



UK AND REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

# ACBS Chapter Conference Programme

16th - 17th  
November 2024



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## Venue

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## Welcome Message for the 2024 UK and ROI Chapter of the Association for Contextual Behavioural Science (ACBS)

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Dear ACBS UK and ROI Chapter members, colleagues, and friends,

Welcome to the 6th bi-annual conference of the UK and ROI Chapter of the Association for Contextual Behavioural Science (CBS), London, November 16th and 17th, 2024. We are thrilled to be hosting this event once again in London, a city rich in history, culture, and innovation, for the second time in the chapter's history.

The UK and ROI conference is a gathering of dedicated professionals, researchers, and practitioners, united by the shared commitment to advancing the science and practice of CBS. Over the next two days, you will experience a wide array of contributions from leading scholars and practitioners across the UK, Ireland, and beyond. The program has been carefully curated to reflect the depth and diversity of our field, and I expect you'll face the enjoyable challenge of deciding which sessions to attend!

If you find yourself torn between sessions, please extend your gratitude to our Programme Committee and Programme Reviewers. Their hard work and dedication have made this conference possible.

One of the most valuable aspects of this conference is not only the knowledge shared but also the sense of community we build together. Whether you are attending for the first time or returning for your fifth or sixth conference, there will be opportunities during sessions, lunches and coffee breaks to connect with each other, and contribute to the welcoming and inclusive community that defines the spirit of ACBS. Of course we also will have the ACBS conference tradition of the 'follies' on Saturday night which I urge you to take part in. You won't regret it!!

**Welcome to London!**

**Warm regards,**

**Louise McHugh**  
**Chapter President, UK and ROI Chapter**  
**Association for Contextual Behavioural Science (ACBS)**

**Thank you to Organisational Committee, Programme Committee,  
Programme Reviewers and Eyas without you this conference  
would not be possible.**

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Organisational Committee: Jonathan Williams, Elizabeth. Burnside, Louise McHugh, Sheila Flaherty, Dawn Johnson

Programme Committee: Nic Hooper, Mark Oliver, Selen Ozbek, Jim Lucas & Connie McHugh,

Programme Reviewers: Charlotte Dack, Ross White, Vasilis Vasilou Freddy Jackson Brown, Jonathan Dowling, Alison Stapleton Sheila O'Flaherty, Dawn Johnson.

UK and RO Chapter Board: Joseph Lavelle, Louise McHugh, Dawn Johnson, Mark Oliver, Elizabeth Burnside, Lynn Farrell, Ross McIntosh, Conor McCloskey. Natalie Savage, Helen McGillivray.

# Detailed Programme ACBS UK & ROI Chapter Conference 2024

## SATURDAY

Rookie Retreat  
08:00-09:00

**A morning session for newbies to the conference and anyone else who would like to meet new people and connect before the conference starts.**

Saturday night follies  
19:30

**Track 1: Jeffrey Hall**

**Track 2: Elvin Hall**

**Track 3: Drama Studio**

### SATURDAY 9:00 - 10:00

**Plenary**  
**Jeffrey Hall: 09:00-10:00**

**Back to the Future: Exploring the history of ACBS UK and Ireland to strengthen community belonging and purpose.**

Joe Oliver



### SATURDAY 10:00 - 11:45

**Track 1: 10:00-11:45**  
**Jeffrey Hall**  
**Skills Class**

**Uncovering the process and practice of "Creative Hopelessness"**  
Rikke Kjelgaard

In my experience, many clinicians find the process of delivering and working with creative hopelessness in ACT difficult. Clinicians themselves may find that they react to the hopelessness and worry about how the intervention is impacting the client. They may "get stuck" in a control agenda or in their own feelings of hopelessness. At times, the function of creative hopelessness is lost and the content becomes the key aspect, often leading to discussions with clients that defeat the work of creative hopelessness. Undermining control based strategies can be challenging in the therapeutic setting, ultimately, clinicians will want to do this with compassion and forthrightness. In the broader application of ACT and in assisting the client through therapy, this process can play an important role in both the process and progress of therapy. Through roleplays and demonstrations Rikke Kjelgaard will uncover the process of creative hopelessness and show various ways of working with this flexibly and fluently in session. Clinicians will be guided to consider their own process and how it plays out in therapy.

**Track 2: 10:00-11:45****Elvin Hall****Skills Class****The Game of Values: Working therapeutically with values using personal memoirs**

Vasilis Vasilou, Stavroula Sanida

Much of what we have to do has a purpose, yet often we easily lapse into mindless reactivity and habit. We disconnect from behaviours that encourage us to commit to personally defined actions and lose ground with our values. In this case, our therapeutic work can easily be shaped by memoirs, encompassing aspects of our families of origin, our backgrounds, or our experiences but without the element of values that can authentically guide conversations with our clients about meaning and purpose.

In this interactive workshop, led by clinicians with a combined wealth of experiences, stemming from an ACT and FAP approach, Vasilou, Ph.D and Sanida, MS.c will invite attendees to participate in a game of values. The workshop will leverage the transformative function of personal memoirs and use storytelling and postcards as tools to strengthen awareness about what matters when working with values in therapy. Attendees will incorporate their stories, including their cultural narratives, into the search toward what would be a life worth living, even in the midst of all life's suffering. The quest will be completed with postcards that are specifically designed for working therapeutically with values.

The workshop will offer the opportunity to attendees to sharpen their imagination and creativity in the service of reshaping their values. With a dynamic blend of didactic (30%) and experiential (70%) methods, attendees will actively participate in self-exploratory role-plays and small group activities, enhancing their competencies in working with values in various therapeutic contexts. As a takeaway, attendees will receive not only a new perspective on how to use their memoirs when working with values but also new tools (e.g., postcards, story-telling) to enrich their clinical work. The ability to conceptualize and tailor value-based work in real-time becomes a tangible skill, elevating the quality of care provided.

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**Track 3: 10:00-11:45****Drama Studio****Symposium****Building brighter futures through Contextual Behavioural Science: Applications with youth populations in schools**

Duncan Gillard, Sarah Cassidy, Owen Cogan, Magda Apapasionok, Kaydee Owen, Ben Sinclair

The potential applications of Contextual Behavioural Science (CBS) in schools and educational settings are vast and wide-ranging, spanning from universal and proactive applications, through to highly specialist and individualised intervention work (Renshaw et al., 2022; Gillard et al., 2018). However, whilst this is a growing area for CBS, what has been achieved so far is barely the tip of the iceberg of what could be achieved. This symposium consists of four short (15minute) presentations regarding some of the most leading-edge, innovative advances in the application of CBS in education today, including:

1. A qualitative analysis of the experiences of children who access a universal CBS curriculum based on DNA-V (Hayes & Ciarrochi, 2015) and the six ways to wellbeing (Basarkod, 2019), called Connect PSHE.
2. Some early conceptual and empirical work around the development of a new version of the Connect PSHE curriculum, adapted for children and young people in special schools.
3. Applications of CBS to support children and young people at risk of exclusion from mainstream education due to challenging/unsafe behavioural presentations. This presentation outlines the work of the Enable Inclusion Team, including outcome data regarding school inclusion and general psychological wellbeing.
4. An ACT-based intervention for students experiencing anxiety around the study of mathematics.

The presentations are introduced by the Symposium Chair, with a practical and empirically-based case being made for the importance of this area of work for the CBS community.

The Symposium concludes with comments from the Symposium Discussant regarding the vision that these presentations help to bring to life. The audience will have an opportunity to ask questions of presenters in the closing minutes.

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## **SATURDAY 12:00-13:00**

### **Track 1: 12:00-13:00**

**Jeffrey Hall**

**Panel Discussion**

### **Should there be an accreditation process for ACT practitioners?**

Richard Bennett, Dawn Johnson, Jim Lucas, Alison Pocock, Jennie Spain

As ACT has grown in popularity in the UK and ROI and is now recommended in WHO and NICE guidelines, there are an ever-increasing number of practitioners who have had exposure to ACT training, and who are providing ACT services to the public. However, there is still no recognised training route for ACT practitioners to follow, and no clear agreement about what might constitute competency in ACT.

Whilst the 'open source' nature of the ACT community, spearheaded by the values of ACBS, has been very helpful to the growth of ACT, experience of training and supervising ACT practitioners suggests that there might be reason to be revisit this strategy. The ongoing lack of oversight of the practice of ACT may give cause for concern around issues of quality and informed choice when it comes to ensuring the safe and effective provision of ACT interventions to the public.

This panel will invite various stakeholders in this issue to offer a view on the question of whether there should be some kind of formal accreditation process for ACT practitioners. Each panellist will represent a particular position on the issue including an ACT trainer, an ACT practitioner, an NHS training commissioner, and someone who has received ACT intervention as a public consumer. Several issues will be put to panellists, and there will also be opportunity for the audience to ask questions and engage in the debate.

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### **Track 2: 12:00-13:00**

**Elvin Hall**

**Panel Discussion**

### **ACT in Sport: a context like/unlike any other?**

Ray Owen, Tom Cowdale, Alison Maitland, Lydia Thompson, Ross White

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy-based approaches have been successfully applied in many contexts, and sport is increasingly one of these. Yet the translatability/appropriateness of ACT to sport has not been extensively discussed, and many questions arise:

Compared to other tested therapeutic populations, what aspects of working with sportspeople are distinctive? Is ACT best understood as an intervention for promoting wellbeing or performance in sport, or is it both? How do we measure effectiveness? Do some therapeutic and delivery principles need to be modified to be contextually appropriate for the sports environment? What might the sports environment be missing in its application of ACT compared to its health/clinical counterparts? Is there a clearer equivalence to applying ACT in other high-performance environments such as business? What do different occupational backgrounds and learning histories contribute to successful application of ACT in sport? Who is best placed to deliver training and supervision of the application of ACT in sport? What might a newcomer to the sport context miss or misunderstand? What can other settings learn from the experience of applying ACT in sport? Do different sports present different issues? Are there relevant differences between team and individual sports, or women's and men's? How can we engage with coaches, management and athletes to consider an ACT approach? Where is the voice of the athlete in all this?



This panel will discuss these issues bringing the experiences of Sports Psychologists, Coaches, Clinical Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, researchers and athletes. The reflections of the audience will also be encouraged.

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**Track 3: 12:00-13:00**

**Drama Studio**

**Skills Class**

**The Ecological Self - eSAC: Embodying a 'self as context' sufficiently accommodating for addressing the multiple global crises of the unravelling socio-economic world order**  
Martin Wilks Margo Osorio

Ecological self is central to the school of Experiential Deep Ecology, which, based on the work of Norwegian ecologist/philosopher Arne Næss, argues that through the ongoing transpersonal process of self-actualisation, we transcend the notions of the individuated "egoic" self and realise/embody a perspective of an ecological self. So long as we are working within a conventionally narrower concept of self, Næss argues, ecologically responsible behaviour is a form of altruism, a "doing good for the other", which historically has been a precarious ethical basis, usually involved in exhorting others to "be good". Næss argues that in his Ecosophy, the enlargement of the ego-self to the eco-self results in ecologically responsible behaviour as a form of self-interest that is an all-inclusive "Self & not-other" compassion".

In what remains of indigenous human cultures - since the hegemony of the scientific revolution insisted it's modernistic. reductionist worldview upon the "primitivism" of the colonies - there are multiple exemplars of spiritual traditions emphasising 'one-ness' - the 'all my relations' of the Lakota plains Indian, Pachamamma, of the Andean cultures, Ubuntu from Africa and from Buddhism the concepts of universal loving kindness to all sentient beings and the "not self" insights of interbeing and interdependency.

As products of the modernistic, neoliberal narratives, it is essentially challenging for us to "receive" conceptually or experientially, the awareness of our interbeing. Our fractured communities are still deeply embedded in a Newtonian/Descartian account that has reached a dangerous pinnacle of polarised thinking on firmly demarcated 'us against them' lines. And our relentless pursuit and consumption of self aggrandisement at the expense of 'the other' has become an existential threat to sentience itself. So very far from universal loving kindness.

A change of paradigm is vital; persuasive accounts of 'oneness' can be found in general relativity, and complex systems science. And Gaia theory, in biology. ACT is uniquely positioned, with our SAC core process to contribute to the deepening of our context for behaviour change

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**SATURDAY 14:00-15:15**

**Track 1: 14:00-15:15**

**Jeffrey Hall**

**Skills class**

**Be More Tree: How a flexible mind can help you thrive**  
Ross White

It was supposed to be different. Despite the chaos and distress the pandemic caused, there were hopes that it would herald a new beginning in our efforts to balance work and life. Those hopes have been dashed; levels of burnout and disillusionment continue to rise. Societal influences still push us to succeed at any cost. Concepts such as grit and mental toughness, which cast emotions as something to be controlled rather than understood, continue to be championed. But trying to control emotions can amplify the impact they have on our lives. True success is about thriving - not just performing well but feeling well. The good news is that our capacity to thrive can be enhanced using a set of evidence-based techniques.

There's a Tanzanian proverb - 'The wind does not break the tree that bends' - that signals the solution. Clinical psychologist Prof. Ross White, an expert in ACT, has supported countless athletes, musicians, and business executives working in high-performance environments. In his book *The Tree That Bends: How a flexible mind can help you thrive* (published by Quercus), Ross points out that just as trees thrive by being firmly anchored in the ground, being willing to flex in the wind, and empowered by the sun's energy, we too can thrive by being Anchored in the present, Willing to lean into our emotional experiences and Empowered to make choices in line with our purpose. This is the A.W.E. of a flexible mind.

Once 'high performance' meant business tycoons, elite-level athletes, and special forces operatives. Nowadays, if you juggle competing demands, take pride in what you do, and want to achieve your goals without sacrificing your wellbeing - high-performance is you too. Drawing on perspective-shifting insights and practical strategies from the book, this workshop will help you and your clients to thrive through the storms of life.

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**Track 2: 14:00-15:15**  
**Elvin Hall**  
**Skills Class**

**Revisiting committed action: nurturing connections across the Hexaflex**  
Richard Bennett, Torval Anderson

Promoting engagement in value-driven action is central to the behavioural focus of ACT. Despite this, it is our experience that ACT trainings often neglect the nuanced nature of interventions that promote concrete behaviour change. Other ACT processes can sometimes be viewed as a precursor to committed action, rather than being central to the experience of it.

This workshop aims to provide delegates with an opportunity to revisit their learning and practice around committed action interventions, giving them an opportunity to design and deliver them in a more process-based and functional manner. After setting up the rationale and theory, the workshop will be highly experiential, involving demonstrations, individual exercises, and, most importantly, deliberate practice of committed action interventions.

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**Track 3: 14:00-15:15**  
**Drama Studio**  
**Symposium**

**Innovations in theory-based application of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy**  
Connor McCloskey, Alison Stapleton, Cara Lefroy, Christina Seery

This symposium combines recent experimental research relevant to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, that is rooted in Relational Frame Theory and neurodiversity.

The first study is a neurodivergent-led study which explored the relationships between psychological flexibility, social support, coping, time management, wellbeing, and parental stress among autistic parents, parents with ADHD, and AuDHD parents. Over 500 parents/guardians aged 18 years or older who had at least one child under the age of 18 years completed an online survey. At present, data analysis is underway. Findings will be used to understand parent experiences within the target groups and will inform support tailored specifically to the identified needs of these groups. Findings will have implications for the use of acceptance and commitment therapy with neurodivergent parents.

The second study presents recent research on pliance, a functional class of rule governed behaviour that is under the control of arbitrary, speaker mediated consequences, presenting data on a series of studies that explored the link between pliance and mental health outcomes, and the relationship between pliance, values, and social detection. This presentation discusses the implications this research has for practice, including in communicating with clients and working on rule-following tendencies.

The third study presents The Understanding and Managing Adult ADHD Programme (UMAAP), which is a novel, online intervention that aims to provide open-access ACT and psychoeducation to adults with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in Ireland. UMAAP is hosted by ADHD Ireland, a non-profit organisation. Attendees self-refer onto the programme and do not require a formal diagnosis to participate, to reduce barriers to accessing psychological support. A mixed methods research programme was used to evaluate the feasibility of UMAAP, with both qualitative and quantitative findings indicating increased self-acceptance and quality of life. Findings highlight the value of ACT for adult ADHD.

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## **SATURDAY 15:30-16:45**

**Track 1: 15:30-16:45**  
**Jeffrey Hall**  
**Skills Class**

**Amplify your ACT Practice with Compassion Focused Therapy**  
Jim Lucas, and Sarah Benkwitz

Compassion-focused Therapy (CFT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) have been shown to improve mental health significantly (Petrocchi et al., 2023; Gloster et al., 2020 & Beygi et al., 2023). The definitions of psychological flexibility and compassion within CFT overlap considerably, and CFACT is the only known approach to date that seeks to integrate the two models (Tirch et al., 2015). In this workshop, you can enhance your ACT practice with CFT by developing your understanding of compassion as defined in CFT. Facilitated by two therapists, each specialising in CFT and ACT, you will explore their similarities and differences. You will learn to train compassion as a primary motivation by modelling compassionate flow, incrementally evoking more compassionate responses from your client, and you will leave with a powerful tool you can implement immediately in your practice. It includes a demonstration from the presenters and small group discussions and practice. Practitioners wishing to amplify the compassion within their ACT practice will benefit hugely from this workshop.

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**Track 2: 15:30-16:45**  
**Elvin Hall**  
**Skills Class**

**The Extended Evolutionary Meta Model, Process Based Therapy and Single Case Experimental Design**  
Alison Stapleton, Joseph Lavelle & Orla Moran

The ACBS Task Force report (2021) highlighted that Contextual Behavioural Science should be multi-level, multi-dimensional, process-based, prosocial, and practical. Among the recommendations to achieve this is use of idiographic analyses of processes of change, transdisciplinary approaches, and fostering conditions for prosocial, cooperative ends. This session aims to explore some methods that support (i) relatively easier integration of research and practice, (ii) greater cultural and contextual sensitivity, (iii) ongoing case monitoring and service evaluation, and (iv) tailored client-oriented feedback. First, the extended evolutionary meta-model (EEMM) will be discussed. As a rubric for a Process Based Therapy framework, the EEMM is intended to facilitate more harmonious integration across approaches. Intraindividual, longitudinal, repeated measures research designs (e.g., small N/N-of-1 studies and single-case experimental designs; SCEDs) will also be examined. In addition, attendees will learn how to apply and report on repeated measures designs, in a research context.

This session aims to enhance learners' competence and confidence in successfully applying these approaches.

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**Track 3: 15.30-16.45**  
**Drama Studio**  
**Symposium**

**Extending contextual understandings of paranoia and mindfulness-based interventions for psychosis: findings from basic and translational research**

Eric Morris, Jess Kingston, Louise Johns, Lyn Ellett

Developing feasible, effective, and safe psychological interventions for paranoia and psychosis, involves basic science and translational studies, informed by contextual perspectives. This symposium presents cross-sectional findings exploring various factors influencing paranoid thinking, and feasibility and meta-analytic studies of ACT and mindfulness-based interventions for psychosis.

The first study investigates the relationship between paranoia and vividness of imagery for future harm among young adults. Results reveal that vivid negative imagery for future events, particularly those with interpersonal and intentional content, is associated with heightened paranoia, highlighting the potential impact of imagery on paranoid ideation. Moreover, lower ability to engage in present moment awareness intensifies this relationship.

The second study delves into the association between poor sleep, negative affect, and paranoid thinking, focusing on the role of psychological inflexibility, specifically cognitive fusion. Cross-sectional findings suggest cognitive fusion moderates the relationship between insomnia and persecutory thinking, emphasizing how rigidity in responding to thoughts is influential in paranoid ideation.

Shifting to intervention approaches, the third study examines the pilot feasibility and acceptability of digitally-delivered Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Psychosis Recovery (ACTfR) groups. Despite challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, digital delivery of ACTfR was feasible and acceptable, with participants reporting high satisfaction. While subjective wellbeing remained unchanged, participants described progress towards their values-based goals, underscoring the potential of digital platforms in enhancing accessibility.

The fourth study addresses the under-researched area of harmful outcomes in mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) for psychosis. A systematic review and meta-analysis summarize reporting, prevalence, and risk differences of eight harm indices in RCTs of MBIs for psychosis. The study reveals inconsistencies in reporting and underscores the need for consistent monitoring and reporting of harm in future studies.

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**SATURDAY 17:00-18:00**

**Plenary: 17:00-18:00**  
**Jeffrey Hall**

**Caring for carers: Internet-delivered self-help Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for family carers of people living with dementia (iACT4CARERS)**  
Naoko Kishita



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## SUNDAY

Morning activity  
08:00-09:00

**Mindful Movement**  
Dawn Johnson, Richard Johnson

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### SUNDAY 9:00 - 10:00

**Plenary**  
**Jeffrey Hall: 09:00-10:00**

**Using Contextual Behavioural Processes to Enhance life meaning, wellbeing, and trust, inside and outside the clinic.**  
Jessica Kingston



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**Track 1: 10:00-11:45**  
**Jeffrey Hall**  
**Skills Class**

**Building interoceptive awareness as a foundation of effective ACT interventions**  
Jennifer Kemp

Present-moment awareness is central to helping a person build their willingness to feel uncomfortable (acceptance) in the service of living a valued life, yet many people struggle with sensing their internal experiences. Our eighth sense, interoception, is the mechanism through which we notice and interpret sensations such as heartbeat, hunger/fullness, thirst, pain, and fatigue, with this information providing essential cues for how to respond to the world.

Differences in interoceptive awareness are linked to multiple mental health problems, including anxiety, panic disorder, OCD, PTSD, eating disorders, and depression. Awareness of subtle internal signals is essential to noticing and labelling emotions effectively, too, with Alexithymia linked to a higher likelihood of depression, suicidal thinking, self-harm, and lower life satisfaction.

Interoceptive awareness varies as a normal part of human diversity. Indeed, approximately three-quarters of Autistic people have noticeable differences with interoception and may be hyper or hyposensitive to these internal cues. Unfortunately, many therapeutic interventions assume some level of interoceptive awareness and the ability to match these with emotional states. When clients have difficulty noticing and accurately labelling their internal experiences, it can hamper efforts to build mindful awareness and may impact the effectiveness of therapy unless addressed.

This interactive and practical workshop will explore interoception and its relationship with emotion regulation, mental health, and neurodivergence. Participants will learn how to identify interoceptive difficulties and apply practical strategies to build awareness of important cues. Concepts will be explored via experiential exercises and two case studies that include real assessment data.

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**Track 2: 10:00-11:45**  
**Elvin Hall**

**Digital Interventions curated symposium**  
Alanko, Cupzala, Rawthorne, Meadows, Chiara, Finucane (6 Papers)

**Paper 1: Fostering Social and Emotional Skills Through a Digital Learning Platform**  
Langenskiold, J. & Alanko, K.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy has been used in school settings to foster wellbeing, and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

The use of ACT in universal prevention programs, teaching skills of psychological flexibility, has not received unambiguous support. The current study utilized the DNA-V model for promotion of wellbeing and psychological flexibility in 5th graders in Finland. The presentation describes 1) the process of creating the 8 week teacher led program 2) the use of a digital learning platform for scalability and 3) preliminary effects of the program on life satisfaction and resilience. Two groups, led by special aid teachers, with 20 students in grade 5 (age 11) will participate in the pilot groups (N =40). A before-after design was used to measure change in life satisfaction (Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale - PTPB Version (BMSLSS-PTPB)) and resilience (10 item measure based on the Child and Young person Resilience Measure). The process of development of the program is described. The pilot project participants' qualitative feedback on the program and possible changes in the outcome measures will be presented. We will present preliminary results from a pilot study on using the DNA-V model of ACT and discuss it in light of the need of evidence based preventive programs, that are easily scalable and accessible for schools, teachers and children. Next, a RCT will be conducted.

## **Paper 2: CBS UA supervisory program - comprehensive support for therapists working in the context of the invasion of Russian troops in Ukraine**

Czupala, H.

In September 2022, during the ACT2022 conference in Poznań, the "Ukrainian space" symposium was held, in which scientists and practitioners shared their experiences of the first days of the invasion of Russian troops in Ukraine, observations of the impact of hybrid war on mental health and the role played by psychological flexibility training in helping people experiencing the consequences of armed conflict. One of the main conclusions of the symposium was that even the best foreign trainer and the best work protocol cannot replace people who know the cultural, historical and current context of people experiencing a crisis and that the dynamics of the protracted war and its scale require long-term support program for interventionists working on site. For the last two years, together with a group of Ukrainian psychotherapists, I have been implementing a CBS supervisory training program. Its aim was to educate supervisors with the knowledge and competence to conduct individual and group supervision of interventionists using ACT in their work. By conducting training evaluation, we intended to develop guidelines for conducting comprehensive CBS supervisory training in the future. In my presentation, I would like to present the values, didactic goals, thematic scope and organizational framework of the training. I will also present the scale of the project, the results of the qualitative evaluation, as well as conclusions and proposed guidelines for conducting subsequent editions of the program.

## **Paper 3: Investigating the Effectiveness of a Brief Values-Based Intervention on Household Recycling Behaviour**

Rawsthorne, M.

The Strategic Investment Board (Northern Ireland) called for innovators to test the applicability 'Persuasive Technology' to the problem of flatlining household recycling rates. Virtual Health Labs Ltd undertook a project to adapt a non-judgmental, Motivational Interviewing based 'coachbot' which had been used successfully for individual health behaviour change. This paper describes the key steps in codesigning and evaluating the acceptability and initial impact of a prototype solution with staff and residents of Fermanagh & Omagh District Council. Analyses will be presented showing changes in perceived importance and confidence to engage in more &/ better recycling following elicitation and reinforcement of values and other behaviour change techniques using the COM-B framework. It will also provide thematic summaries of reported enablers of, and barriers to improving recycling, and crowd-sourced ideas for their mitigation. It demonstrates acceptability of Contextual Behavioural Science to a pragmatic, real-world issue outside of mental health, and will discuss potential next steps based on the evidence generated.



#### **Paper 4: Enhancing Sleep and Mental Health: A Pilot Study on Digital Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Insomnia (dACT-I) in Adults**

Meadows, G.

**Objectives:** This pilot study explored the effects of digital Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (dACT-I) on insomnia severity, anxiety, and depression in adults with chronic insomnia, compared to a control group. **Methodology:** Thirty participants meeting DSM-V criteria for primary insomnia (mean age 45±10 years; 80% females) were randomly assigned to either the dACT-I intervention group or a Waitlist Control (WLC) group (15 per group). All reported 'moderate to severe clinical insomnia,' with an average Insomnia Severity Index (ISI) score of 20±3. The dACT-I group completed a 30-day 'Overcoming Insomnia' course via a smartphone app over 12 weeks, featuring daily content on ACT principles and sleep education. The WLC group remained on a waiting list for 12 weeks. **Results:** After 12 weeks, the dACT-I group showed clinically significant improvements in insomnia severity, anxiety, and depression compared to the control group. Significant reductions in ISI (≥6-point change), GAD-7 (≥4-point change), and PHQ-9 (≥5-point change) scores were observed, with improvements evident as early as week 8 for ISI. The dACT-I group demonstrated average score changes of -12.55, -6.27, and -8.36 for ISI, GAD-7, and PHQ-9, respectively, compared to -2.93, 0.14, and -0.43 in the control group. Repeated measures ANOVA confirmed the positive impact of dACT-I on all assessed outcomes throughout the study duration. For the proportion of individuals with clinically significant change, the group difference was found after week 12 for ISI (81.8% in treatment vs 35.7% in control), GAD-7 (81.8% vs 14.3%) and PHQ-9 (72.7% vs 14.3%). The difference can even be noted earlier at week 4 for ISI, and at week 8 for GAD-7 and PHQ-9. Attrition rates were 27% and 7% for the dACT-I and WLC groups, respectively. **Conclusion:** This study suggests dACT-I as an effective intervention for chronic insomnia, improving sleep, anxiety, and depression. It presents a promising alternative to traditional Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT-I), offering cost-effective delivery and potentially wider accessibility for the 10-30% of the population affected by insomnia.

#### **Paper 5: Psychological flexibility processes differentially predict the improvement of anxiety depressive symptoms during outpatient cardiac rehabilitation.**

Spatola, C., Cattivelli, R, Martino, G.,

**Background.** Being affected by cardiovascular disease has a detrimental impact on psychological well-being, as indicated by increased levels of anxiety and depression problems. The psychological maladjustment may, in turn, negatively affect cardiovascular health through different causal pathways. Therefore, it appears crucial to understand the possible psychological processes that may predict the psychological status of cardiac patients. Psychological flexibility (PF) has been reported to be longitudinally associated with larger improvements in psychological well-being during cardiac rehabilitation (CR) among patients with moderate-to-severe psychological distress. PF can be conceptualized as a dynamic interaction of three dyadic processes: 'Openness to Experience' (OE); 'Behavioural Awareness' (BA); and 'Value-driven Action' (VA). The aim of this study was to evaluate the differential role of these three processes in predicting anxiety and depression levels in cardiac patients and their change during CR.

**Methods.** One hundred and ninety-four patients with cardiovascular disorders, attending a high-intensity outpatient CR, were enrolled in this longitudinal prospective study. Anxiety and depression were measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4), and PF was assessed using the Comprehensive Assessment of ACT Processes (CompACT). Assessment measures were administered before (t0) and after (t1) the cardiac rehabilitation program. Stepwise multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relative influence of the three CompACT subscales in predicting depression and anxiety symptoms, both cross-sectionally and longitudinally. **Results.** Cross-sectional regression analyses showed that all three dimensions of PF are negatively associated with anxiety and depression scores, while longitudinal regression analyses showed that only the VA component significantly predicts the change in depressive symptoms, after cardiac rehabilitation. **Discussion.** These results highlight the potential benefits of measuring specific PF processes when examining the psychological status of cardiac patients and when planning psychological interventions during CR.

**Paper 6: Development of a logic model describing how online Acceptance and Commitment Therapy can improve bereavement outcomes.**

Finucane, A, Gillanders, D. Canny A., Harrop E., Selman, L.

Background/aims: A logic model is a graphic which represents, in a simplified form, the theory of how an intervention produces its outcomes. Logic models are useful as they clarify intervention components, factors which influence implementation, and data needed to support evaluation.

We sought to develop an online Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) intervention, called My Grief My Way, to improve coping and quality of life after bereavement. Here we describe the development of the logic model that guided intervention development. Methods: We synthesized evidence from: (i) research literature on grief theories, bereavement support and online interventions; (ii) interviews with 9 therapists providing bereavement support using ACT; (iii) two workshops involving 7 staff from organisations providing bereavement support and (iv) input from the research team and collaborators. A draft logic model was developed and subsequently refined at a workshop with 5 bereaved people. Results: Our resulting logic model illustrates the links between: risk factors for grief (individual and situational); indicators of problematic grief (e.g. overwhelming negative emotion, loss of meaning and purpose, burden of expectations, isolation and loneliness); online ACT intervention components (e.g. audiovisual stories illustrating stuck points in grief; ACT metaphors and exercises, videos on ACT skills development); intervention features (e.g. easy to navigate, feedback provided), behavioural determinants (e.g. IT literacy, motivation), behavioural change mechanisms (e.g. increased openness, awareness and engagement) and key outcomes (e.g. improved wellbeing, coping and quality of life). Conclusions: The My Grief My Way logic model provides a rigorous framework for the development of an online ACT bereavement support intervention based on theories, evidence, and the experiences of bereaved people and professionals. The model has underpinned the development of the My Grief My Way bereavement support prototype, and will guide future evaluation and implementation.

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**Track 3: 10:00-11.45**  
**Drama Studio**  
**Symposium**

**Practice and innovation in services for people with Intellectual Disabilities**

Jonathan Williams, Sam Walker, Mark Oliver, Lauren Pettitt

This symposium would present 4 case studies of Contextual Behavioural Science (CBS) informed programmes and interventions for people with Intellectual disabilities and their families/carers. Many of the people CBS practitioners support have a range of complex behaviours that challenge (such as aggression, self-harm, damaging to the environment) and they often need individually tailored packages of intervention over long periods of time. This in turn requires a high level of coordination across family and professional networks, including health, education and social care services. Developing the verbal and non-verbal skills of the people we support is a key focus of this work and this symposium will showcase 4 examples of the innovative practices and service models taking place across the country. They will describe how to support the development of prosocial, cooperative behaviours - at both system and individual level - which in turn can reduce the levels of behaviours that challenge. They will also describe how young people can learn to use deictic stimuli (ie pronouns) in their day to day language and the impact this has. The symposium will also provide an opportunity for CBS practitioners to come together to share skills and experiences of working with this population of people.

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**SUNDAY 12:00 - 13:00**

**Track 1: 12:00-13:00**  
**Jeffrey Hall**  
**Panel Discussion**

**Nurturing ACT therapists and supervisors: What can we learn from supervision?**

Eric Morris, Sally Bradley, Sarah Cassidy, Em Perera, Jim Lucas



Acceptance and Commitment Therapy has seen tremendous growth internationally as an evidence-based psychological therapy and recognised treatment model in the last 25 years (Gloster et al., 2020).

Along with scientific progress, efforts have been coordinated to disseminate ACT, with a burgeoning landscape of training workshops and opportunities to support learning the psychological flexibility model, processes and skills. But how do helpers continue to develop their skills after the training workshops? How can we help helpers do ACT competently, effectively, and safely? An important context for learning ACT - supervision - is of increasing interest and focus in the CBS community. This can be seen with the emergence of models of competency development (e.g., SEED), frameworks for supervision elements (e.g., SHAPE), and empirical research about supervision.

This panel of supervisors and trainers, who have worked internationally to support people to learn Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, will engage the audience in a conversation around the following questions:

1. What goals might an ACT Therapist have for supervision?
2. What goals might an ACT Supervisor/Trainer have for supervision?
3. How do we create a context for successful learning in supervision?
4. What has supervision research taught us about effective learning?
5. How do you assess, track and improve ACT knowledge and skills?
6. How can the ACT community support disseminating ACT knowledge and skills effectively?

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**Track 2: 15:00-18:00**

**Elvin Hall**

**Panel Discussion**

**Bravery and Honesty: How to (or not to) talk around body image issues**

Selen Ozbek, Francesca Brandolin, Rikke Kjelgaard, Dawn Johnson

How do you respond when someone comments on your body? Whether it is a compliment, subtle criticism, or outright insult, how does it affect you? How do you respond when you encounter 'small talk' around physical appearance or 'fat-talk'? Have you ever thought about how could you respond to such comments in line with your values? What thoughts and emotions arise when you think about your body, and how do they shape your behaviours in relationships?

Body shaming and fat-talk is prevalent in society, which can shape and complicate our relationship with ourselves and those around us. In this panel, we aim to raise awareness by sharing our expertise in body image and our personal experiences. We encourage participants to reflect on how societal pressures influence their responses and decisions, and the relationship they have with themselves and others. By shifting perspectives and fostering empathy, we can begin to facilitate positive change. Our discussion will touch on sensitive topics to facilitate an open dialogue about our relationships with our bodies; such as leadership, courage, discrimination and sexuality. A candid and courageous conversation can be the catalyst for change, it only takes someone to get the ball rolling...

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**Track 3: 12:00-13:00**

**Drama Studio**

**Symposium**

**Beyond pain alleviation and into stigma: Tackling the societal harms of pain using CBS approaches**

Vasilis Vasilou, Whitney Scott

When the expected linear progression of diagnosis, treatment, and resolution of chronic physical conditions deviates from the anticipated linear trajectory of cure, societal harms emerge mostly due to the absence of physical pathology. This can then undermine health outcomes. Stigma, prejudices, and personal biases rank among the main societal harms afflicting individuals with various chronic physical conditions, such as chronic pain or skin conditions.

Despite the well-documented evidence on the role of psychological processes in enhancing functioning in chronic conditions, the potential of these processes to alleviate societal harms remains underexplored. Emerging research indicates that psychological flexibility and self-compassion, concepts derived from contextual behavioural science (CBS), could play a crucial role in diminishing these societal harms. These processes can serve as foci interventions' components aimed at lessening the societal impacts on affected individuals. The symposium aims to explore how CBS processes could be integrated as comprehensive intervention components for individuals facing societal harm due to chronic physical conditions. We intend to highlight research that examines the efficacy of psychological flexibility (PF) and self-compassion in addressing societal harms through various analytical approaches, including moderation and network analyses. Dr. Vasiliou will share insights from a network analysis that investigates PF's effect on stigmatized behaviour in two groups of individuals suffering from dermatological issues and chronic pain. Dr. Scott will examine the complex interplay between stigma, self-compassion, and PF in individuals seeking treatment for complex chronic pain. Following these presentations, we will engage in a discussion on the potential of psychological processes to enhance treatment strategies, aiming to more effectively counteract the societal harms associated with chronic conditions.

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## SUNDAY 14:00-15:00

**Plenary**  
**Jeffrey Hall: 14:00-15:00**

**Using Contextual Behaviour  
Science everywhere, all at once:  
Applying RFT to all levels of an  
interdisciplinary therapy**  
Risca Soloman



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## SUNDAY 15:15-16:30

**Track 1: 15:15-16:30**  
**Jeffrey Hall**  
**Skills Class**

**Using metaphor in group settings, within contextual  
behavioural therapy**  
Sandro Voi, NiklasTörneke

The use of metaphors is a well-known therapeutic tool in ACT as well as other psychological interventions. This workshop focuses on ways to use metaphors in group settings, within a Contextual Behavioral Science (CBS) framework. For this purpose, the example of the Tree of Life (ToL) intervention is implemented. The workshop includes a brief presentation of the ToL methodology. Following this, a possible conceptualization of the ToL methodology from a CBS perspective is offered. Then, the main aspect of the workshop is an experiential group practice. This offers practical insights for clinicians aiming to employ interventions using metaphors and creative tools in their practice, especially, within diverse population groups.

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**Track 2: 15:15-16:30**  
**Elvin Hall**  
**Bumper Session 2**

**Innovations in ACT curated symposium (6 papers)**  
Whitfield, Rasanan, Kierans, Dowling, Gallego, Brosh,  
Bradshaw

Symposium Innovations in ACT curated symposium  
Whitfield, Rasanan, Kierans, Dowling, Gallego, Brosh,  
Bradshaw

**Paper 1: After psilocybin, imaginal reliving of the psychedelic experience and related memories combined with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) extended anxiety relief longer than using psilocybin with ACT alone, as well as predicting relationships to negative affect and personality as a barrier**

Whitfield, H

This mixed methods study investigated how two psychological interventions during the integration phase of psilocybin-assisted therapy may influence process and outcomes differently, in view of deepening and extending gains. The daily data CS-GIMME (Confirmatory Sub-Group Iterative Multiple Model Estimation) analysis detected different subgroup processes for each treatment, suggesting the two treatments had different ongoing effects on the variables (psychological flexibility, Negative Affect, Life Satisfaction, Personality as a barrier). The treatment that did not include imaginal reliving of the psychedelic experience and related memories, more frequently encountered barriers of negative emotions. Similarly, a linear mixed model analysis found that the latter treatment post-psilocybin, predicted that anxiety would continue to decrease, (instead of returning to baseline as in the other treatment) and that openness to experience would remain open, both at up to 15 weeks post-psilocybin). The present findings advance on previous work by detecting empirical relationships between psychotherapeutic interventions and outcomes during the integration phase of psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy. Precisely measured psychotherapeutic processes during psychedelic-assisted therapy may be important to consider when other studies are criticised for negating the importance of such processes [1] and when new empirical data is suggesting that behaviour and experience during psychedelic treatments are fundamental to outcomes [2]. We consider the ACT-consistent interventions applied in this study and how to apply them with or without psychedelics for longer lasting changes in anxiety and its related behaviours.

(1) Grunder et al., (2023) Treatment with psychedelics is psychotherapy: beyond reductionism. *The Lancet Psychiatry*. (2) Nardou et al. (2023). Psychedelics reopen the social reward learning critical period. *Nature*, 1-9. 2023.

**Paper 2: Exploring the impact of coaches' online written feedback in an ACT internet-based intervention on university students' mental well-being and psychological distress.**

Rasanan, P.

**Introduction:** Internet-based Acceptance and Commitment Therapy interventions (ACT IBIs) have proven effective in enhancing university students' mental well-being and alleviating symptoms of stress and depression. Nonetheless, few studies have delved into the active components contributing to their effectiveness. This study investigated the impact of different forms of online written coach feedback on participants' outcomes and satisfaction within two ACT blended interventions. **Methods:** 123 university students (88% female) received support from ACT-trained master's level psychology students (n=50). Participants were randomly assigned to two groups, each receiving three face-to-face sessions alongside an online five-module ACT-based program. One group (iACTa, n = 61) received personalized, free-form written feedback, while the other (iACTb, n = 62) received semi-structured feedback with minimal personalization options. **Results:** Both intervention groups showed significant improvements across multiple measures, including well-being, psychological flexibility, mindfulness skills, and reduction of stress and depression symptoms. Notably, differences between the groups were insignificant, except for well-being, where iACTb showed a slight advantage. Effect sizes ranged from small to large in iACTa ( $d = .44-0.80$ ) and from medium to large in iACTb ( $d = .69-0.83$ ). Retention rates were high for both groups (iACTa:  $n = 51, 83.6\%$ ; iACTb:  $n = 54, 87.1\%$ ). Moreover, semi-structured feedback notably reduced coaches' response time per participant (31 min in iACTa vs. 18 min in iACTb). **Conclusions:** This study extends the current understanding and indicates that ACT-based blended internet interventions with semi-structured coach feedback and minimal tailoring are as effective as those offering fully personalized feedback in improving treatment outcomes and participant satisfaction. These findings have implications for optimizing and refining intervention strategies in ACT IBIs.

### **Paper 3: Take a Breath - 6 week ACT group for parents of children with Congenital Heart Disease**

Kierans, A.

The Take a Breath programme (Muscara, 2016) is a 6 session Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) group designed to be delivered online with parents of children with serious illnesses. It has been used in Australia, where it originated, and has been subject to promising outcomes research including reducing post-traumatic stress symptoms in parents (Muscara et al. 2020). In our Children's Hospital setting in Belfast NI we are currently establishing the group to support the parents of our paediatric cardiology patients. We have experienced challenges in setting up a group including recruitment and retention issues in the context of working with parents with very unwell children. We have completed one group intervention with seven participants so have limited quantitative data in terms of outcomes however we also have qualitative feedback. We are due to commence the second round of the group intervention with a new group of parents in April so will have further data by the time of the conference.

### **Paper 4: Values are not guides for a meaningful life**

Dowling, J.

A common thread that unites most motivational constructs is that we almost always engage or act for something, i.e., our action is directed (e.g., Murayama & Jach, 2024). In virtue of providing people with an overarching life direction that cuts across situations (i.e., values are trans-situational), personal values are typically abstract and decontextualised. When people behave in ways that accord with values, and rules more generally, they are often used as ways of categorising patterns of behaviour that may conform to those labels (e.g., Goldman, 1985). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) goes beyond this, positing that people should actively use these a priori values as "decision guides" to live meaningful lives. In diametric opposition, Heidegger and Wittgenstein reject that people are guided to live meaningful lives by "actualising values", conforming to rules, or satisfying norms (e.g., Heidegger, 1927; Wittgenstein 1953), rather it is guided by manifesting the type of person they see themselves to be in this situation. We encounter things that expect us to do certain things to interact with them, i.e., we respond to availabilities, i.e., options, dangers, threats etc. A priori values cannot guide how we respond to such availabilities as we do not know what we will encounter and what will be most important in a situation in advance. Indeed, values research increasingly highlights that values often follow rather than proceed behaviour (Fischer, 2017), have relatively weak associations with behaviour (e.g., Skimina, 2021).

To address this substantive theoretical and practical issue we will provide theoretical developments and empirical evidence for how people can respond to relevant features of their concrete situation that draw them to act in a way that is most important to them (e.g., Bond & Dowling, 2019; Eyal et al., 2009; Heidegger, 1927; McManus, 2012).

### **Paper 5: Fostering perspective-taking in aggressors through the use of Virtual Reality**

Gallego, A

Theoretical approaches to aggression have indicated that committing a violent act against others is connected to a deficiency of empathy or a lack in the capacity of perpetrators to put themselves in the victim's perspective (Blair, 1995). Indeed, some empirical studies have established a link between aggression and empathy (Follife & Farrington, 2004; Van Langen et al., 2014). To this end, the primary aim of the present project was to shape perspective-taking and empathy in aggressors through the use of Virtual Reality (VR). To do this, the offenders (n = 34) accessed a virtual environment in which they embodied a virtual avatar victim of psychological abuse. Before and after the use of VR, we assessed emotional recognition, empathy, attitudes towards women and violence, and the recognition of violent acts. The results are discussed in terms of their implications in rehabilitation programs as well as future research.

## **Paper 6: Supporting connection and Acceptance: A group intervention for parents/ carers of children with Ushers Syndrome**

Brosh, L

Ushers Syndrome is a rare genetic condition which effects both hearing and sight and in some balance, with the trajectory and progression of sight loss varying leaving parent and child in a situation of uncertainty. Parents are often aware of the diagnosis and possible trajectory for a period of time prior to onset of change with vision. Professional services will become involved with the child's care and support as need indicates. However, there is varying support for parents who are navigating a new and uncertain journey. This can leave them feeling isolated, focusing on questions about the future and unsure how best to support their child and own wellbeing. There is limited research into psychological interventions for parents/ carers of children with visual impairment. Parental well being is important in itself but also to be best placed to support the child through this changing journey. There is a growing evidence base for the use of ACT based parental well being groups particularly within the area of Autism/ neurodiversity. A small scale pilot project is being undertaken at GOSH to evaluate an ACT informed wellbeing group for parents/ carers of children with Ushers. The group involves 4 sessions lasting 75 minutes each based upon the ACT principles of acceptance, connection to the present moment, cognitive defusion and committed action. Outcomes were goal based measures (GBO), Wellbeing measures and group experience feedback. Preliminary findings are positive with parents commenting on the value of being able to connect to the present in the face of uncertain trajectories and consider what supports their self care. In addition to valuing the connection with fellow parents.

## **Paper 7: Human performance on RI and RR schedules of reinforcement, performance awareness and rule-governed behaviour**

Bradshaw, C

While animal responding is on multiple schedules of reinforcement is orderly and predictable, with far higher rates of response typically produced on ratio compared to interval schedules, response rate differences between ratio and interval schedules in humans are far more variable. Although differences comparable to animals are sometimes seen in humans, participants can show insensitivity to contingencies of reinforcement on multiple variable schedules. The role of verbal language has been discussed as an issue of theoretical importance in understanding human performance on schedules of reinforcement, particularly with regards to verbalised performance awareness, verbalised awareness of the contingencies of schedules, and the role of experimenter-derived verbal instructions. Human participants responded on multiple random ratio and random interval schedules of reinforcement in 10 experiments; verbalised performance awareness of the participants was measured in each experiment. Not all participants showed differential schedule performance consisting of higher rates of responding on random ratio rather than on random interval schedules; however, where it did occur, differential schedule performance was reliably associated with higher performance awareness scores across all 10 experiments. Differential schedule performance was more strongly associated with performance awareness than with both verbal instructions provided to participants by the experimenter and with contingency awareness. Certain procedural elements of performance awareness measurement, for example, asking performance awareness questions using closed ended questions after each trial, appeared to increase likelihood of participants displaying performance awareness and associated differential schedule performance. The finding support the conclusion that differential schedule performance can occur in humans as it can in nonhuman animals, and this behaviour is reliably associated with higher performance awareness.

**Track 3: 15:15-16:30**  
**Drama Studio**  
**Symposium**

**Psychological Flexibility Across Contexts: Insights from**  
**Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Interventions in the**  
**Workplace and Educational Settings**

Arianna Prudenzi, Yass Rad, Francesca Brandolin, Sari  
Harenwall, Ross McIntosh

This symposium provides a comprehensive evaluation of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) across various workplace and educational environments.

Study 1's systematic literature review of 24 workplace interventions focuses on mechanisms of change and highlights improvements in cognitive defusion and present-moment awareness but points out gaps in measuring broader aspects of psychological flexibility. It advocates for the use of multidimensional assessments of psychological flexibility and the integration of in-situ practitioners to enhance intervention implementation.

Study 2 focuses on the Mental Health and Productivity Pilot initiative, detailing the development and assessment of the new psychological-flexibility-based MENTOR programme. Designed to support employees (and their managers) with and without prior mental health challenges, two feasibility trials involving 63 employee-manager dyads show that the MENTOR 2.0 iteration significantly reduces distress, emphasising the importance of flexible and brief interventions in occupational health settings.

Study 3 investigates the deployment of an ACTive Rehab approach for staff on long-term sick leave or frequent sick leave due to physical and mental health needs. Informed by NHS staff in their return to work post-Long COVID, this pilot study shows the preliminary efficacy of an interdisciplinary rehab programme in vocational settings.

Study 4 assesses the effectiveness of a low-barrier ACT group workshop in improving the distress of international students (n=101), comparing face-to-face versus online modalities. Results indicate positive well-being shifts across both formats, with a slightly greater impact in direct interactions, underscoring the benefits of brief ACT workshops in enhancing students' mental health and the need for multicultural adaptation.

These findings will be discussed in light of the challenges of implementing these programmes. Future research directions will also be highlighted, including exploring innovative approaches to enhance psychological flexibility, integrating technology, and developing strategies for scaling these interventions to broader populations and adapting them.

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**SUNDAY 17:00-18:15**

**Track 1: 17.00-18.15**  
**Jeffrey Hall**  
**Skills Class**

**Swimming with the tide of your emotions: Teaching**  
**children to tune into their own cycles with sensitivity and**  
**value**

Sarah Cassidy, Alison Stapleton

Some approaches to emotion regulation in childhood can unintentionally promote experiential avoidance and result in children learning to ignore their feelings, that their feelings aren't valid, or that they "don't matter".

Yet, our bodies give us essential information about the things we want and care about. Being able to attend to that information and use it to guide our behavior effectively is important; moving from being swept away by the "emotional tide" to swimming \*with\* the tide. Teaching children to pause and consider what their body is trying to tell them when big, all-encompassing emotions show up can broaden pathways to values-guided action. We turn our attention to ways we can meet our needs while also being aware of what certain environments might be simultaneously expecting of us and when those expectations are unfair.



This workshop introduces attendees to MAGPIES for emotion regulation, a developmentally appropriate, neuroaffirmative, process-based approach to following emotions wisely. Through didactic presentations, attendees will conceptualize emotion regulation from a MAGPIES perspective (emphasizing the importance of meeting children's needs). Through experiential exercises, attendees will be invited to practice exercises relevant to emotion regulation, further planning for challenges that may arise in the context of group-based interventions targeting emotion regulation. Finally, attendees will receive a suite of easy-to-implement MAGPIES protocols that teachers/clinicians/other professionals can use to explore emotion regulation in naturalistic group-based settings. While it is often assumed that most children who benefit from this type of support are part of clinical populations, it is important to note that many children without any formal identifications will also benefit from learning these skills.

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**Track 2: 17.00-18.15**  
**Elvin Hall**  
**Skills Class**

**Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP): A process-based approach using intense and curative therapeutic relationships to create emotional and interpersonal change.**

Tien Kuei, Kelsey Wiemer

SFAP is a process-based behavioural approach grounded in moment-to-moment functional analysis of the client-therapist relationship. FAP builds a functional analytic formulation that incorporates the rules of prediction and influence, which can supercharge any other protocol-based treatments. This approach is both technically precise and full-hearted as it uses the therapeutic relationship as the natural reinforcement for client change. FAP focuses on the subtle ways clients' daily life problems occur in the context of therapy and by augmenting the therapist repertoires identified as awareness, courage, and love (behaviourally defined) in responding contingently to emotional and interpersonal target behaviors, clients are helped to resolve presenting symptoms and to delve into their purpose and passion for living.

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**Track 3: 17.00-18.15**  
**Drama Studio**  
**Symposium**

**CBS and Artificial Intelligence (AI): Research, technology and ethics of modelling RFT in silico**

Freddy Jackson Brown, Dave Cowell, Ben Cosh, Mark Oliver, Nathan Duran

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers humanity both huge benefits and potential threats. Questions and opportunities that arise from AI are particularly relevant for Contextual Behavioural Science (CBS). For example, the modern behavioural account of language, Relational Frame Theory (RFT), argues generalised relational responding (GRR) is the basis of human language generativity, intelligence and even consciousness. According to RFT, GRR is a learned behavioural repertoire and this can in principle be modelled in an artificial system. If RFT is correct, then modelling these processes in silico will produce wide ranging capabilities and consequences, far beyond the currently high-profile AI language models like ChatGPT (which is essentially a sophisticated predictive text system). AI technologies can also directly deliver therapeutic interventions, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), at scale, low cost and great speed, something that is greatly needed across our communities.

But just because we can model GRR in silico, the more important question is, should we? What would it mean to produce computer systems with full artificial general intelligence or self-awareness, both for ourselves and the artificial agents? There is an urgent need to engage with these questions or we risk moving in the wrong directions, sparking a public backlash or worse. To address the ethical 'rights and wrongs' of this technology we must talk about why we are doing things, not just what we are doing. This is a conversation about the purpose, values and goals of our scientific and technological endeavours.

This symposium comprises 4 papers. The first presents foundational research modelling the acquisition of mutual and combinatorial entailment in silico. The second outlines the development of an 'ACT chatbot' by combining hexaflex processes with large language model. The third outlines some of the ethical questions and issues raised by modelling GRR in silico. The fourth is a group discussion about the ethical questions raised by two examples of AI. This will enable our community to be clearer about our goals, motivations and purpose. It will be chaired by Mark Oliver.

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## Poster session: Saturday 1:00-2:00pm

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### AUTHOR NAMES AND POSTER TITLES:

1. Alegbo, R. ACT For You-NHS, A Service Evaluation.
2. McCloskey, C. The Influence of Punishing Natural Contingencies and Social Feedback on Pliance"
3. Sairanen, E. What if you could see yourself through my eyes? Investigating the impact of perspective taking in a virtual reality environment on the sense of self'.
4. Farrell, L. Personal & Occupational Experiences of Medical Professionals in Cancer Care in Ireland.
5. Sanida, S. Write Personalized Metaphors for Your Clients - An Evocative and Reinforcing FAP Intervention".
6. Gangi, A., Longhi, C., Rizzi, L. Tabiani, & F. The Portland Model: its "Italian Journey"
7. Gangi, A. Six-three-two: is it time for a Biflex?
8. Roe, K. DNA-V Woodland Wellness
9. Emine Serra Nebati Obsessive-compulsive personality and eating pathology: body image flexibility as a mediator
10. Lucie Zernerova Psychometric Properties and Incremental Validity of the Czech Version of the Multidimensional Psychological Flexibility Inventory in Predicting Depression, Anxiety, Stress and Satisfaction with Life
11. McCloskey, C. Pliance, social consequences, and values
12. Susu, M. Generalization of Fear extinction in Relational Networks
13. Alegbo, R. ACT For You - ACT training for NHS staff
14. Huxtable, B. Using the Preschool Life Skills Program to Support Skill Development for Children with Trauma Histories
15. Burnside, E. Chilled Mind Programme: taking ACT into cold water
16. Cattivelli, R. Integrating Ecological Momentary Assessment and Contextual Behavioral Science to Promote Lifestyle Changes in Individuals with Obesity and Chronic Pain: A Technology-Enabled Intervention Study Protocol

17. Gear, E. Mindfulness for Paranoia in Virtual Reality: A Randomised Controlled Trial
18. Sanida, S. Write Personalized Metaphors for Your Clients - An Evocative and Reinforcing FAP Intervention
19. Tani, S. The Preliminary Investigation of Generalized Pliance Questionnaire for Children Japanese version
20. Thorne R. We Practise What We Teach: A Weekend of ACT for a Behaviour Analytic Team"

## UK and Republic of Ireland ACBS Chapter Conference 2024 Schedule at a Glance

16th November 2024					
ROOM	9:00-10:00 PLENARY	10:00-11:45 SESSION	11:45- 12:00	12:00-13:00 SESSION	13:00- 14:00
Room 1 IOE Jeffrey Hall	<p>Joe Oliver</p> <p>Back to the Future: Exploring the history of ACBS UK and Ireland to strengthen community belonging and purpose.</p>	<p>Skills Class</p> <p>Uncovering the process and practice of "Creative Hopelessness"</p> <p>Rikke Kjelgaard</p>	COFFEE TEA	<p>Panel Discussion</p> <p>Should there be an accreditation process for ACT practitioners?</p> <p>Richard Bennett, Dawn Johnson, Jim Lucas, Alison Pocock, Jennie Spain</p>	LUNCH
Room 2 IOE Elvin Hall		<p>Skills Class</p> <p>The Game of Values: Working therapeutically with values using personal memoirs</p> <p>Vasilis Vasilou, Stavroula Sanida</p>		<p>Panel Discussion</p> <p>ACT in Sport: a context like/unlike any other?</p> <p>Ray Owen, Tom Cowdale, Chris Hartley, Lydia Thompson, Ross White</p>	
Room 3 IOE Drama Studio		<p>Symposium</p> <p>Building Brighter Futures Through Contextual Behavioural Science: Applications with Youth Populations in Schools.</p> <p>Duncan Gillard, Sarah Cassidy, Owen Cogan, Magda Apapasionok, Kaydee Owen, Ben Sinclair</p>		<p>Skills Class</p> <p>The Ecological Self - eSAC: Embodying a 'self as context' sufficiently accommodating for addressing the multiple global crises of the unravelling socio-economic world order</p> <p>Martin Wilks, Margo Osorio</p>	

## UK and Republic of Ireland ACBS Chapter Conference 2024 Schedule at a Glance

16th November 2024					
ROOM	14:00-15:15 SESSION	15:15- 15:30	15:30-16:45 SESSION	16:45- 17:00	17:00-18:00 PLENARY
<b>Room 1</b> IOE Jeffrey Hall	Skills Class  Be More Tree: How a flexible mind can help you thrive  Ross White	<b>COFFEE TEA</b>	Skills Class  Amplify your ACT Practice with Compassion Focused Therapy  Jim Lucas, and Sarah Benkwitz	<b>BREAK</b>	Naoko Kishita  Caring for Carers: Internet- Delivered Self-Help Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Family Carers of People Living with Dementia (iACT4CARERS)
	Skills Class  Revisiting committed action: nurturing connections across the Hexaflex  Richard Bennett, Torval Anderson		Skills Class  The Extended Evolutionary Meta Model, Process Based Therapy and Single Case Experimental Design  Alison Stapleton, Joseph Lavelle, Orla Moran		
<b>Room 2</b> IOE Elvin Hall	Symposium  Innovations in Theory- Based Application of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy  Connor McCloskey, Alison Stapleton, Cara Lefroy, Christina Seery		Symposium  Extending contextual understandings of paranoia and mindfulness- based interventions for psychosis: findings from basic and translational research  Eric Morris, Jess Kingston, Louise Johns, Lyn Ellett		
<b>Room 3</b> IOE Drama Studio					

## UK and Republic of Ireland ACBS Chapter Conference 2024 Schedule at a Glance

17th November 2024					
ROOM	9:00-10:00 PLENARY	10:00-11:45 SESSION	11:45- 12:00	12:00-13:00 SESSION	13:00- 14:00
Room 1 IOE Jeffrey Hall	<p>Jessica Kingston</p> <p>Using Contextual Behavioural Processes to Enhance life meaning, wellbeing, and trust, inside and outside the clinic.</p>	<p>Skills Class</p> <p>Building Interoceptive Awareness as a Foundation of Effective ACT Interventions</p> <p>Jennifer Kemp</p>	COFFEE TEA	<p>Panel Discussion</p> <p>Nurturing ACT therapists and supervisors: what can we learn from supervision?</p> <p>Eric Morris, Sally Bradley, Aisling Leonard-Curtin, Em Perera, Jim Lucas</p>	LUNCH
Room 2 IOE Elvin Hall		<p>Symposium</p> <p>Digital Interventions curated symposium</p> <p>Alanko, Cupzala, Rawsthorne, Meadows, Chiara, Finucane</p>		<p>Panel Discussion</p> <p>Bravery and Honesty: How to (or not to) talk around body image issues</p> <p>Selen Ozbek, Francesca Brandolin, Rikke Kjelgaard, Dawn Johnson</p>	
Room 3 IOE Drama Studio		<p>Symposium</p> <p>Practice and innovation in services for people with Intellectual Disabilities</p> <p>Jonathan Williams, Sam Walker, Mark Oliver, Lauren Pettitt</p>		<p>Symposium</p> <p>Beyond pain alleviation and into Stigma: Tackling the societal harms of pain using CBS approaches</p> <p>Vasilis Vasilou, Whitney Scott</p>	

## UK and Republic of Ireland ACBS Chapter Conference 2024 Schedule at a Glance

17th November 2024					
ROOM	14:00-15:05 PLENARY	15:00-15:15	15:15-16:30 SESSION	16:30-17:00	17:00-18:15 SESSION
<b>Room 1</b> IOE Jeffrey Hall	Risca Soloman  Using Contextual Behaviour Science everywhere, all at once: Applying RFT to all levels of an interdisciplinary therapy service.	<b>COFFEE TEA</b>	Skills Class  Using metaphor in group settings, within contextual behavioural therapy  Sandro Voi, NiklasTörneke	<b>BREAK</b>	Skills Class  Swimming with the tide of your emotions: Teaching children to tune into their own cycles with sensitivity and value  Sarah Cassidy, Alison Stapleton
			Symposium  Innovations in ACT curated symposium  Whitfield, Rasanan, Kierans, Dowling, Gallego, Brosh, Bradshaw		Skills Class  Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP): A Process-Based Approach using Intense and Curative Therapeutic Relationships to Create Emotional and Interpersonal change.  Tien Kuei, Kelsey Wiemer
			Symposium  Psychological Flexibility Across Contexts: Insights from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Interventions in the Workplace and Educational Settings  Arianna Prudenzi, Yass Rad, Francesca Brandolin, Sari Harenwall, Ross McIntosh		Symposium  CBS and Artificial Intelligence (AI): Research, technology and ethics of modelling RFT in silico  Freddy Jackson Brown, Dave Cowell, Ben Cosh, Mark Oliver, Nathan Duran