Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Encouraging Hand Trauma Counseling | Client Education & Reflection

What Is ACT?

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, pronounced “act”) is an evidence-based therapy that helps people respond differently to difficult thoughts, emotions, and sensations while building a life guided by what matters to them. ACT does not require you to feel better before taking meaningful action.

The Goal: Psychological Flexibility

Psychological flexibility means being aware of the present moment, allowing internal experiences to be there when useful, and choosing actions that reflect your values. Acceptance does **not** mean approving of harm, giving up, or remaining in an unsafe situation.

Six Core ACT Skills

Acceptance: Making space for feelings and sensations instead of struggling to eliminate them.

Cognitive defusion: Seeing thoughts as thoughts rather than automatically treating them as facts or commands.

Present-moment awareness: Gently returning attention to what is happening here and now.

Self-as-context: Noticing that you are the observer of your experiences, not defined by any single thought or feeling.

Values: Clarifying the qualities and directions that matter most in your life.

Committed action: Taking realistic steps in the direction of your values, even when discomfort is present.

Understanding Avoidance

Avoidance can bring short-term relief, but when it becomes a pattern, it may shrink our lives: **discomfort** → **avoidance** → **temporary relief** → **greater restriction.** ACT helps you distinguish helpful safety and boundaries from avoidance that prevents you from living according to your values.

ACT Skills to Practice

Name the thought: “I notice I am having the thought that I will fail.”

Acknowledge the feeling: “Anxiety is here right now. I can notice it without letting it make every choice.”

Ground in the present: Feel your feet on the floor or name three things you can see. Keep your eyes open if that feels safer.

Choose a value: Ask: “What matters to me in how I respond?”

Take one small step: Choose an action that supports that value and is safe and manageable.

Client Reflection

What difficult thought or feeling have I been struggling with?

_____

What do I usually do to avoid or control it? Does that help over time?

_____

What personal value would I like to move toward?

_____

What is one small, safe action I can take this week?

_____

A Reminder

You can experience discomfort and still make choices that reflect who you want to be. For trauma survivors, ACT skills should be adapted to your sense of safety, capacity, and pace; you do not need to push through overwhelming distress.