ACT with Kids

ANZ ACBS Conference 2016 Workshop
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What do you remember?

• How much of your childhood do you remember?

• Is it a highlights reel of specific events, characterised as experiences of intense emotions? Those ‘a-ha’ moments where something once hazy was now clear? Or when we discovered something about ourselves and our world?

• Think of a child’s perspective: Ever present in the ‘now’, children are mini scientists exploring new frontiers of friendships with the same curiosity and intensity as they may do with navigating the perils of a spelling test.
Workshop Outline

• Why ACT with kids
• Initial session, assessment and case formulation
• Practical application of ACT processes to case studies
• Show and Tell time (if time permits)
• Have fun while learning something new / affirming current practice
• Rules of engagement: have fun, openness, collaborative learning = active participation, sharing ideas, giving it a go
• Yes, there will be group work.
What is your context?

• Setting (e.g. private practice, community MH, school, NGO, etc.)
• Types of clients (e.g. all ages, children only, specific disorders)
• Functions (e.g. think of your roles in a child’s life)
• Patterns of behaviour (e.g. try to notice negative cycles and thought → feeling → action chains)
• Challenging situations (e.g. what are common trigger situations for your clientele? Consider the range and frequency of events and what clients need in their behavioural repertoire)
Building flexibility into our work

• Clinic setting is changing

• Understanding behaviour (rather than diagnoses)
  • DSM-V not child-focused; presenting concerns not ‘diagnosable’

• Role of context / situation

• Use of language (e.g. wellbeing, resilience, thriving, etc.)

• Child + Parent + System (e.g. hospital, school, extended family)

• Attitude of openness and curiosity
Why ACT with Kids?

• Offers flexibility to work in complement to the practitioner’s theoretical and practice base (wherever it may be derived from).
• Practical and realistic approach to working with a population that requires an adaptive and playful stance.
• Process-based approach that can build learning and skills at the child’s developmental stage (unlike ‘unlearning’ for adults)
• Provides a common language to facilitate growth across the systems of a child’s life – their family, their school and local community
Why ACT for Kids?

• Can be used in brief settings (not time constrained)
• Clients connect with the playful, experiential approach
• Flexibility and spontaneity is good for everyone
• More of a focus of noticing the client’s present moment action = more creative metaphors
• Increased openness and creativity
Practical Considerations

• Other therapies have validity and ACT can work in complement to other child-focused approaches.
  • Narrative therapy, play therapy, solution-focused therapy, compassion-focused therapy, family therapy models, etc.

• Children’s learning preferences and cognitive abilities (e.g. concrete thinking; rule-directed; insight and narrative recall poor)

• Understanding the contexts the child is living within (e.g. family structure, parental mental health issues, cultural expectations, etc.)

• Role of other influencers (e.g. school-based programs)
What influences your work with children?

• Brief discussion with a partner (5 min)

• Consider:
  • The contexts of your contact / engagement
  • The child and their systems
  • Your training and professional approach
  • Your own experiences of childhood
  • Your values
Initial Session

• Introduce role
• Build rapport
• Empower children, e.g. goal setting, self-motivation
• Explain ACT? Impact on informed consent
• Engagement of parents, e.g. align parent goals with ACT approach

• Demonstration of initial session introduction (role play)
Initial Session Mind Map

• Provides an engaging process for the children

• Allows for rapport to develop – child to warm up with topics they are comfortable with / enjoy speaking about

• Allows for some exposure to the ‘It’ – the thing they usually avoid

• Helps to put the child in the observer role as they are looking at their lives from a distance
Assessment measures and tools

• Non-ACT specific measures that are diagnostic in nature

• ACT specific measures:
  • Limited numbers that are child-focused.
  • Diabetes Acceptance and Action Scale for Children and Adolescents (DAAS)
  • Child Acceptance and Mindfulness Measure (CAMM)
  • Avoidance and Fusion Questionnaire for Youth (AFQ-Y) (older children)
  • White Bear Suppression Inventory (WBSI) (older children)
  • Parental Acceptance Questionnaire (6-PAQ)
  • Valued Living Questionnaire (VLQ) (Parent domain)
Case Formulation

• Consider:
  • 5Ps: Presenting issue, Predisposing, Precipitating, Perpetuating, Protective
  • Traditional frameworks, e.g. biopsychosocial model,
  • Function of behaviours
  • Attachment history
  • Developmental stage
  • Any developmental / learning issues
  • What systems are involved? How are they maintaining behaviours?
Case Formulation Exercise (20min)

• Find a partner
• Review the provided case study handout (Case Study A or B)
• Using the case study’s details, fill in the Initial Assessment and Formulation template (template can be emailed for future use)
• What further information is needed? How would you gather that information?
• Come together into groups of 4 with the alternate Case Study and discuss each others’ formulation process
Formulation model
The Action Heroes Strategy Cards

• Set of 72 cards
  • 5 Instruction Cards
  • 10 Strategy Cards per Hero + 6 Character Cards
  • Each card has visual language & verbal language

• For professionals and schools
• For parents

• www.actionheroes.com.au
The ACT-consistent Helper

- The mindful helper
- The defused helper
- The accepted helper
- The values-driven helper

- Therapeutic relationship & therapy process
- You must model the hexaflex as a therapist
Knowing when to use which process

• Where are you in your hexaflex?
• Be open to the present moment
• What language is client using?
• Defuse from right or wrong
• Notice symbolism, metaphor potential
• Use a metaphor
• Check with client
The ACT Therapeutic Processes

• Group work (groups assigned by Reyelle – please keep your stick)

• Six stations – each is an ACT process with some stimulation tools to get the creative juices flowing

• Groups will rotate through the processes using a different case study at each station

• Each station will have a record sheet for ideas to be noted – all record sheets will be typed up and shared with participants after the workshop (e.g. loaded onto ACBS website; email for non-members)
Show and Tell time (if time permits!)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXkhRVh2Byc

(related to exercise on next slide)
• Young child whose older sibling had significant behavioural issues and how it was affecting the client.

• The client had an interest in the Littlest Pet Shoppe TV cartoon. I found an episode where one of the characters loses her sprinkles and is very angry. There is a catchy song and some important messages about anger.

• We watched the episode in session, adapted the song from the show into our session using her own lyrics, as well as developed a metaphor of being a wind-up doll that her older sibling controls.

• She drew her angry feeling as well as some strategies for accepting and responding in a helpful way to her anger.
Milk, milk, milk = pink, fluffy unicorns

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2P3e1_kU-8
The ever changing self

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BYyJ5ETB90
Repurpose child artefacts

Have a Hero (ACT process) on the four sides and when you lift up the 'fortune' replace it with a strategy from the cards, or your own variation.
Defusion

- The next three slides provide examples of defusion for children who are experiencing different challenges. These are examples of how children can engage in defusion using language, song lyrics, and imagery.
What if it's?

What if... the bridge falls down?

↓
I will get hurt

↓
I will drown

↓
I will die

I will die

I will die

I will die

I will die

I will die
Netball

- People are watching
  - Coach is yelling
  - Other players are cheering
  - Other team is rough
  - Parents are screaming
  - Whistle is loud
  - Players are calling out

X/4

Is the other team better?
We lose every game
We aren't very good
It's not very fun to lose all of the time

There's pressure to play well and win
If we go going to pick on the next

Shake It Off
I don't want to play
I miss shots every day
That's what the team will say

That's what they'll all say
I'm gonna be sick
Vomit all over my kicks
It'll smell throughout the day
I won't be able to play no more

But I keep playing
Can't stop, won't stop moving
It's like I've got this feeling
In my mind saying
It's gonna be alright!
Cause the players gonna try,
Try, try, try, try
On the court.

And I'm gonna shot, run laugh, play
Cause I just want to kick the ball.
What if I can't say goodbye

- - - - -

eybaaoy yes tinac l fi tahm

goofy octopus of
dress town
buys
yellow
elves

Green
Olives
Of
Duggletown
Bully
Young
Eggs

Google
On
Osteopathy
Digging
Big
Yaks
Ever after.

Cold
Apes
Now
Belong
Everywhere
Really
Rand
Awesome
Can
Ankle
Now
Board
Easily
Rapidly
Restricted (of)
Anxiety
Abnormal
Cudgely
Puppies
Live
Amongst
Naughty
Fruits and
Elephants.

Australia.
Exposure hierarchies

• Next slide includes examples of exposure hierarchies using interests of two children.

• The image on the left was for a child who had issues with physical touch and her goals were to gradually increase physical contact with her friends. A horse jumping metaphor was used to set exposure goals based on her interest in horse riding.

• The image on the right was for a child who was refusing most food after a serious choking incident. He enjoyed reading the 13 Storey Treehouse series, so an exposure hierarchy was created using storeys in his own special treehouse.
Being able to focus no matter the feeling is amazing.

I used to have trouble focusing on things.

I was very easily distracted.

I used to have trouble focusing in school and at home.

I didn't know how to focus.

I didn't know how to pay attention.

I didn't know how to listen.

I didn't know how to concentrate.

I didn't know how to focus on my work.

I didn't know how to focus on my studies.

I didn't know how to focus on my homework.

I didn't know how to focus on my schoolwork.

I didn't know how to focus on my projects.

I didn't know how to focus on my assignments.

I didn't know how to focus on my tasks.

I didn't know how to focus on my responsibilities.

I didn't know how to focus on my goals.

I didn't know how to focus on my objectives.

I didn't know how to focus on my outcomes.

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Values exercise

• Explain values using the compass metaphor and provide a personal example of own values

• Have child consider the different domains of their life and how values (who and what matters most to them) help guide their compass

• Ask child to look at photos on their phone / iPad to help tease out their values

• Example on next slide
Acceptance

• The next slide includes two examples of acceptance

• The left image is about the feelings the child is carrying around with her throughout the day and how they can lessen / grow depending on how she responds to them

• The right image is teaching urge surfing and identifying when feelings related to germs and anxiety about routine occur
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>wash hands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>go home straight after school</td>
</tr>
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</table>

- not wanting to go to the shop

**urge**

- itchy feeling
- squeeze feeling

- cool stops
- time with Mum
- helping decisions
- buy ice blocks

We are driving to the visitors
in the car

Mum picks me up

Arrived home

Diddington
Goal setting can be fun!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dup3lArSNs
Teeth

Bubblegum
Chew food
Talk, speak
funny noises
Smile
Show our feelings

I'm brushing on my own
Cause I'm a big girl all grown
It's so much fun for me
mm mm

I'm chewing lots of food
With my mouth closed - I'm not rude
There are important to me
mm mm mm

But I keep brushing
Can't stop, won't stop brushing
It's like I've got these fuzzies
In my mouth saying 'You need to keep me clean'

So the fuzzies go away, ay, ay, ay
Healthy teeth are here to stay, ay, ay, ay
I'm just going to brush, brush, brush, brush
Spit it out, spit it out

Brush our teeth
nice, clean and shiny

Rotten
Dirty
Fuzzy
Smelly
It’s all about being flexible

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJP1RzqxkHw
Other YouTube sources

• Laura Green (Australian) has a channel
• Crash Course (for older children and parents)
• GoZen and GoStrengths channel (mindfulness)
• MyMindFeed channel (It’s a beautiful day mindfulness clip)
• Mindful Schools channel
• Pixar short films
• Happify channel (for older children and parents)
Thank you!

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