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Practical ACT: using ACT with children, young people and parents

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is often described as belonging to a 'third wave' of cognitive behavioural therapies. It aims to help people to 'live better' by increasing how flexibly they respond to unwanted experiences. This is encouraged by: increasing awareness of thoughts, feelings and physiological responses, or 'internal events', through mindfulness work; encouraging willingness to experience thoughts and feelings more openly and directly rather than trying to avoid, struggle with or control them; encouraging individuals to engage with thoughts as 'just thoughts' rather than as literal facts; encouraging a stronger sense of self and choice; helping individuals clarify their personal values, or what really matters to them and to make actual changes in their lives that are consistent with these.

This two day workshop will cover:

- a brief introduction to Relational Frame Theory, the theory underpinning ACT;
- an orientation to the similarities and differences between ACT and standard cognitive behaviour therapy;
- the therapeutic relationship in ACT and being 'ACT-consistent';
- the six core processes of ACT
 - o developing the ability to 'be present' in a non-judgemental way through mindfulness work;
 - o nurturing willingness to experience internal events with an attitude of curiosity and kindness to the self (acceptance);
 - o encouraging 'defusion' or not buying into thoughts and feelings;
 - o developing awareness of an over-arching sense of Self that enables a greater sense of choice;
 - o defining personal values or 'what matters';
 - o making behavioural changes that are values led; and
- measuring outcomes in ACT.

The focus of the workshop will be on the use of ACT with people who stammer, *particularly exploring its potential in work with children and teenagers who stammer and their parents*. It will add to therapists' repertoire of skills in working with clients' unwanted emotions such as anxiety and worry and coping patterns such as self-criticism, avoidance or increased physical effort in the moment of stammering.

It is suitable for therapists who are developing their skills in the field of stammering as well as those who wish to build on their experience of using traditional cognitive therapy or other psychological approaches. The workshop will combine theoretical discussion with practical exercises and resources.