

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy - a practical tool for a speech pathologist

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ABSTRACT

Stuttering can interfere *not only* with the fluency of speech, but *more importantly* it affects the psychological well-being of the person experiencing it (According to the World Health Organization (WHO): "Health is a state of complete, physical, mental and social wellbeing, and individuals or groups must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living."). As a result, it can lead to a *reduction in self-esteem*, as well as making choices incompatible with dreams and aspirations. (Yaruss, Quesal 2010, Boyle 2015).

Therapists need tools (proven effective both in clinical practice and in research) that will allow them to work with the client on:

- ✓ emotions,
 - ✓ attitude towards stuttering,
- and consequently:
- ✓ help to reduce the fear of speaking,
 - ✓ change the attitude towards experienced disfluencies,
 - ✓ increase communicative and social competences.

THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

ACT therapy (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) is a form of behavioral therapy based on *learning effective skills* that:

- ✓ allow coping with painful thoughts and feelings so that they have less impact on us,
- ✓ allow setting the direction of action and following it consistently (Hayes, Ciarrochi 2015)
- ✓ help to fully engage in your own life in line with the values we profess / we believe in.

CREATORS OF THE ACT APPROACH

Steven. C Hayes, Kelly G. Wilson K. Strosahl

PRESENCE, that is, psychological presence, purposefully focusing the one's experience on the here and now

ACCEPTANCE, that is, opening up and making room for painful feelings, sensations, and emotions

DEFUSION, cognitive fusion understood as detachment from one's thoughts, ideas, or memories and their observation

**HEXAFLEX,
OR SIX THERAPEUTIC
PROCESSES IN ACT
THERAPY**

ME AS CONTEXT, called "pure awareness", that is, the part of ourselves that is aware of what we think, feel, and experience

VALUES, establishing them as desirable qualities of action necessary to build a meaningful life

COMMITTED ACTION, that is, acting in accordance with our values, even if it is associated with pain and discomfort.

SUMMARY

The ACT program can be an effective adjunct to speech therapy, as it:

- ✓ helps you *accept* what is and what is not out of control,
- ✓ allows you to change the relationship with painful symptoms
- ✓ enables you to understand what is physically going on with your body (Chambers, Allen 2008)
- ✓ strengthens your psychological presence
- ✓ helps to you reduce the level of inner anxiety
- ✓ prepares you for the constructive overcoming of difficulties
- ✓ shapes your psychological flexibility

The ACT approach, consists of *practicing and experiencing*, mainly in everyday life, not only during therapeutic sessions. It allows achieving satisfactory results enhancing the effects of therapy. According to the authors, it is worth making such an effort to lead a *full and rich life* in line with the professed values.

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