



## “Using Acceptance and Committed Therapy to Open Up and Do What Matters”

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Speaker Disclosure: Dr. Tusa has no relevant financial relationship(s) with ineligible companies to disclose and DOES NOT INTEND to discuss off-label or investigational use of products or services.

### SPEAKER

Brittany Tusa, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist, Assistant Attending Psychologist at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, and Assistant Professor of Psychology in Clinical Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medicine. She provides psychotherapeutic services through CopeNYP, the hospital system's Employee Assistance Program, and the Weill Cornell Physician's Organization. Dr. Tusa serves on the Weill Cornell Physician's Organization Leadership Council, where she acts in an advisory role and as an ombudsperson for its members. She earned her doctorate in clinical psychology from Hofstra University's APA-accredited program and completed her APA-accredited internship at the Veterans Affairs New Jersey Health Care System in East Orange, NJ. She then pursued a postdoctoral fellowship at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, specializing in cognitive behavioral therapies for anxiety, trauma, and mood disorders. During this time, she also received additional training in evidence-based trauma treatment at Weill Cornell's Program for Anxiety and Traumatic Stress Studies (PATSS). Dr. Tusa specializes in treating anxiety, trauma, and mood-related concerns, with advanced training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Behavioral Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP). She is also extensively trained in trauma-focused interventions, including Prolonged Exposure (PE) and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT). Her clinical experience spans diverse populations, including civilians, veterans, first responders, and healthcare workers. Her research interests focus on PTSD treatment innovation, mindfulness-based therapeutic applications, and advancements in telehealth service delivery.

### ABSTRACT

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a type of third wave therapy that aims to increase wellbeing and reduce symptomology through helping people increase psychological flexibility. Within this talk, we will explore two parts of the ACT hexaflex, Values and Experiential Acceptance. Using Values, or one's chosen life directions, we help clients connect with their hearts' desires for how they want to behave in various domains of their lives on an ongoing basis. In this lecture, we will explore Values in more depth: experiential exercises to help clients connect more deeply with their "compass directions", diversity related considerations when helping clients form and prioritize values, and how to help clients use values to improve mental wellbeing. We will also focus this lecture on Experiential Acceptance, or willingness to allow for both the pleasant and unpleasant personal experiences of the world (thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations). In this lecture we will explore how to help clients recognize that being driven by an agenda of experiential control/avoidance, they often engage in behaviors to resolve distress quickly that are out of line with our values (i.e., avoidance). Only through experiential acceptance/willingness is one fully able to live a life in line with their valued directions.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe how to apply ACT Values to help clients identify and engage in behaviors aligned with their core desires across various life domains.
2. Explain the role of Experiential Acceptance in ACT and how avoidance-based behaviors can interfere with values-driven actions.
3. Demonstrate the use of ACT-based exercises and metaphors in clinical practice to support clients in embracing emotional openness and committing to meaningful actions.

### REFERENCES

1. Harris, R., & Hayes, S. (2022). *The happiness trap: How to Stop Struggling and Start Living*. Shambhala Publications.
2. Harris, R. (2019). *ACT made simple: An Easy-To-Read Primer on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*.
3. Luoma, J. B., Hayes, S. C., & Walser, R. D. (2017). *Learning ACT: An acceptance and commitment therapy skills-training manual for therapists*. New Harbinger Publications.