Enrich Your Mental Health Practice With Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: A 2-Day Practical Workshop

Presenters: John P. Forsyth, Ph.D. & Jamie R. Forsyth, Ph.D.
Workshop Dates: March 14 & 15, 2019
Time: 8:30am – 4:30pm (both days)
Place: Queens University, exact location TBA

Workshop Overview
Acceptance and mindfulness-based practices are rapidly making their way into mental health care, medicine, and society – both to alleviate human suffering and nurture psychological health and wellness. This body of work offers a fresh perspective on psychological suffering, and powerful clinical strategies that support meaningful life changes. In this workshop, we will learn about one unique approach and set of intervention strategies based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (or ACT, said as one word).

ACT balances mindfulness and acceptance processes with commitment and behavior change in the service of living a more vital life. ACT is both a form of therapy and an approach to living well, with evidence showing that it is useful for many forms of psychological and emotional suffering. ACT offers a fresh perspective on psychological health and a set of powerful clinical strategies that support meaningful life changes. In short, ACT teaches clients how to change their relationship with painful aspects of their experience and do what works – to live well, richly, and meaningfully, without first having to overcome sources of emotional and psychological pain.

This work can be challenging for both therapists and clients alike, for much of ACT work involves contacting difficult and painful psychological content without defense and for a purpose other than psychological relief. Thus, understanding the application and integration of the ACT model of psychological health and suffering is essential for effective ACT work.

This 2-day workshop will introduce ACT, both as a model and intervention technology, and illustrate its use across a broad set of problem areas that are commonly seen in mental health settings (e.g., anxiety, depression, anger). Our time together will be a mix of instruction, demonstrations, and hands on practical experiential exercises that will be done individually, in dyads, and small groups. The exercises will highlight the integration of mindfulness and acceptance strategies to disarm forms of human suffering and also to promote greater clarity of values and value-guided action. Worksheets and other practical tools will be provided.

We hope that you will join us for this 2-day workshop where you will learn powerful strategies to help your clients:

- Gain freedom from fear & suffering
- Let go of unhelpful struggles
- Cultivate peace of mind & self-compassion
- Show up to life as it is
- Get unstuck and moving
- Live a rich & meaningful life
Learning Objectives

Participants in this workshop will learn to:
1. Define the three pillars of ACT as a process-oriented intervention approach;
2. Identify the core processes within the ACT model of human suffering and link each process with ACT intervention targets to support psychological health;
3. Explain an ACT approach to case conceptualization / formulation;
4. Describe the Forsyth Sphere-a-Flex model as a practical guide to ACT in practice;
5. Describe mental health concerns (e.g., anxiety, depression, problem anger) within an ACT framework;
6. Define and identify “fusion” and “experiential avoidance” and their role in various forms of human suffering;
7. Explain the purpose and function of creative hopelessness work within ACT;
8. Identify exemplars of excessive struggle and avoidance and describe mindful and compassionate alternative behaviors;
9. Deliver values clarification exercises in dyads and small groups;
10. Rehearse essential ACT intervention skills to cultivate psychological flexibility;
11. Apply and integrate mindfulness and acceptance processes with commitment and behavior change processes in dyads;
12. Discriminate ACT consistent and inconsistent strategies in mental health practice; and
13. Describe strategies to foster the ongoing development of ACT competencies.

Workshop Schedule

DAY 1 – March 14, 2019
8:00– 8:30 am Registration / Check in

8:30am – 12:00 pm
ACT Model and Case Conceptualization
- Why It’s Hard Being Human
- Pervasiveness of Human Suffering
- ACT Case Conceptualization
- ACT Model of Human Suffering & Psychological Health
- Pulling it Together

12-1:00pm Lunch Break

1:00 – 2pm
Creating Space For Something New
- Why Creative Hopeless in ACT?
- Exploring Workability
- Letting Go of Unhelpful Struggle and Control
- Establishing Creative Hopelessness

2 – 2:15 pm Break
2:15 – 4:30pm
Doing Effective Values Work in ACT
- The Nature of Values in ACT
- Distinguishing Values From Goals
- Connecting with Values
- Values Clarification and Assessment
- Barriers to Valued Action

DAY 2 – March 15, 2019

8:30am – 12:00 pm
Cultivating Mindfulness, the Observer Self, & Defusion
- Learning to be Present, Here Now
- Self as Context vs. the Conceptualized Self
- Defusion From Unhelpful Thoughts: Overview and Purpose

12-1:00pm Lunch Break

1:00 – 4:30pm
Nurturing Self-Compassion, Acceptance, & Value-Guided Action
- Self-Compassion and Kindness – Powerful Antidotes to Suffering
- Cultivating Acceptance to Open Up
- The Nature of Willingness
- Building Patterns of Committed ACTion
- Setting SMART Value Guided Goals
- Wrap up & the Journey Ahead

Who Should Attend
Social workers, licensed mental health counselors, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, psychiatrists, life-coaches, and other mental health professionals, including graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. Some general familiarity with ACT will be helpful, but is not required.
Speakers – Drs. John and Jamie Forsyth

John and Jamie have trained thousands of mental health professionals in the practical use of ACT and together they are known to offer what promises to be a unique and dynamic ACT training experience. They are known to infuse their teaching and trainings with energy, humility and compassion, and their down-to-earth workshops are consistently praised for their clarity, depth, and practical utility.

John and his wife Jamie regularly give ACT talks and workshops to the public and professionals in the United States and abroad. They are well known for offering intensive week-long retreat-style ACT trainings at the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies in Rhinebeck, NY, the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, CA, and the Cape Cod Institute in Eastham, MA, where John and Jamie are members of the teaching faculty. In 2020, Jamie and John will be offering a week-long training at Kripalu in MA, dates to be determined.

**John P. Forsyth, Ph.D.** is an internationally recognized author, speaker, researcher, and trainer in the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and practices that cultivate mindfulness, loving kindness, and compassion. For over 20 years, his work has focused on developing ACT and mindfulness practices to alleviate human suffering, awaken the human spirit, and to nurture psychological health and vitality. His personal journey and experience, balanced with practical insights grounded in scientific evidence, offers hope to those wishing to find a path out of suffering and into wholeness.

He has written several popular ACT books, including *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Anxiety Disorders* (for mental health professionals), and several ACT self-help books for the public: *The Mindfulness & Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety, 2nd ed.*, and *ACT on Life, Not on Anger*, and *Your Life on Purpose*. His latest ACT self-help book, *Anxiety Happens: 52 Ways to Find Peace of Mind*, was released in April 2018.

John holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, and is a Professor of Psychology and Director the Anxiety Disorders Research Program at the University at Albany, SUNY in Upstate New York. He is a licensed clinical psychologist, with expertise in the use and application of ACT for several forms of psychological and emotional suffering. He is also widely sought after ACT trainer and consultant and serves as a senior editor of the ACT book series with New Harbinger Publications.

Collectively, his work has helped foster growing interest in acceptance and mindfulness in psychology, mental health, medicine, and society.

[www.drjohnforsyth.com](http://www.drjohnforsyth.com)
Jamie R. Forsyth, Ph.D. is an active and gifted clinician and clinical supervisor, with extensive expertise in the use and application of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) with severe forms mental illness (e.g., psychosis and personality disorders) and forms of psychological and emotional suffering in inpatient, outpatient, and college mental health settings. Beyond ACT, Jamie is a skillful integrationist and researcher, with specialized knowledge in relational and process-oriented therapeutic work, addictions, motivational interviewing, including mindfulness and self-compassion practices.

Jamie holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology and is a licensed clinical psychologist in New York. She is a clinician and clinical supervisor at Union College, where she offers ACT-based outpatient psychotherapy to college students presenting with significant psychological, emotional, and behavioral challenges. Her clinical work, grounded in evidence-based know-how, offers unique insights into the subtle nuances of ACT as it unfolds in clinical practice. Jamie is also actively engaged in the dissemination of ACT and mindfulness practices within her college community and, along with her husband John, co-lead ACT professional workshops in the United States and abroad.

Although ACT is her primary theoretical orientation, Jamie considers herself to be an integrationist and thus draws upon relational and psychodynamic theories to help create a holistic person-centered approach to treatment. Jamie’s clinical wisdom, coupled with the depth and scope of her knowledge and skills, bridges various approaches and streams of practice within an ACT point of view.