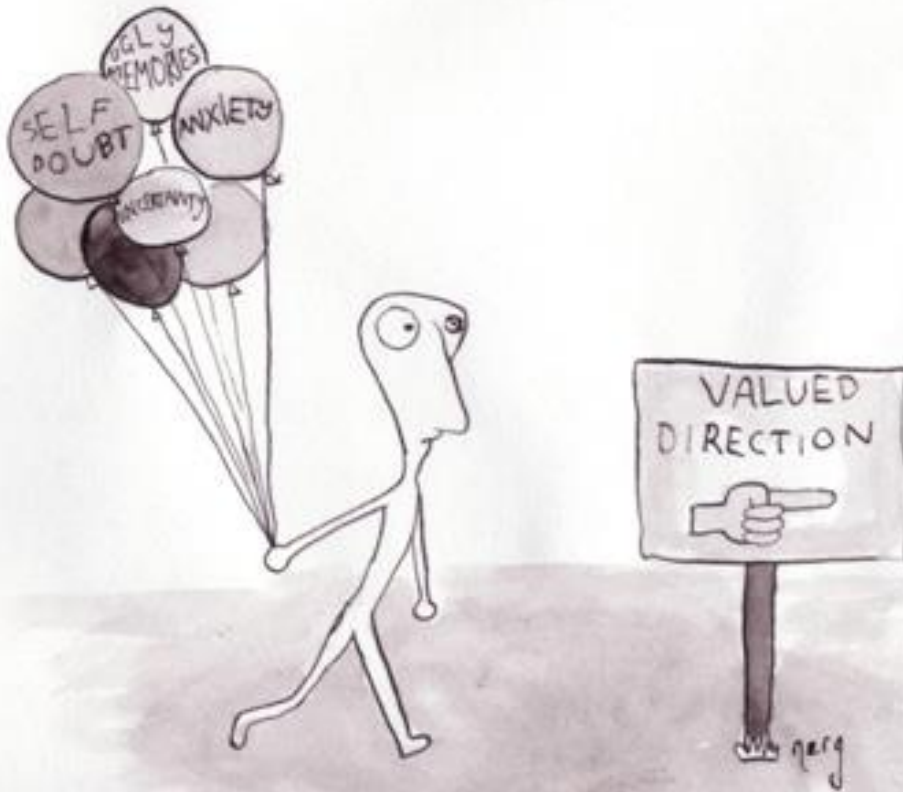


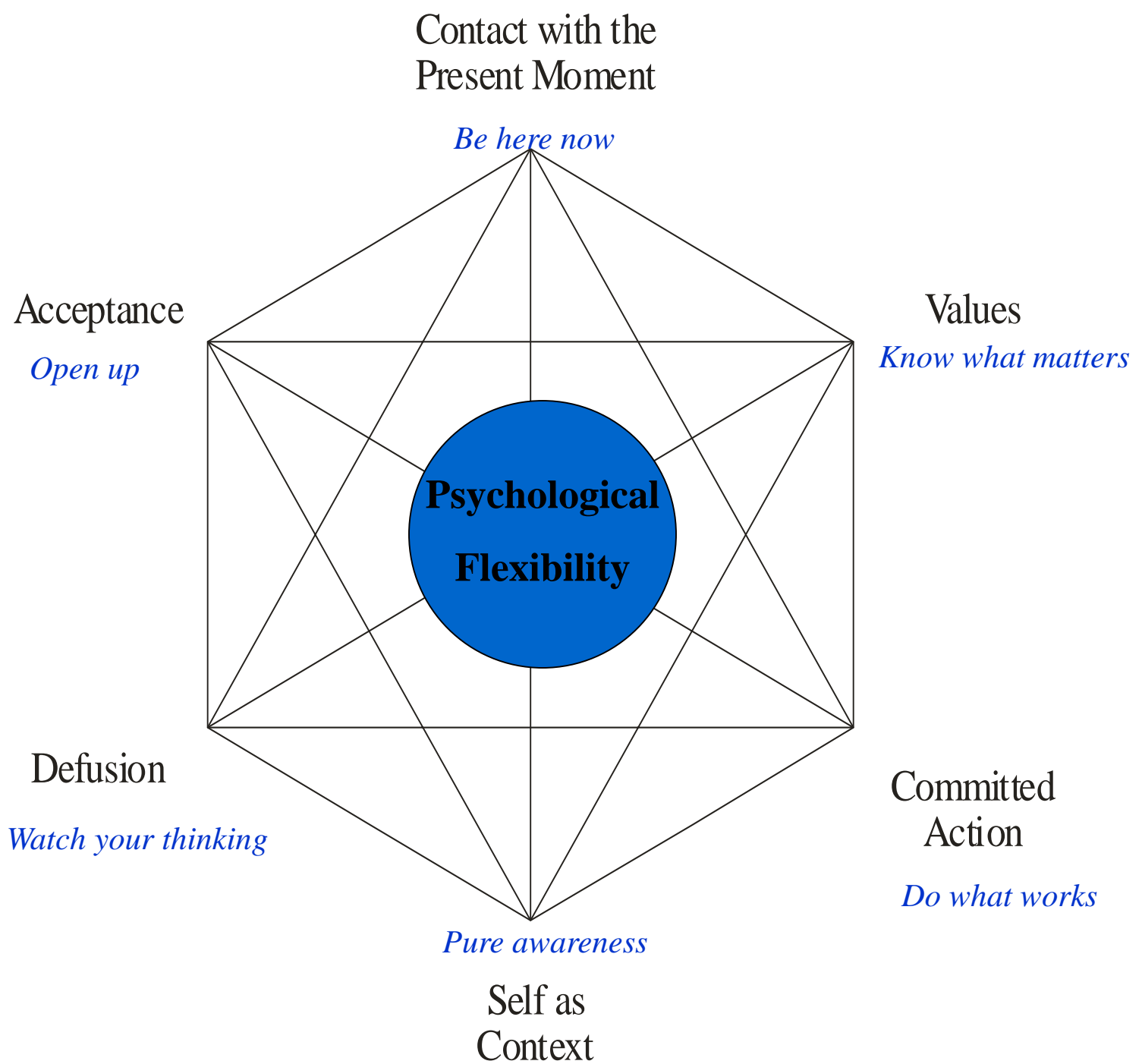
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) in The Workplace



Dr. Paul Flaxman

What is ACT?

- **A contextual CBT**
- **Process-driven**
- **Transdiagnostic**
- **From the behavioural analytic wing of psychology**



Psychological Flexibility

The ability to contact the present moment fully as a conscious human being, and based on what the situation affords, **changing or persisting in behaviour in the service of chosen values.**

Psychological Flexibility Unpacked

- An increased willingness to experience even the most difficult thoughts, feelings, and sensations
- Becoming much clearer about personally valued life directions and actions
- Ability to engage in increasingly larger patterns of values-based action, ***while in the presence of*** undesirable or unhelpful psychological content

Acceptance and
Mindfulness
Processes

Contact with the
Present Moment

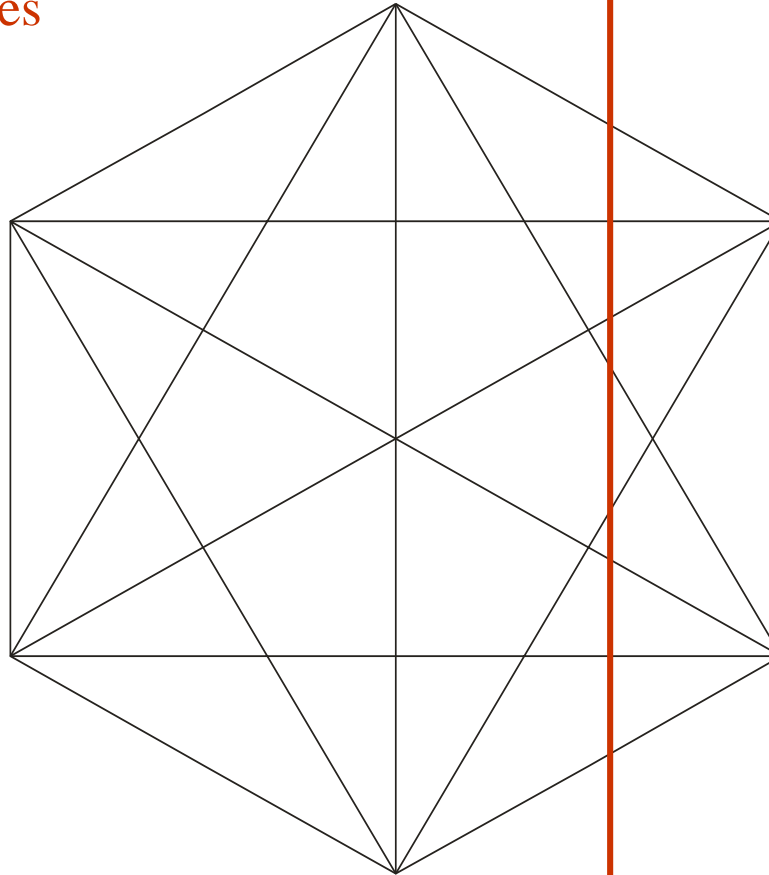
Acceptance

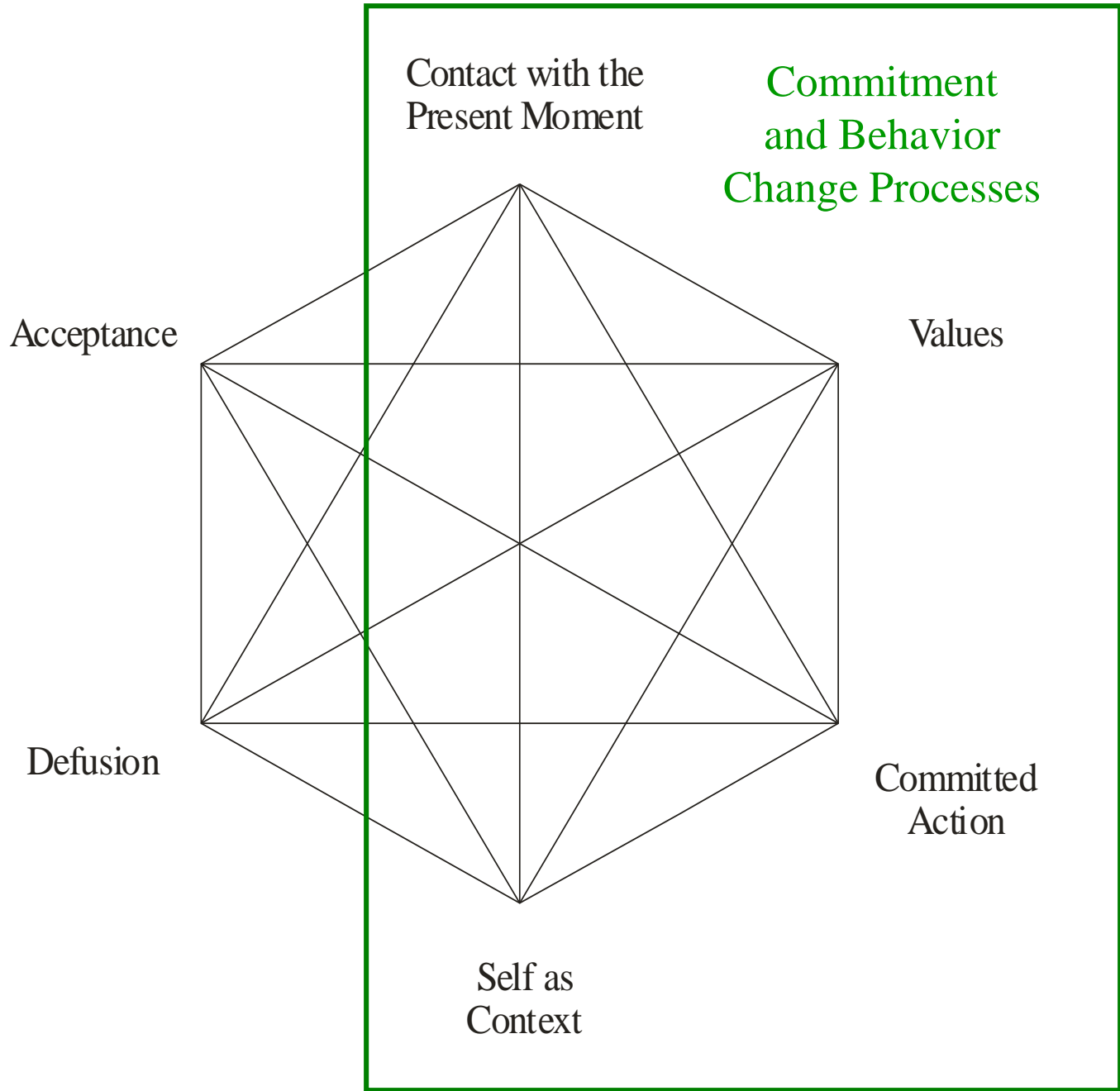
Values

Defusion

Committed
Action

Self as
Context





Two-skills Diagram

MINDFULNESS

- Present moment awareness training
- Noticing and disentangling from internal barriers to values-based action
- Strengthening your resilient self

VALUES-BASED ACTION

- Defining your values
- Mindfully engaging in values-based actions
- Using values as a guide to goals and daily behaviour

Building defusion skills

- **Loosening attachment to the literal content of thoughts, to increase behavioural flexibility in the presence of such thoughts**
- **Cultivating healthy psychological distance between the person and his or her psychological content**
- **Taking unhelpful or self-critical thoughts a bit less seriously**
- **Focus on ‘workability’:**

“If you did what this thought says, would you move closer or further away from doing things you would choose to do?”

Example Defusion Strategy

Learning to take the mind's unhelpful output a bit less seriously

- Note down a thought that seems to interfere with effective or personally valued behaviour
- Experiencing that thought in the voice of **cartoon character** (e.g., Homer Simpson; Bug's Bunny)
- Experiencing that thought in voice of **film character** (e.g., Yoda; C3PO; Arnie)
- Experiencing that thought to **familiar tune** (e.g., London's burning; happy birthday; etc)

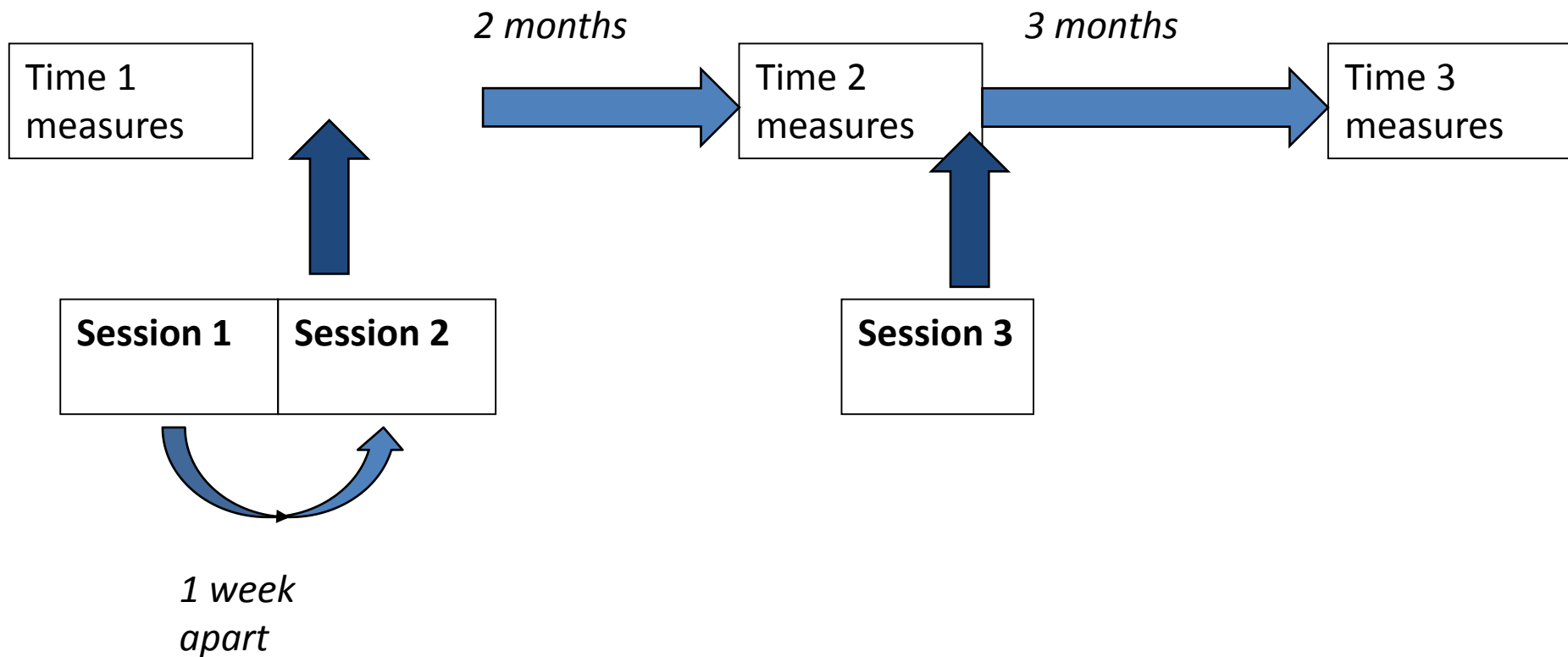
Simple ways of introducing values

- The *personal strengths or qualities* you most want to express in your day-to-day-behaviour
- Your *personally chosen guide* to behaviour
- What you most want to *be about* in different areas of your life

Previous Research Findings

- ACT better than workplace innovation training for improving employees' psychological health (Bond & Bunce, 2000)
- Two sessions of ACT elicit same improvements as two sessions of CBT - BUT OPERATE THROUGH DIFFERENT PROCESSES OF CHANGE (Flaxman & Bond, 2010a)
- Four sessions of ACT about same outcomes as four sessions of MBSR (SLaM study, in prep)
- ACT outcomes reliably mediated by increased psychological flexibility
- 40% -70% of initially distressed employees showing clinically significant improvement in mental health over 6 months period

Recent Mediation Study: Research Design



The Cognitive Fusion Questionnaire (CFQ; Gillanders et al., 2013)

My thoughts cause me distress or emotional pain

I get upset with myself for having certain thoughts

I tend to get very entangled in my thoughts

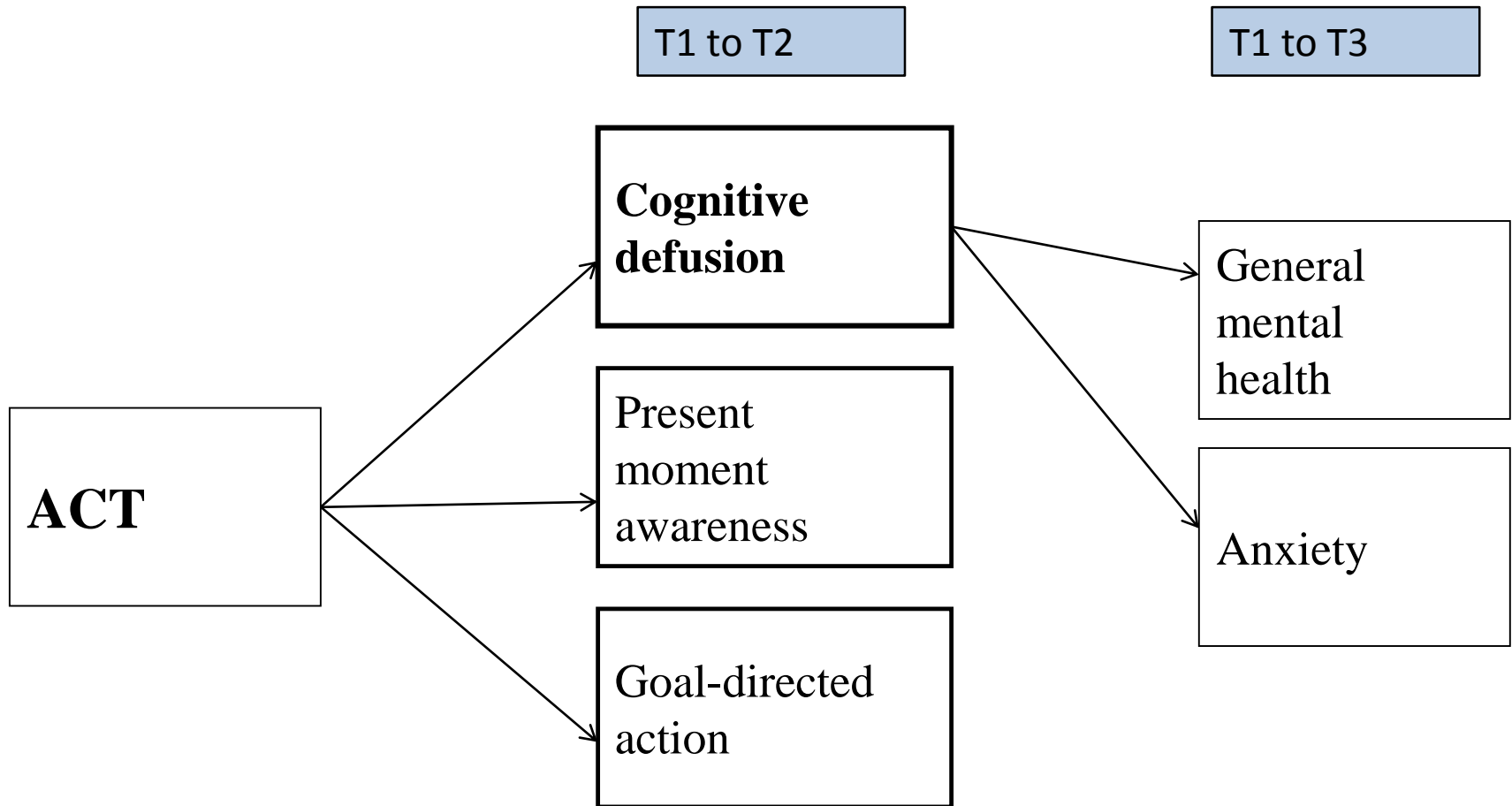
**It's such a struggle to let go of upsetting thoughts even when I know that
letting go would be helpful**

**I get so caught up in my thoughts that I am unable to do the things that I
most want to do**

I over-analyse situations to the point where it is unhelpful to me

I struggle with my thoughts

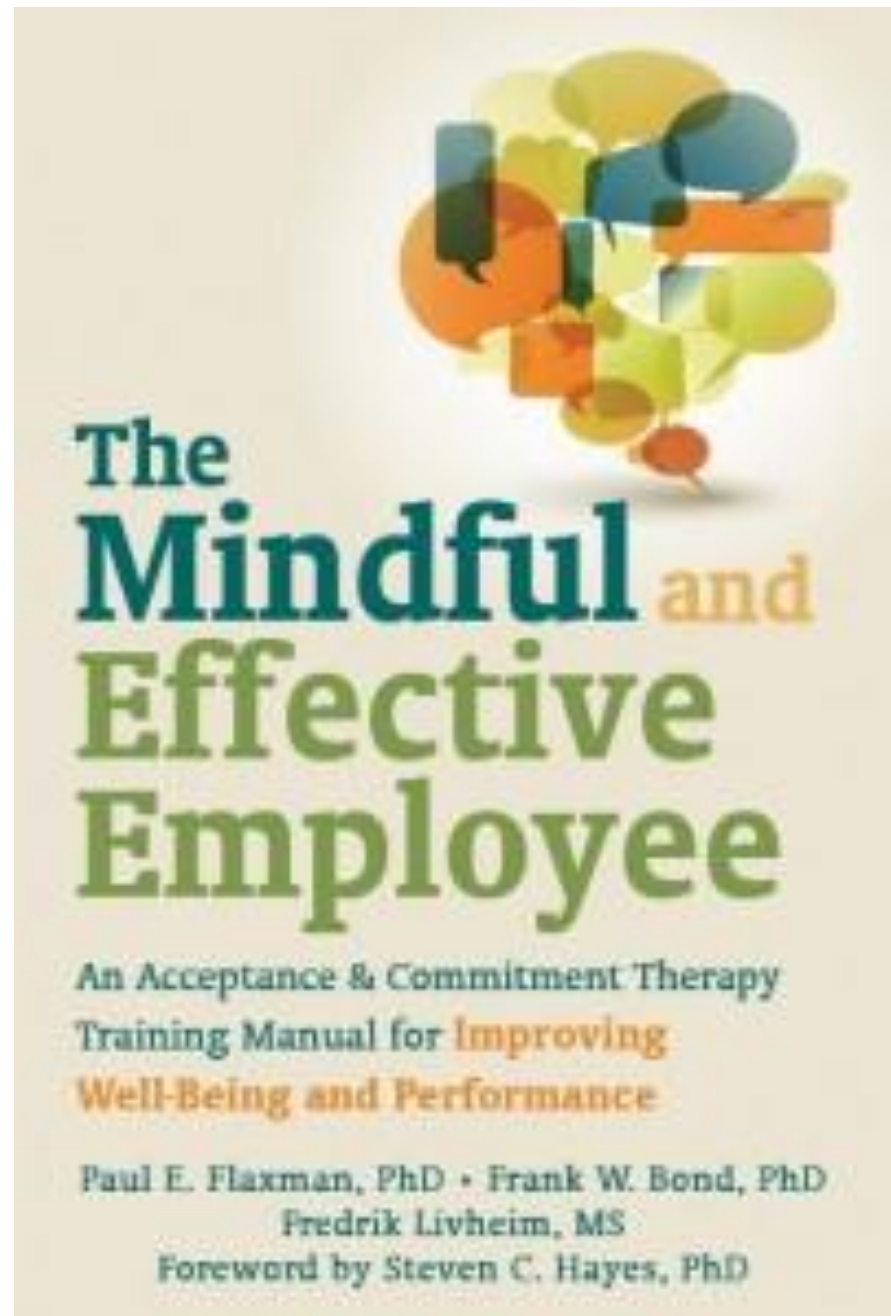
Multiple mediation effects: Significant total indirect effects; specific indirect effects of ACT through defusion only;

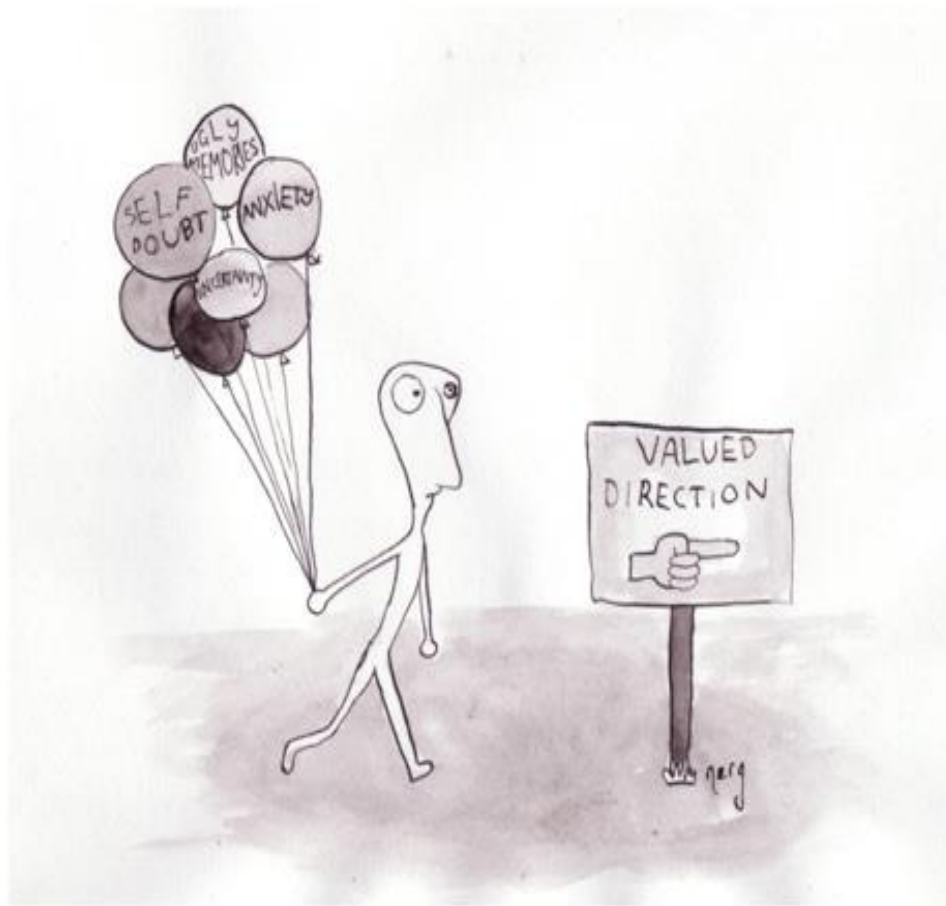


ACT n = 112; controls n = 131

Find more
here!

NOT available
in foyer.





Thank
you for
your
attention