

GUIDE FOR AN INITIAL ACT SESSION

1. Establish problem. What difficulty are you experiencing?
2. Connect to values.
How is that a problem for you?
What is it getting in the way of?
If we were able to completely get rid of this problem, what would you be doing that you're not doing now?
3. Connect to experience with an eye to the 'doing' of the problem.
What happens? What do you feel? What do you do about feeling that way? What are you doing¹ before you start feeling that way?
4. Identify failed strategies – creative hopelessness.
What have you tried? What have you thought of trying? Overall, how has all that effort worked out for you? Has it rid you of symptoms? Has it enriched your life pursuing solutions to this problem?
5. Establish consent to proceed with ACT.
What if it's not your fault it can't be solved? Perhaps you're using a powerful tool for a problem it can't fix (demonstrate with "Get rid of this thought"). If that seems hopeless, would you be willing to try something else even if it's difficult or doesn't seem common sense?
6. Identify fused thoughts and feelings.
What thoughts/feelings do you find most difficult to sit with?
Could we just try sitting with that feeling rather than running away from it or wrestling with it?
Defusion - thoughts
Expansion – feelings
Acceptance – feelings or evaluative thoughts
7. Map out near-term committed action.
What's a small but significant step you could take today/tomorrow/this week towards the richer more meaningful life we talked about earlier?
8. Plan for relapse/obstacles.
What would be difficult about doing that for you?
What might other people say or what situations would you find confronting?
What can we do to plan for that?
Are you willing to experience some difficult thoughts and feelings on your road to a more fulfilling life?

¹ Note that for our purposes, having thoughts and feelings is also a form of 'doing' i.e. behaviour.