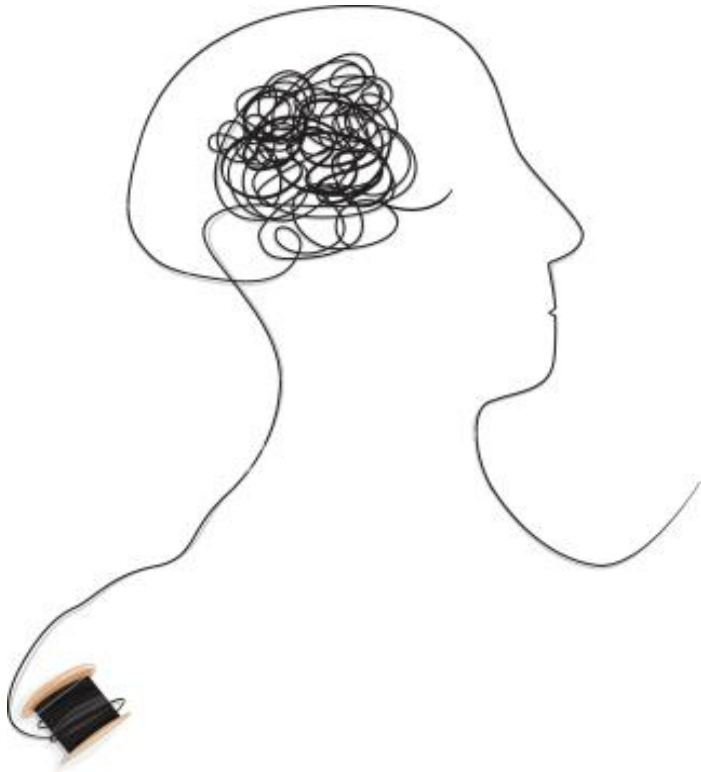


# Working with ACT

How Using ACT in the Workplace Could Transform....Well, Almost Everything



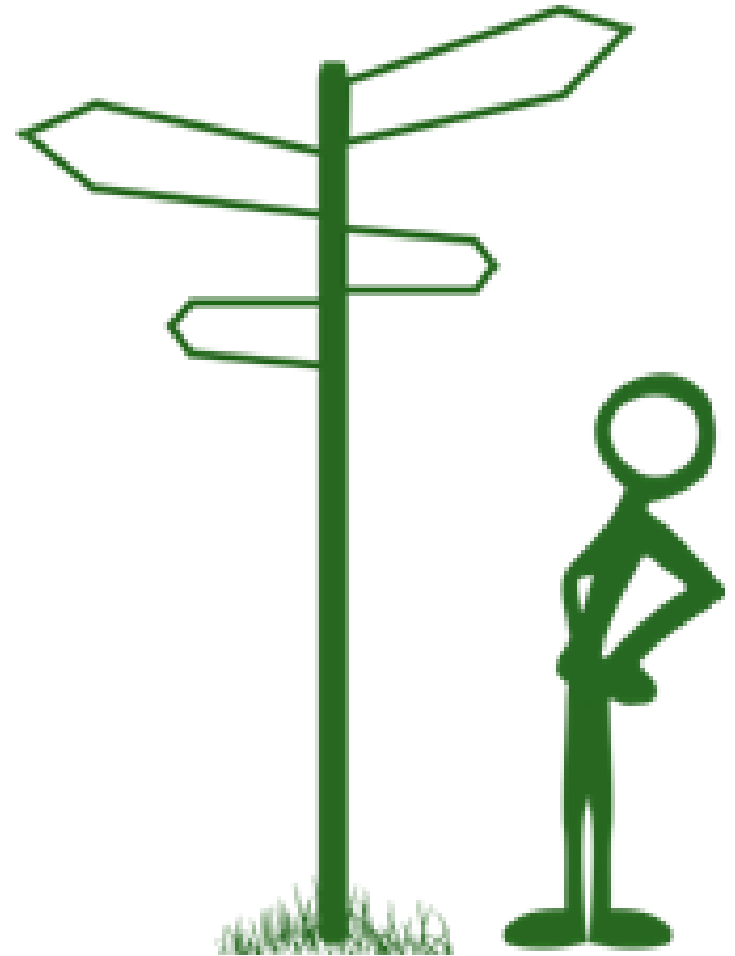
*Rachel Collis*

*Rob Archer*

*[www.workingwithact.com](http://www.workingwithact.com)*

# Session Structure

1. Why is ACT needed in the workplace?
2. How is applying ACT to the workplace problematic?
3. How ACT in the Workplace Could Transform... Almost Everything



Meaningful

3 Good Things



# About Us



# Why ACT is Needed In The Workplace



# Top 10 Work Stressors

1. Lack of **control**
2. Lack of **communication**
3. No **appreciation**
4. No **feedback**
5. Career and job **ambiguity**
6. Unclear policies
7. Mistrust, unfairness, office **politics**
8. Pervasive **uncertainty**
9. Random **interruptions**
10. The **treadmill** syndrome



Distracted...



80% Disengaged...



---

‘A life lived outside our most closely held values generates a great deal of suffering

(Luoma et Al -Learning ACT p140)

Distressed

**1 in 6**



British Occupational Health report

**1.5 million  
Australians**

*Use a health service  
for their mental health  
problem*

**4.4 million  
Australians**

*Current mental  
health problem*

**9 million  
Australians**

*Not engaged > risk*



---

‘A life lived outside our most closely held values generates a great deal of suffering  
....an essential part of values work is to help clients discriminate how closely their current behaviour lines up with their intended direction for their lives’

(Luoma et Al -Learning ACT p140)

# Distracted

# Disengaged

# Distressed



- Time Management
- Executive Coaching
- High Performing Teams



- Employee Engagement
- People-Led Change
- Leadership & Management
- Safety Leadership



- Stress Management
- Resilience Training
- EAP

# Why ACT...

- ✓ Empirically supported
- ✓ Improves performance and health.
- ✓ Enhances other interventions.
- ✓ We understand not just **that** it works but **why**.


And....it can be trained!





Using ACT  
in the Workplace  
Could Transform....  
Almost Everything

**BUT**

Big but  


# What are the ways in which using ACT in these settings can be problematic?

## **1. Difficulties with Creative Hopelessness**

2. Combining ACT with problem solving
3. Getting 'hooked' by organisational politics etc
4. Modelling vulnerability.
5. ACT sounds weird
6. Revealing vulnerability
7. Making 'values' work work.

# Creative Hopelessness

“If a person has exerted so much effort and yet is coming for treatment, one of two things must apply:

- 1.The person has not found the right way to fix the problem, or
- 2.The model for change is flawed and unworkable.”





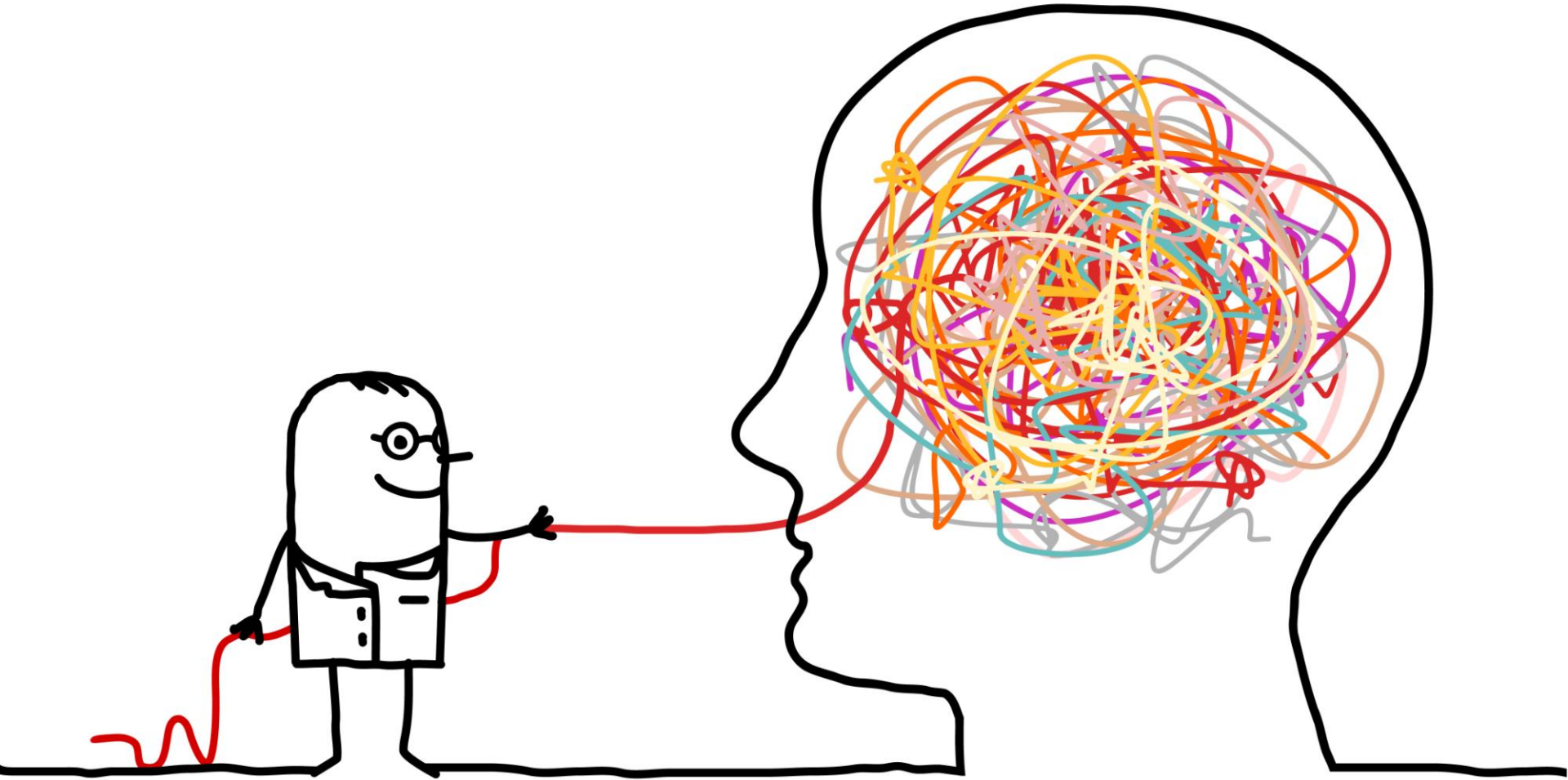
60% of people in employment are **not** suffering from mental illness

# Level of Satisfaction with Life

**7.6 / 10**



Be clear what the problem is... and isn't.



# “What is Your Top Business Priority?”

	Issue	% Agreed
1	Attracting and retaining skilled staff	35%
2	Changing organizational culture and employee attitudes	33%
3	Acquiring new customers	32%
4	Developing new processes and products	29%
5	Increasing customer loyalty and retention	29%
6	Managing risk	29%
7	Improving workforce performance	28%
8	Increasing shareholder value	27%
9	Using IT to reduce costs and create value	27%
10	Being flexible and adaptable to rapidly changing market conditions	26%
11	Developing employees into capable leaders	26%

Source: Accenture

# CH involves:

A dialogue focused on three primary questions:

1. What does the client want?
2. What has the client tried? And,
3. How has that worked?'



Hayes, Wilson & Strosahl (1999)

# In Organisational Setting that is a Needs Analysis

- What does the client want to achieve?
- Where are they now?
- What have they tried?
- What do they think will work?
- Context

# 'Groupthink' and the Control Agenda



---

There is a lot of groupthink in our culture that controlling thoughts and feelings is a good idea. Here are some examples...

*“As long as you **think** the problem is out there,  
that very **thought** is the **problem**”*

Stephen Covey

*“Absolute belief is an essential part of any massive achievement”*

Andrew Meikle: *Win Now, Win Later*

*'You **become** what you **think**...so discipline yourself to **think about the things you want** and **keep your mind off the things you don't want**'*

*Brian Tracy - Create your Own Future*

‘We observe, *we tell a story*, and then we **feel**.  
...Since *we and only we* are telling the story, we  
can **take back control of our emotions**  
by telling a different story.’

Patterson et al: Crucial Conversations



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**Happiness is  
only a power  
button away.**

*La felicidad está en sus manos.*

---

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Comcast Digital Cable**

*Bienvenido al  
Cable Digital de Comcast*





**We make joy**

Da passione e dedizione  
di un'azienda  
che crede nel cliente  
e nel futuro.  
Da un'azienda  
che crede nel cliente  
e nel futuro.  
Da un'azienda che crede  
nel cliente e nel futuro.  
Da un'azienda che crede  
nel cliente e nel futuro.  
Da un'azienda che crede  
nel cliente e nel futuro.  
Da un'azienda che crede  
nel cliente e nel futuro.

**SHARE THE LOVE.**



New  
Chocolate Heart  
Doughnuts

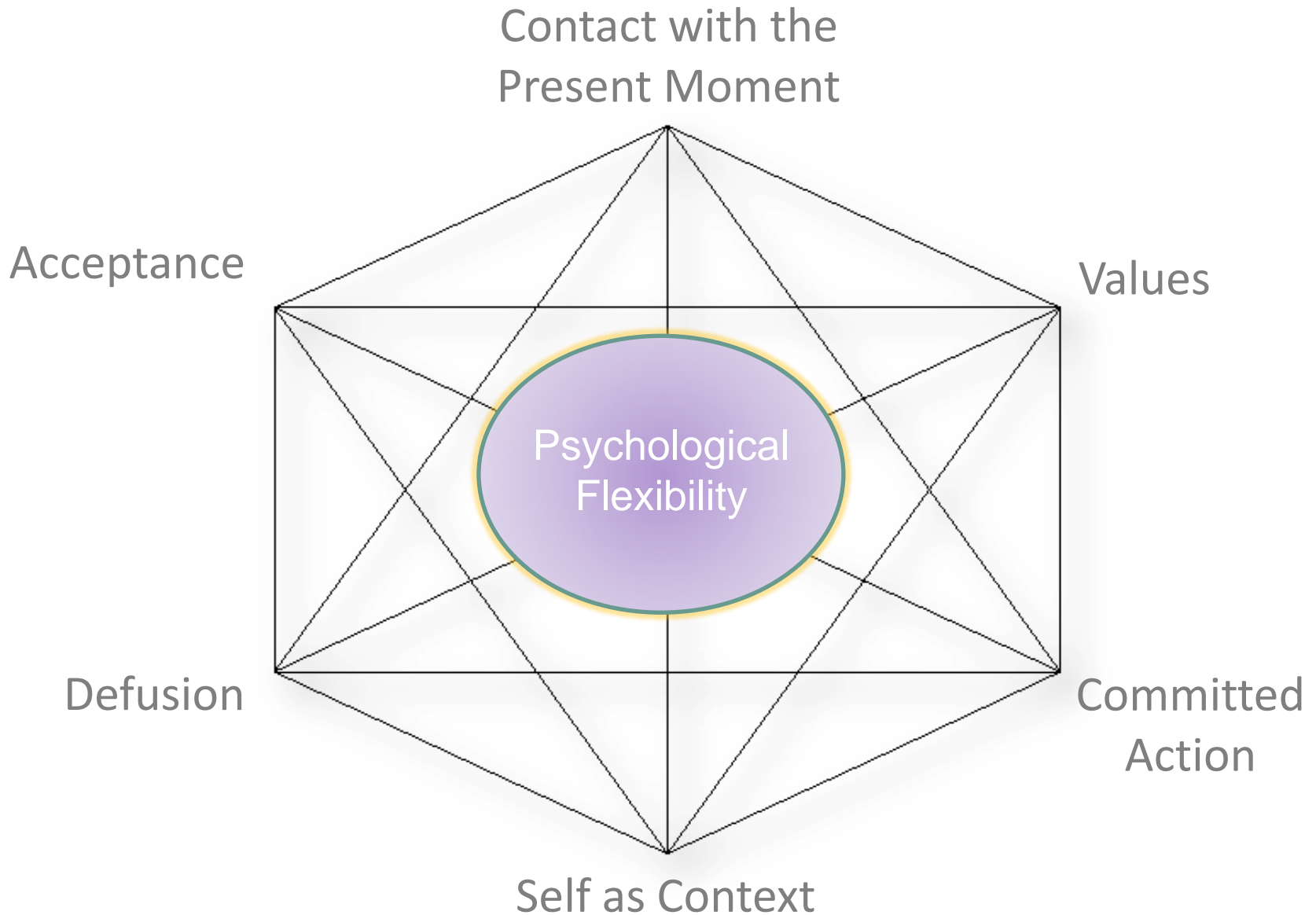
**Krispy Kreme**  
DOUGHNUTS

[www.krispykreme.com.ph](http://www.krispykreme.com.ph)

Don't make your clients wrong  
- they are the experts on their  
situation and their life



# Be Flexible...



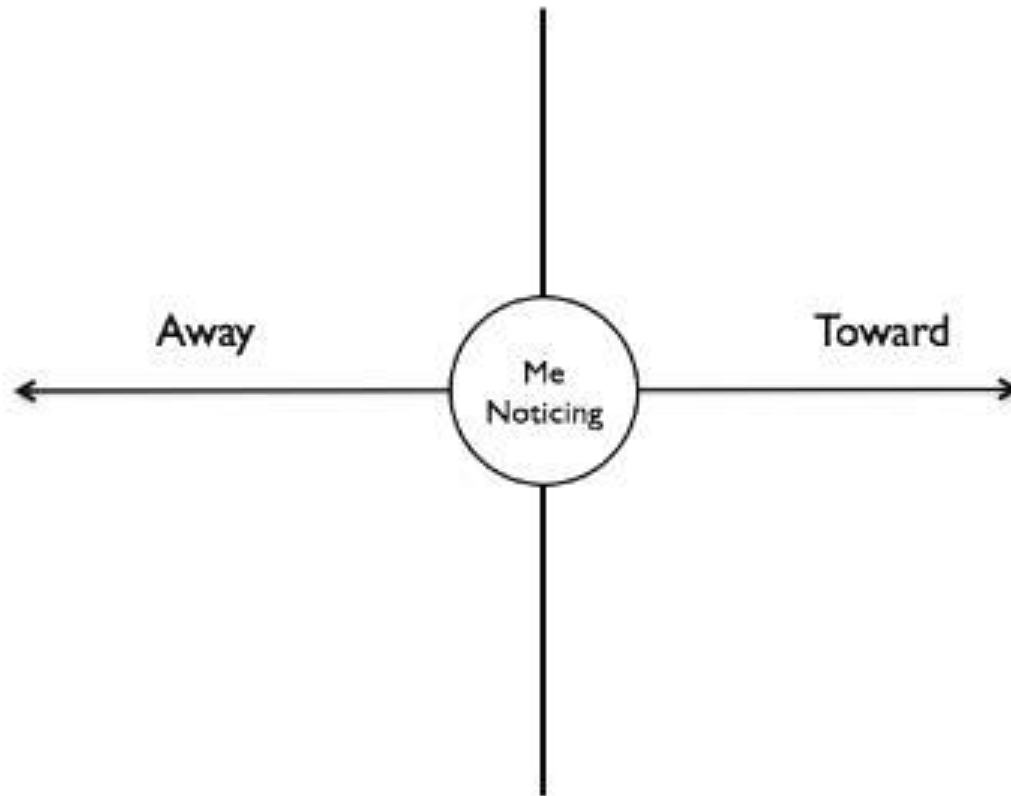
# Increase discrimination around workability



# World

---

5 Senses Experiencing



## Values:

- Family
- Intimate Relationships
- Parenting
- Friends
- Education
- Work
- Recreation
- Spirituality
- Citizenship
- Health

Mental Experiencing

Weave it in...





Be clear about your intention...



# Psychological Flexibility

“Contacting the present moment fully as a conscious human being, and based on what the situation affords, changing or persisting in behavior in the service of chosen values”

**Steve Hayes**

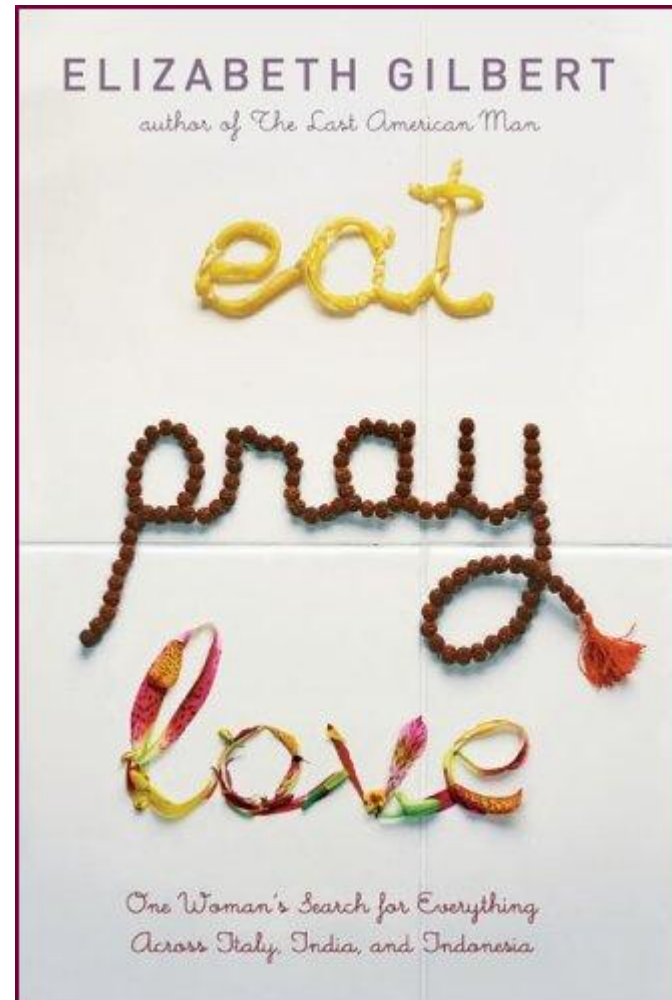
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**There are also lots of examples of psychological flexibility.....**



'You look at that assumption even from half an inch away and you can see...'

Elizabeth Gilbert



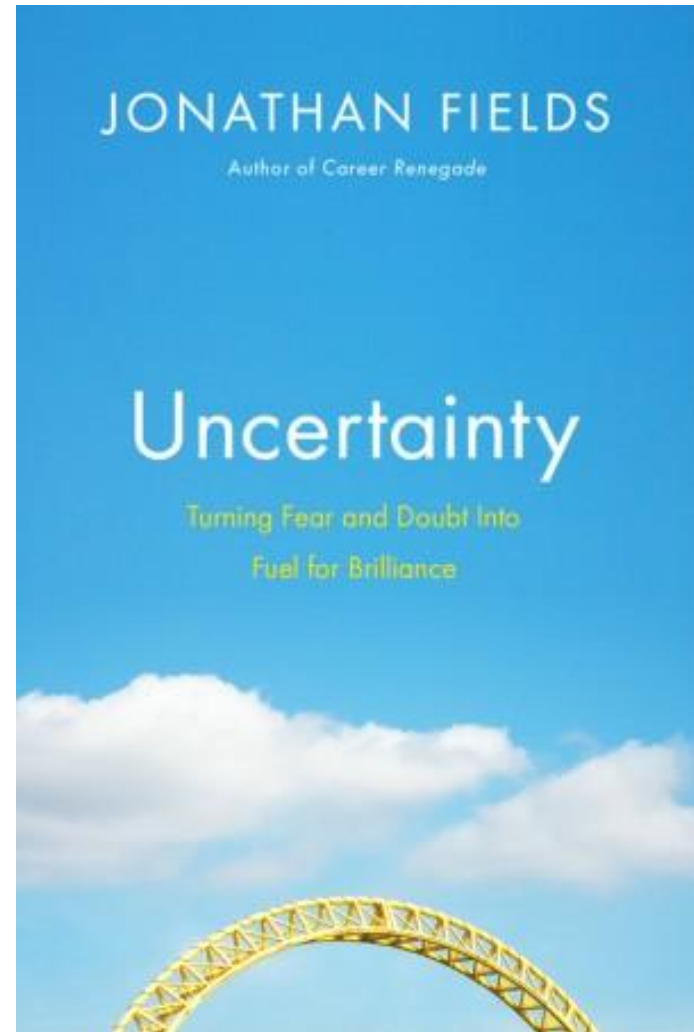
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‘Do your dance anyway...Ole to you  
nonetheless for having the sheer  
human love and stubbornness to  
keep showing up’  
Elizabeth Gilbert



‘The butterflies have to be there. They’re not fun (though you can learn to experience them very differently), but they are visceral signposts that what you’re doing matters.’

Jonathan Fields



---

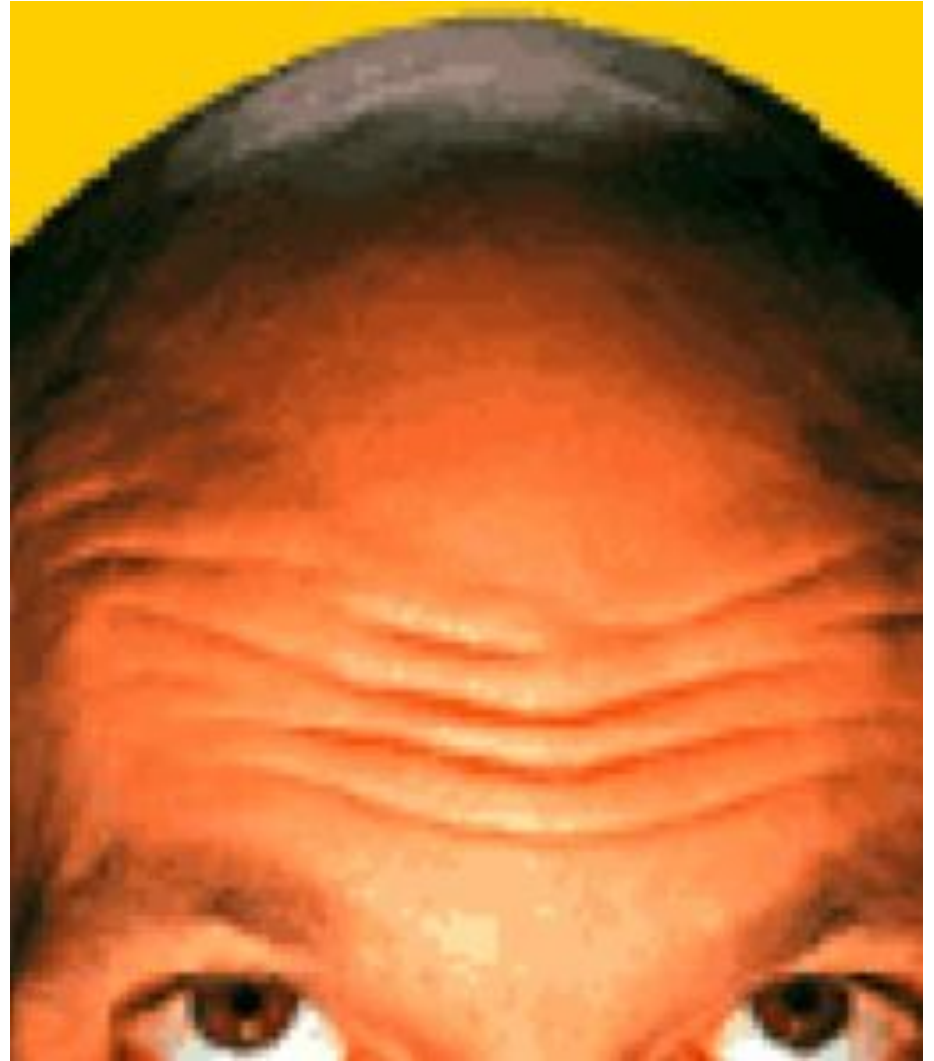
Every time you raise your hand, send an email, launch a product or make a suggestion, you're exposing yourself to criticism. Not just criticism, but the negative consequences that come with wasting money, annoying someone in power or making a fool of yourself.

It's no wonder we're afraid to ship.

It's not clear you have much choice, though. A life spent curled in a ball, hiding in the corner might seem less risky, but in fact it's certain to lead to ennui and eventually failure.

..... Everyone is afraid. Where do you put the fear?

Seth Godin



---

'Is there something about me that if other people know it or see it, then I won't be worthy of connection...it's universal we all have it'

Brene Brown



---

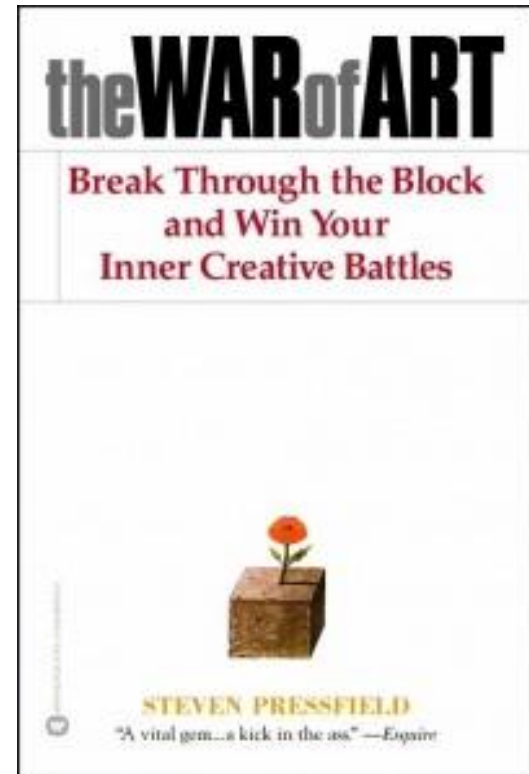
**‘Willingness to fully embrace vulnerability as a necessary part of a life well-lived. ...The willingness to do something where there are no guarantees.’**

Brene Brown



The artist and the professional....have turned a corner in their minds. They have succeeded in stepping back from themselves. They stand “at one remove.”

Steven Pressfield



# What are the ways in which using ACT in these settings can be problematic?

1. Difficulties with Creative Hopelessness
- 2. Combining ACT with problem solving**
3. Getting 'hooked' by politics etc
4. Modelling vulnerability.
5. ACT sounds weird
6. Revealing vulnerability
7. Making 'values' work work.

Work Stressor	Problem Solving Response
Lack of control	Enhance job control
Lack of communication	Improve communication skills
No appreciation	Look for positives
No feedback – good or bad	360 degree feedback
Career and job ambiguity	Psychometrics/ decision sciences
Unclear policies	Review policies and procedures
Mistrust, unfairness, politics	Develop clear ground rules
Pervasive uncertainty	Risk management
Random interruptions	Time management

Note to self:

**There is always a  
problem solving  
element to my client's  
problem**

But...



Work Stressor	Problem Solving Response	Limits of Problem Solving
Lack of <b>control</b>	Enhance <b>job control</b>	There are still <b>factors outside our control</b> that cause us stress
Lack of <b>communication</b>	Improve <b>communication skills</b>	I may have the <b>right skills</b> but will tend to narrow down and become <b>inflexible</b> when I feel stressed
No <b>appreciation</b>	Look for <b>positives</b>	Employees experience the manager as <b>'fake'</b>
No <b>feedback</b> – good or bad	<b>360 degree feedback</b>	360 feedback is often <b>distressing</b>
Career and job <b>ambiguity</b>	<b>Psychometrics/</b> decision sciences	Having a 'type' tends to <b>restrict</b> our sense that we can grow, develop or adapt
Unclear <b>policies</b>	<b>Review policies</b> and procedures	People often <b>don't follow</b> the policies
Mistrust, unfairness, <b>politics</b>	<b>Develop clear ground rules</b>	To implement the team agreement we are going to have to <b>'call' behaviour</b>
Pervasive <b>uncertainty</b>	<b>Risk management</b>	<b>Risk management still leaves risk</b>
Random <b>interruptions</b>	<b>Time management</b>	All jobs involve <b>a degree of random interruption</b>

# What are the ways in which using ACT in these settings can be problematic?

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Sometimes it all goes horribly and  
terribly wrong...



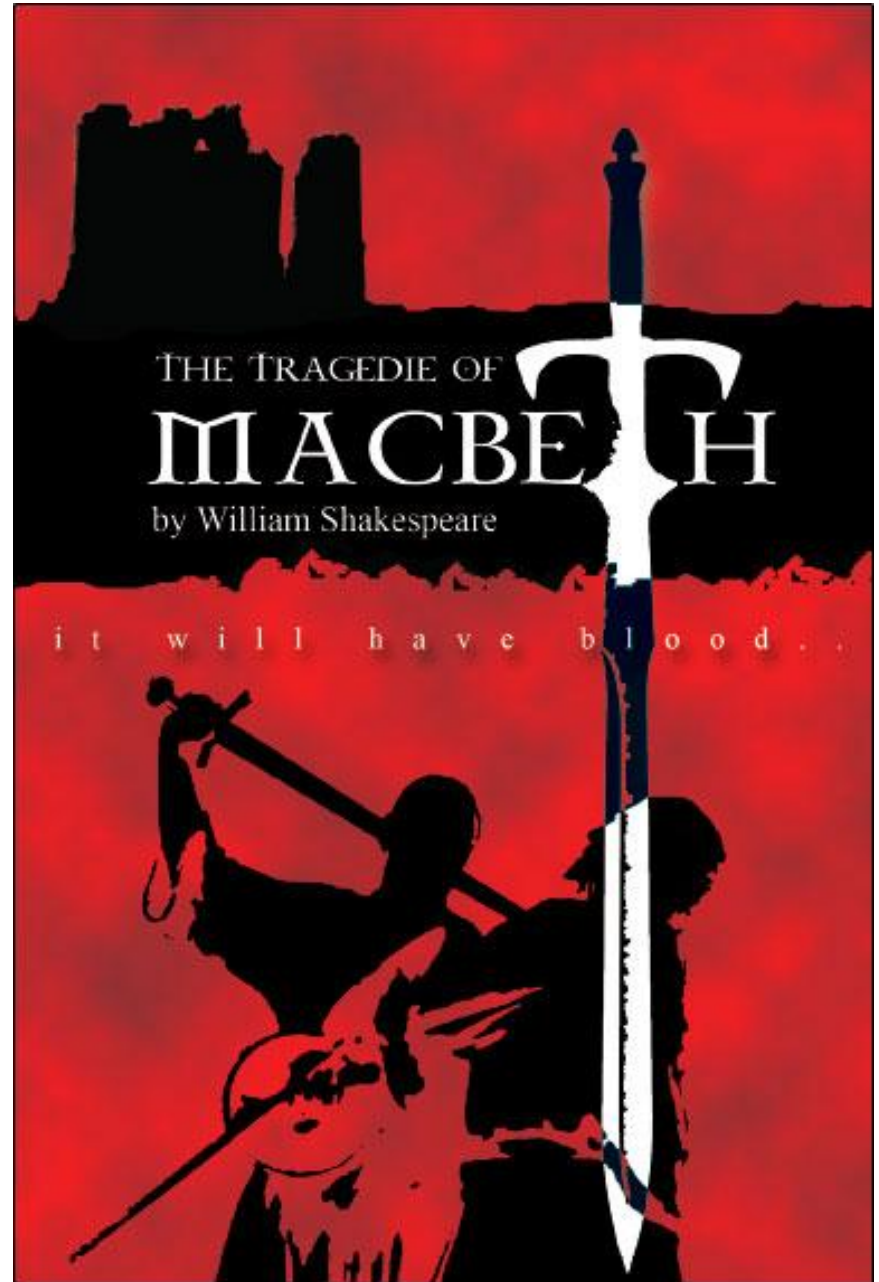
# Needs Analysis

- What does the client want to achieve?
- Where are they now?
- What have they tried?
- What do they think will work?
- **Understanding the Context**

Attitude



# Dynamics



Power?

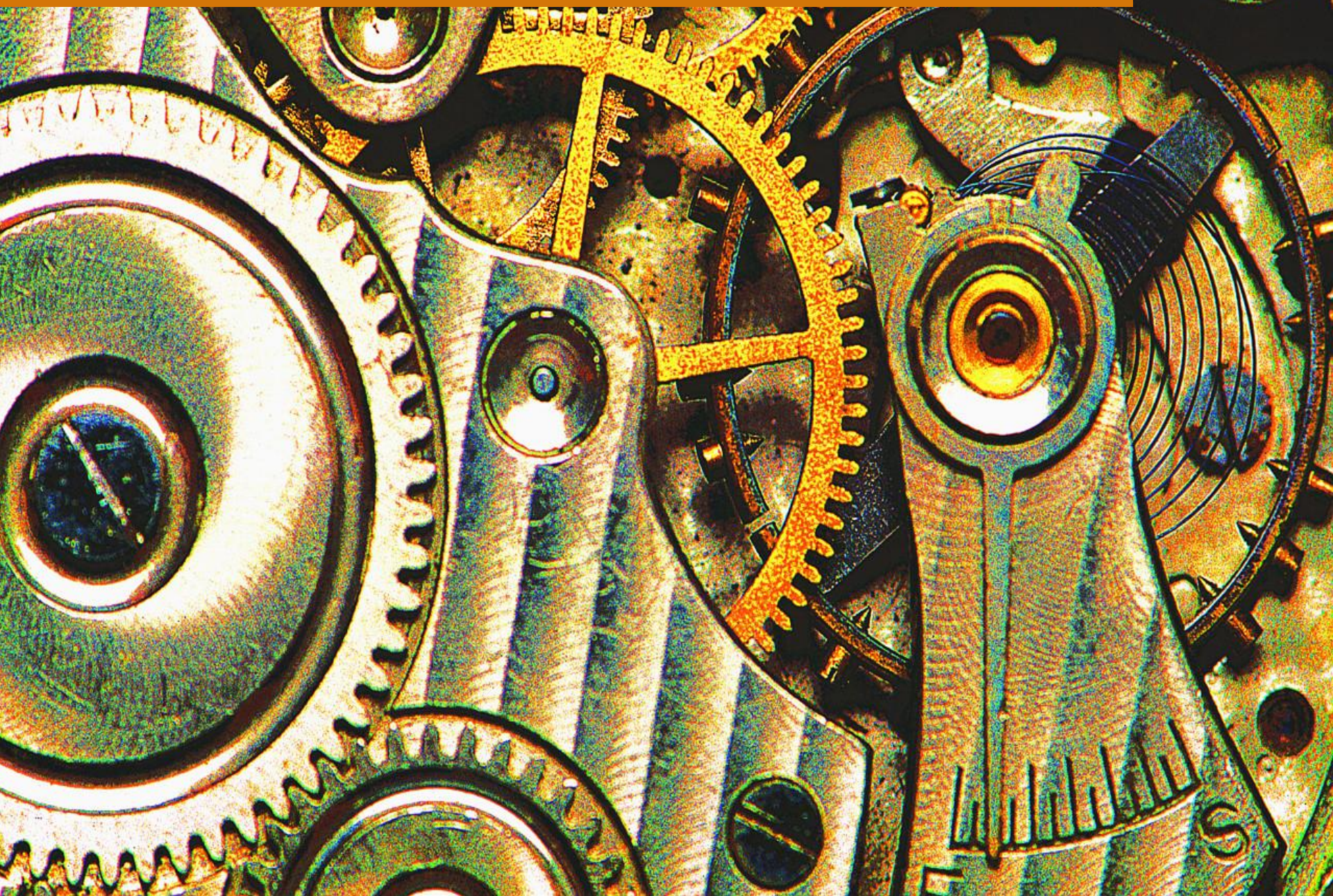


# Strategies to build influence:

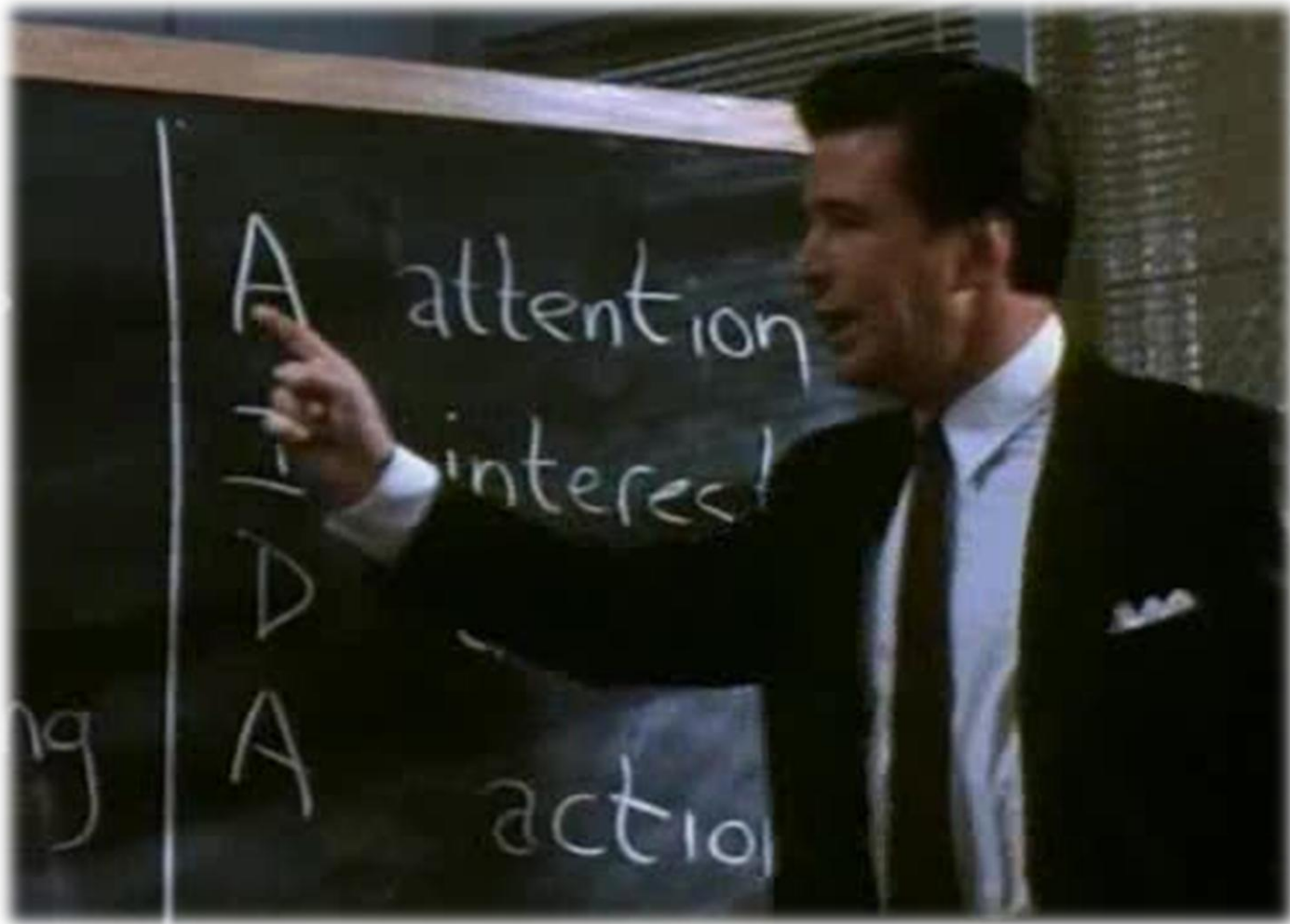
- ✓ Do good work
- ✓ Hope you are noticed
- ✓ Avoid political manoeuvring
- ✓ Be humble
- ✓ Have open and honest agendas
- ✓ Genuinely seek feedback

**AND...**

Find out how the system works...



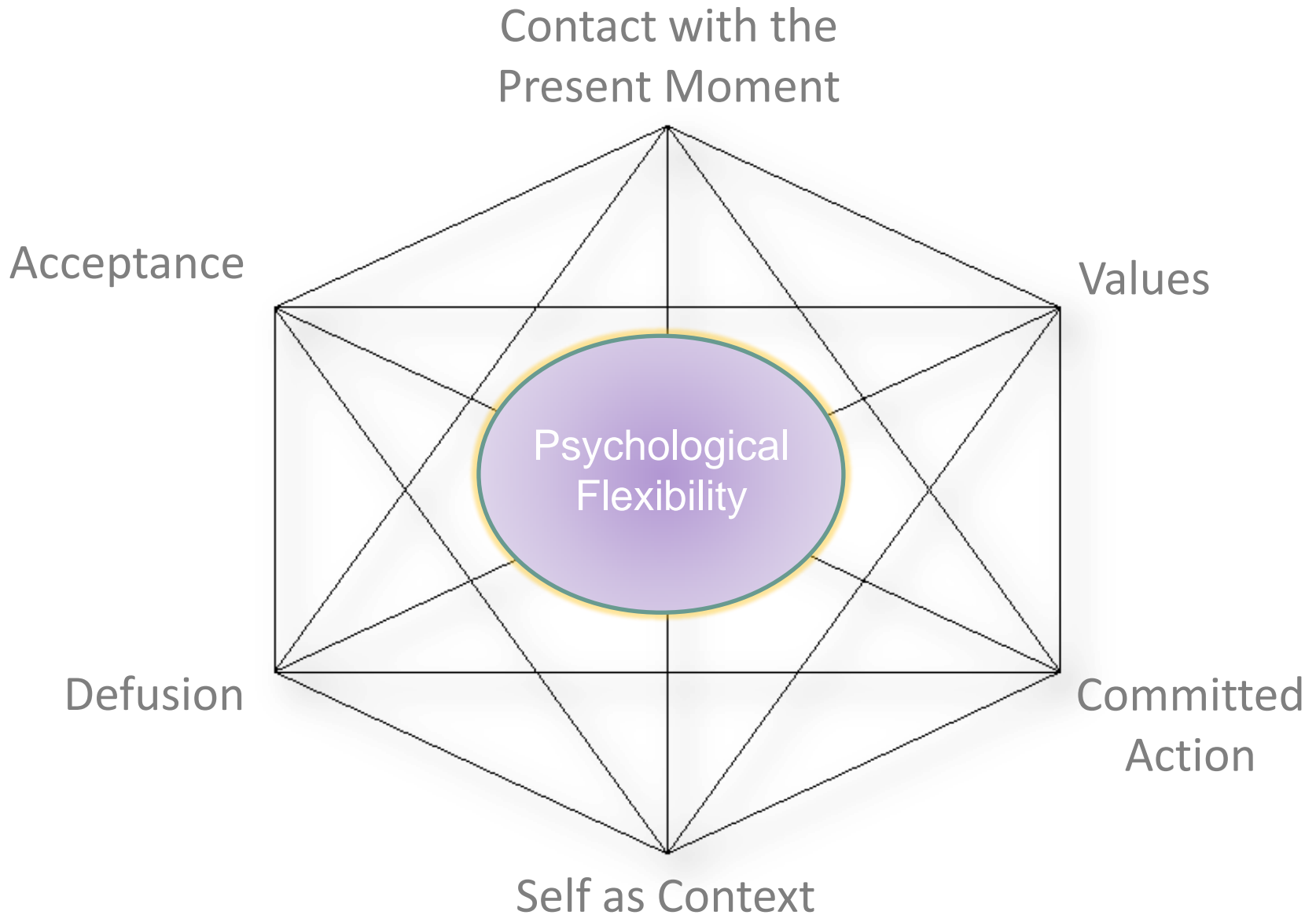
# Be prepared to sell solutions



Excel at presentation



# Be Flexible...



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3: Crying on stage  
is no longer a problem





# Translating ACT for Organisations

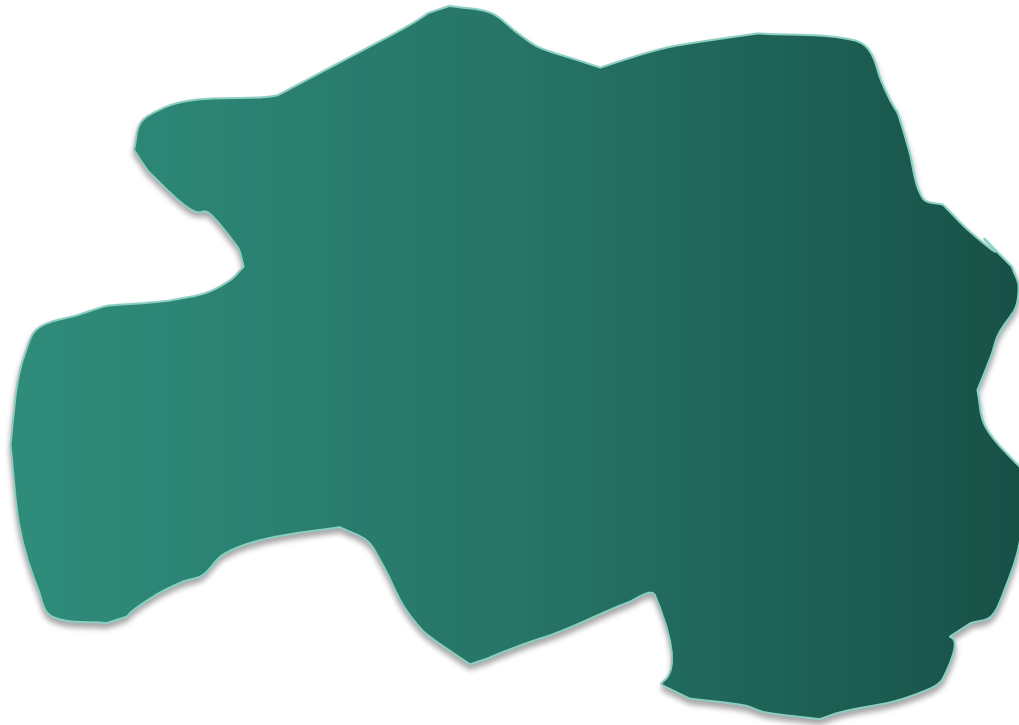
Acceptance & Commitment Therapy	Acceptance & Commitment Training? Psychological Flexibility Training
The 6 processes of ACT	Mindfulness / Values-based action The Matrix
Stress management	Resilience
Self as context	Your resilient self
Mindfulness	Noticing where attention is, Getting present
Defusion	Changing relationships with thoughts 'Even from half an inch away'
Acceptance	Willingness Self-compassion
Present moment awareness	Getting present
Values / What are your values?	What are you committed to? What do you want your life to stand for?
Unwanted private events	Recurrent thoughts, painful feelings and memories
Creative hopelessness process	Needs analysis process
Control agenda	The limits of problem solving
Contacting the present moment fully as a conscious human being, and based on what the situation affords..	Needs to be <b>explained</b> with examples and activities Flexible thinking



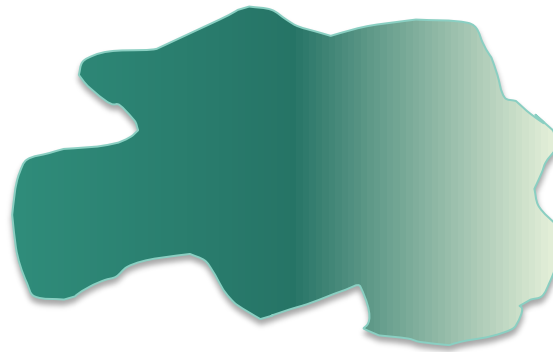
# Getting to Know Each Other



# Physicalise



# Physicalise



---

# Valued Action and Willingness

- Pick a valued action
- As you imagine taking that action, what thoughts and feelings come up?
- Is that value important enough to you that you would be willing to take that action anyway whilst experiencing those thoughts and feelings?

Russ Harris



A photograph showing a woman with long dark hair, wearing a light green sweater, sitting on the floor. She has a slightly distressed or sad expression. Another person, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, is leaning in from the right, with their hand resting on the woman's shoulder in a comforting gesture. The background is a simple indoor setting with a white wall and a grey carpet.

**Willingness is...**

Honouring your distress  
the way you would  
honour a friend by listening

Steve Hayes - GOOYM

Willingness is not...

Ignoring your painful emotions

Russ Harris - ACT made Simple

# Willingness is not...



Resisting your painful emotions



Willingness is not...

Believing your painful emotions



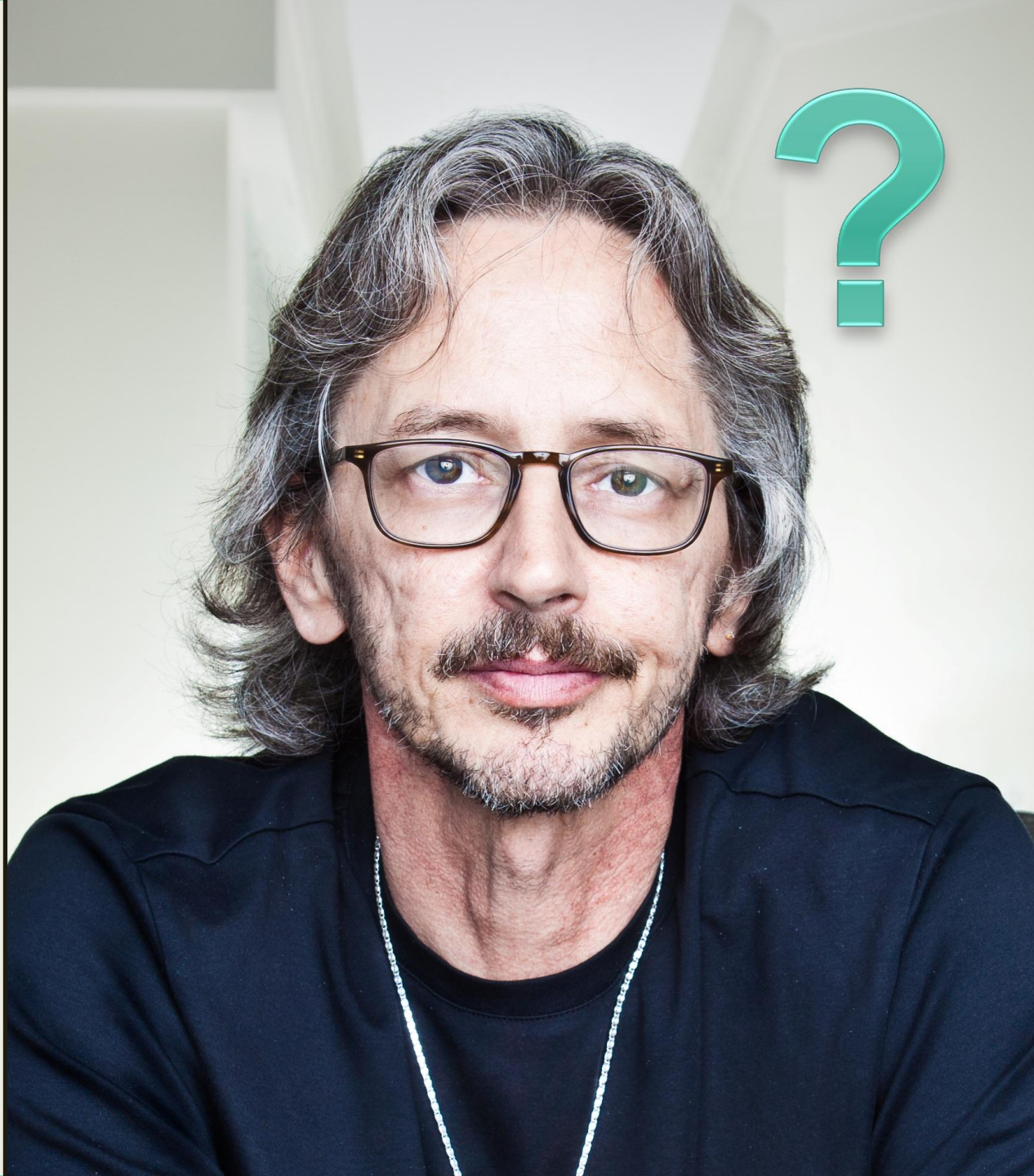
Willingness is not...

Not believing your  
painful emotions

# Willingness is...



Carrying your difficult feelings with you the way you carry a picture in your wallet



---

**What ACT activities have you found  
to be effective in organisational  
settings?**

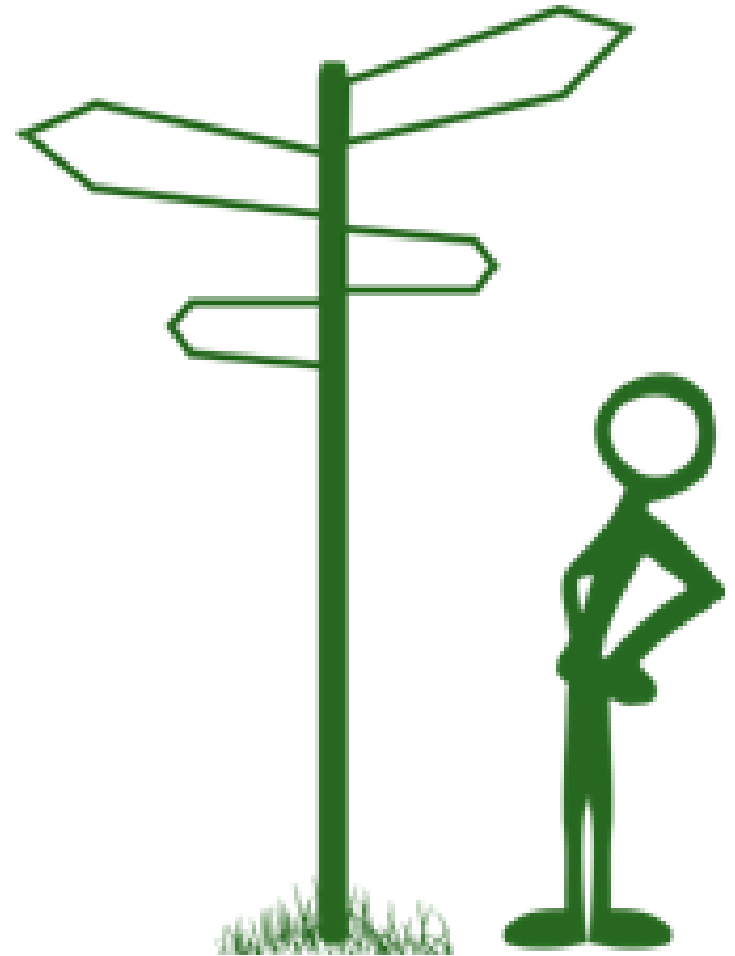


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# Session Structure

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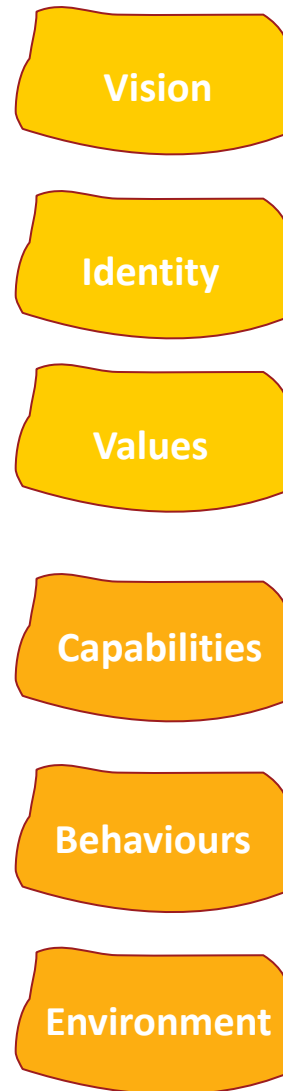
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‘Values are your heart’s deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being. Values are not about what you want to get or achieve; they are about how you want to behave or act on an ongoing basis.’

Russ Harris - The Happiness Trap

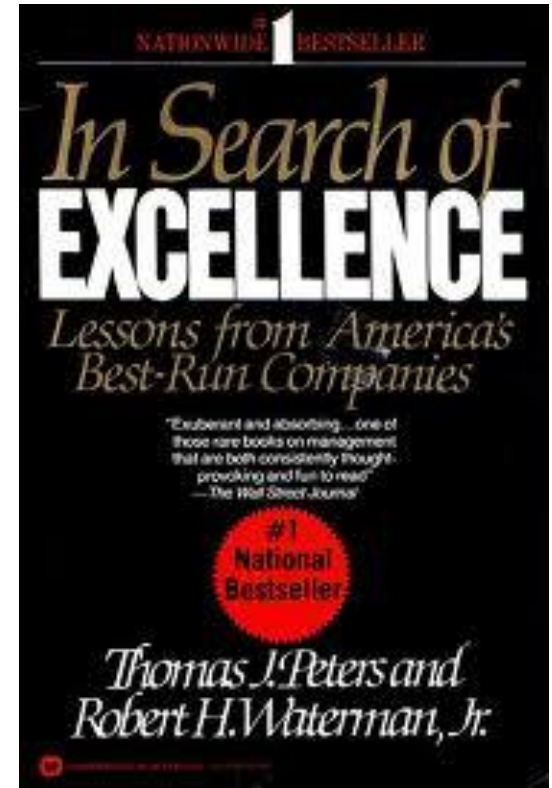


# The Current View...



# The Current View...

“An organisation must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all its procedures and actions... To meet a challenging world, it must be prepared to change everything about itself except those beliefs”.



# The Current View...

“Successful organisations are characterised by **strong values** that communicate what behaviour is appropriate and what is not”.



So 'Values' have to be sold to employee's...



---

‘In ACT values are freely chosen, verbally constructed consequences of ongoing dynamic evolving patterns of action which establish predominant reinforcers for that activity that are intrinsic in engagement in the valued behavioural pattern itself’

(Wilson and Dufrene:

*Mindfulness for Two* p 64)



---

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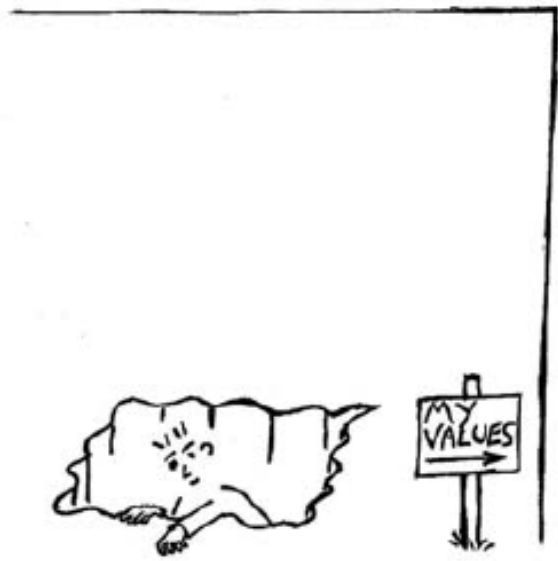
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*Mindfulness for Two* p 64)





# Scaling Personal Values (through knitting)



“You can whip people into line with fear, but you can't get them to build any of the great human accomplishments. That takes aspiration, which I think means values”.



“You need low enough experiential avoidance that you do not run from the pain that empathy will give you.”



“We can take what we do in our therapy rooms and bring it to the occupational and social contexts of our lives.

We can live our values while having our doubts come along for the ride.

If we can take a chance on this broader level - the collective impact will be great.”



# What's next?



# Working with ACT Website

## Working with ACT

*Using ACT in the workplace to improve performance and wellbeing*



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### **How Using ACT in the Workplace Could Transform....Well, Almost Everything**

Posted on [July 8, 2011](#) by [Rob Archer](#)

Rachel and I will shortly presenting at the World ACT conference in Parma, Italy.

<http://workingwithact.com> ... ..

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