



ACT TOGETHER FAMILY WORK PILOT

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FOUNDATIONS OF ACT TOGETHER — BEHAVIOURAL FAMILY THERAPY (BFT)

Engagement

Assessment and goal setting

Information sharing and relapse planning

Communication skills

- Expressing pleasant feelings
- Making positive requests
- Active listening
- Expressing unpleasant feelings

Problem solving skills

Disengagement

FOUNDATIONS OF ACT TOGETHER — ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY (ACT)

ACT helps us to accept what is out of our personal control and commit to action that enriches our life

It aims to help us create a rich, full and meaningful life, while accepting the pain that life inevitably brings

It does this by teaching us skills to handle painful thoughts and feelings more effectively, so they have less influence on us (mindfulness and de-fusion skills)

And by helping us to clarify what is truly important and meaningful to us (our values) and use these to guide, inspire and motivate us to set goals and take actions that enrich our life

(From ACT Made Simple, Russ Harris)

FOUNDATIONS OF ACT TOGETHER — ACT

Values — know what matters

Committed actions — do what it takes

Contacting the present moment — mindfulness/noticing, be here now

De-fusion — stepping back from thoughts / watch your thinking

Self-as-context — pure awareness / observing your thoughts...noticing the part of you that is observing those thoughts...

Acceptance — willingness to let what is there be there / open up

EVIDENCE BASE

Established for BFT and recommended by international guidelines for psychosis treatment, adaptations for Early Intervention clients, established programmes of training staff

Growing evidence for ACT in general and for psychosis specifically. Good text books on adaptations for people who experience psychosis. Some literature on working with families and couples using ACT, however not much specifically on using ACT for families affected by psychosis



RATIONALE FOR ACT TOGETHER

Bringing in some of the 1:1 work I do into a family context.

Realising that doing it all together could help the family to support the young person in implementing these skills, AND these skills could be of benefit to the family members for themselves.

ACT TOGETHER SPEED SUMMARY

Values underpin everything – Values exercises and identifying actions

A metaphor to keep coming back to – Passengers on the bus

Unhooking skills – E.g. mindful breathing, leaves on the stream, noticing surroundings

Communication skills – Expressing pleasant feelings, making a positive request, active listening, expressing difficult feelings

Individually tailored information sharing – Psychoeducation and staying well planning and promoting self-care for all

Mindful, values-based problem solving



VALUES AND COMMITTED ACTIONS

80th birthday party exercise

Discuss your values in pairs and identify an action you are taking or would like to take in line with one of your values

PASSENGERS ON THE BUS METAPHOR - YOUTUBE



UNHOOKING SKILLS — MINDFULNESS AND DEFUSION

A Mindful Mashup:

Mindful breathing

Leaves-on-the-stream

Mindfulness of surroundings

COMMUNICATION SKILLS — EXPRESSING PLEASANT FEELINGS

- 1) Get rationale from the family
- 2) Discuss current skill level
- 3) Outline steps and get rationale for each step
- 4) Invite a volunteer to practice (set up observer to notice the step of the skill)
- 5) Get constructive feedback on the steps taken and re-practice if needed (focus on steps not content)
- 6) Identify opportunities for between session practice

Look at the person

Say exactly what they did that pleased you

Tell them how you felt

INFORMATION SHARING AND STAYING WELL PLANNING

What do families want to know?

What resources are useful e.g. Attitude TV documentary, EWS cards etc.

What do you need to be thoughtful of when doing this with families?

Discuss in groups then super quick feedback

FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

On sessions generally:

“It was good, and a relief. Good to focus on solutions and that we are making a joint effort, and it’s not a blame thing”

“It was fantastic. Really liked being able to talk calmly together without arguing”

On passengers on the bus video:

“Anything on video was good, would like more videos and websites”

“The video was pretty interesting to watch. It seems quite motivating to try and continue navigating your own vehicle and choose to take the passengers with you”

“I liked the metaphor, in our worldview the body is a vehicle, so this fitted well with me”

FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

On communication skills:

“Glad we went over ‘healing techniques’ to show each other gratitude

On values and committed actions:

“It was useful. It started heated but we made progress, it was hopeful”

“It was good. Good to move from negative to positive”

“It was good focusing on future plans”

“The active part, it’s something I’m going to focus on”

“Focusing on everyone’s strengths, strength to persevere”

FUNDAMENTALS

++ Flexibility – different sessions, different times, different family members, different pace, repeat a session, skip a session...whatever works!

Normalising – skills for everyone, all family members, all families, clinicians model use in their own lives. Also helps take focus off the ‘problem’ being with the young person.

Validation and compassion – family members may be stressed and hurting or worried about being blamed, this may show itself in different ways. Be patient, be kind, be gentle...to them, and yourselves.

Focus, re-focus and focus a bit more back on values.

Build up the foundations – values, strengths, positive communication...before tackling the ‘hot potato’ topics.

OTHER USEFUL LESSONS LEARNED

Working in pairs works well, don't underestimate the power of a tag team!

It may take longer than you initially think...getting 4+ people together on a regular basis is hard work! Slowing it down to fit the cognitive capacities or levels of unwellness that the young person may be experiencing

Be mindful of cultural adaptations. E.g. one family there are some language barriers, particularly when discussing complex concepts, such as the passengers on the bus metaphor and mindfulness. The other family we will invite the Pukenga Atawhai for the 'information sharing' sessions so that we can reflect on cultural understandings of the young person's difficulties

It's highly rewarding work to be involved in

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Refine skills and resources with feedback from families

Continue with current families then roll out to more

Collate and refine evaluation tools/outcome measures (currently satisfaction with life as a whole and the PWI and AAQ/PAAQ)

Further training and/or joint working with interested staff

Does working with families fit with your own values? If so, just give it a go!!

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