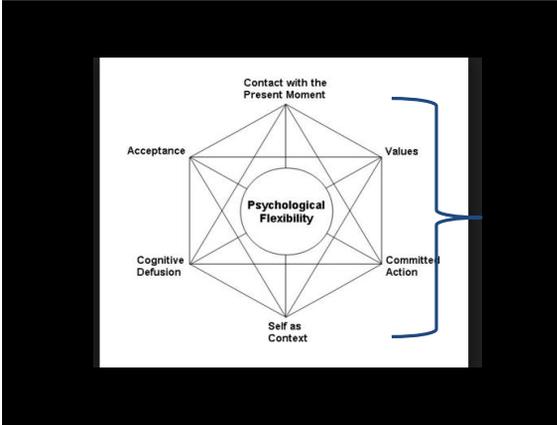
Figure 1. This figure shows the number of specific interactions during baseline and conditions conditions across Abby, Jane, and Maggie.

## Implications

- Processes involved in mindfulness exposed participants to events often avoided
  - Promote repertoires of willingness to experience the here-and-now with flexibility
  - Increased contact with reinforcing events of giving care that may have been overridden by previous entanglement with language



ACT with Human Service Agency Staff:  
*Values & Committed Actions*



## Values vs Committed Actions

- Paths or directions that are defined by the individual as important and meaningful to them (Stoddard & Afari, 2014)
- Values that are chosen are verbally constructed consequences of an ongoing evolving pattern of activity that helps establish reinforcers for engaging with that activity in the valued behavioral pattern itself (Hayes et al., 2011).



## Psychological Well-being and Values

- People with chronic pain who engaged in activities consistent with their values reported higher levels of physical and emotional functioning (McCracken & Yang, 2006)
- Changes in values and committed actions correlated with seizure reduction in patients with epilepsy (Lundgren et al., 2008)
- **\*\*Bond et al. (2006): People who are NOT acting according to their chosen values are likely denying themselves contact with positive reinforcers that foster good mental health and successful performance at work**



Check for the availability of an abstract

**Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science**

Journal homepage: www.jocbs.sagepub.com

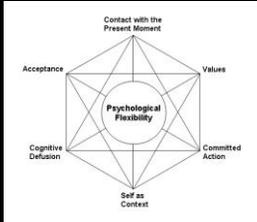
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**Empirical Research**

**On the role of values clarification and committed actions in enhancing the engagement of direct care workers with clients with severe developmental disabilities**

Monica Castro, Ruth Anne Rehder, William B. Rose

- Purpose: Establish a functional relationship between values and committed action trainings and direct-care staff interactions with clients (using objective and reliable measures of behavior change)



## Participants

Three direct care staff members at an adult rehabilitation

- **Monica**
  - 71 year old female
  - 28 years employment at facility
- **Jennifer**
  - 36 year old female
  - 2 year employment at facility
- **Amanda**
  - 39 year old female
  - 8 year employment at facility

## Response Measurement

- Dependent Variable
  - The instances of staff engagement with clients during a 15 min observation
- Staff Engagement
  - Initiated engagement without verbal or gestural prompts for attention from individuals within classroom.
  - Be within two feet from the individual, physically oriented, and providing verbal and/or gestural engagement that met the individuals needs.
  - Demands placed or remarks from across the room would *not* be considered as engagement

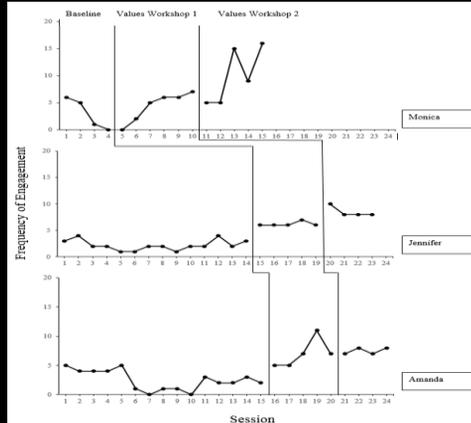
## Design

- A multiple baseline design across participants



## Values Workshop

- **Values Workshop 1**
  - Three 20-40 min sessions
  - Centered on work values
- **Values Workshop 2**
  - Three 20-40 min sessions
  - Centered on the value of client interactions
- During each session, three to four individuals participated along with the participants during both Values Workshop 1 and 2
- *Values clarification exercise (Bulls' Eye; Cycling Race)*



## Implications

- All participants showed an increase in the frequency of their engagement with clients from 11-16 instances of engagement relative to their baseline levels
- Functional relationship using objective, reliable measures of behavior change
- *Full benefits may occur following challenging issues some time following workshops (Biglan et al., 2011)*

## How do we teach people to care?



Care about them first!



*Ethical Implications*

**Who is the client?**

- Individual, parent, teacher, school, agency, community
- Promote betterment of all involved
- Need to treat all involved with compassion



*Prejudice & Stigma:*

*Language Cutting Both Ways*

stig·ma  
/'stigmə/

“a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person.”

*“the stigma of having gone to prison will always be with me”*

prej·u·dice  
/'prejədəs/

“preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.”

*“prejudice against people from different backgrounds”*

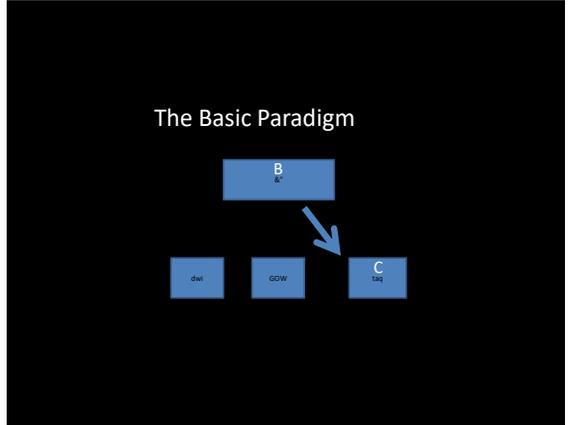
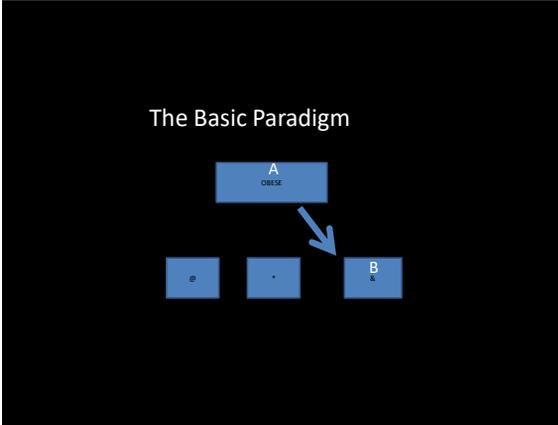
A Sociocultural analysis of  
Stigma & Prejudice (Weinstein et al., 2008)

THIN

- Stylish
- Popular
- Attractive
- Healthy
- Successful

OBESE

- Lazy
- Frumpy
- Unattractive
- Unhappy



- ### A Sociocultural analysis of Stigma & Prejudice (Weinstein et al., 2008)
- | THIN  | OBESE   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stylish</li> <li>• Popular</li> <li>• Attractive</li> <li>• Healthy</li> <li>• Successful</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lazy</li> <li>• Frumpy</li> <li>• Unattractive</li> <li>• Unhappy</li> <li>• Lazy</li> <li>• &amp;</li> <li>• taq</li> </ul> |

### Changing Relational Repertoires

Prejudice is a generalized verbal process that is socioculturally influenced, automatic, and inappropriately applied (Masuda et al., 2012)

 The Impact of Acceptance and Commitment Training and Multicultural Training on the Stigmatizing Attitudes and Professional Burnout of Substance Abuse Counselors  
 by Steven C Hayes, Richard Bissett, Nancy Roget, Michele Padilla, Barbara S Kohlenberg, Gary Fisher, Akihiko Masuda, Jacqueline Pistorello, Alyssa K Rye, Kristen Berry, Reville Nicolls  
 Article 2004  
 Journal: Behavior Therapy v35 n4 p821-835 Aut 2004

**Applying Acceptance, Mindfulness, and Values to the Reduction of Prejudice: A Pilot Study**  
 Jason Lillis and Steven C. Hayes  
*Behav Modif* 2007: 31; 389  
 DOI: 10.1177/0145445506298413

## Need Scaled up Applications



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