

ACT Part 2

Texas Addiction Research to Practice
Conference

- ▶ Mindfulness...
- ▶ Introduction – we will barely scratch the surface...

- ▶ The single most remarkable fact of human existence is how hard it is for human beings to be happy (Hayes et al., 1999).

The case of suicide

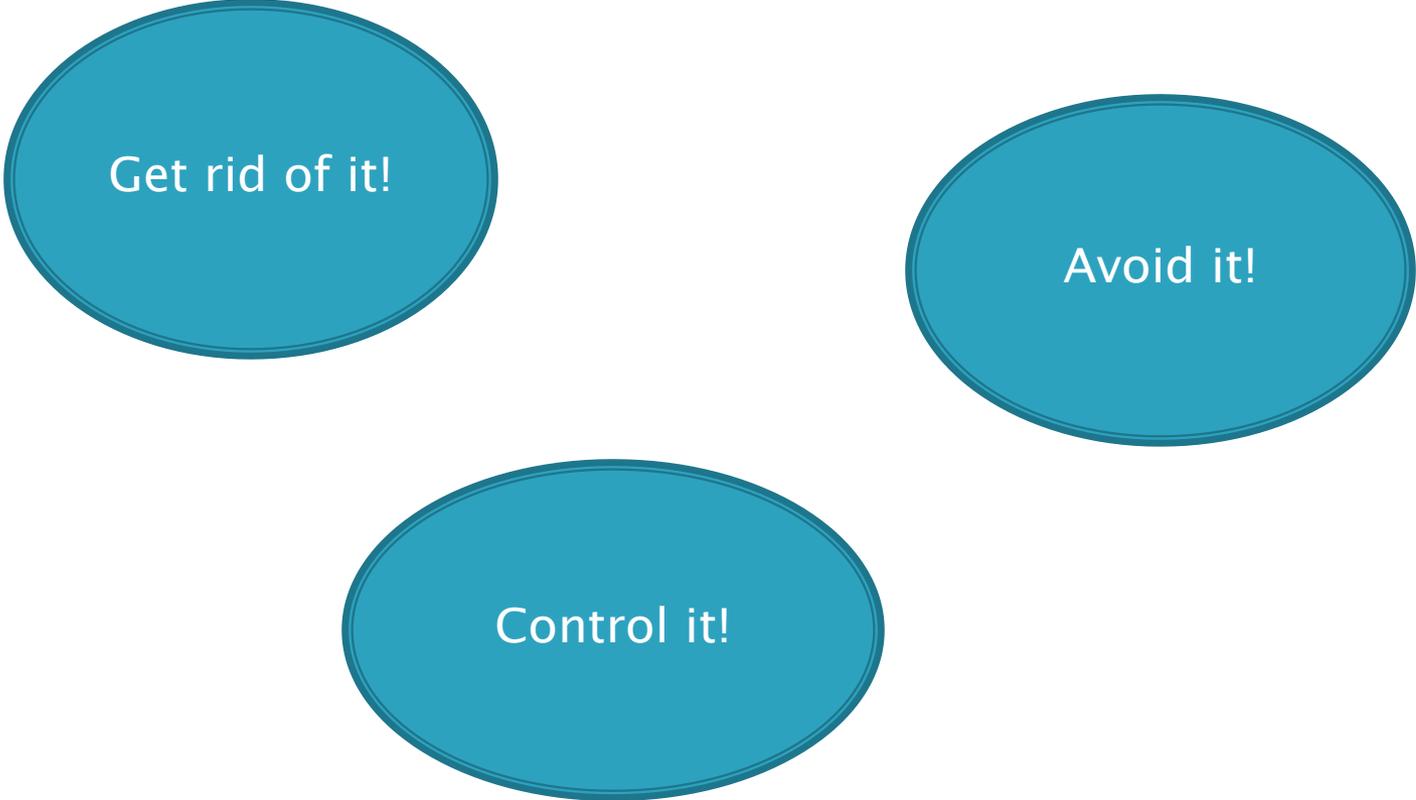
- ▶ 10% of all people will at some time make an attempt.
- ▶ An additional 20% will struggle with suicidal thoughts to the extent that they make a plan.
- ▶ An additional 20% will struggle with suicidal thoughts without making a specific plan.
- ▶ That is 50%. 1 out of 2.

Add up all the humans who are or have been:

- Depressed
- Addicted
- Anxious
- Angry
- Self-destructive
- Alienated
- Worried,
- Compulsive
- Workaholic
- Insecure
- Painfully shy
- Divorced
- Avoidant of intimacy
- Stressed
- Etc...

Suffering is a
basic
characteristic of
human life.

What is our natural tendency when we have a distressing thought or feeling?



Get rid of it!

Avoid it!

Control it!

Normal problem-solving may not work inside the skin...

- ▶ Inside vs. outside the skin
- ▶ Trying to kill negative thoughts only makes them stronger
- ▶ Harvard psychology Dan Wegner (1994):
When you try not to have a thought, the frequency of that thought will go down for a short while, but it soon appears more and more often than ever.
- ▶ Ex. Chocolate cake

“If you aren’t willing to have it...
you’ve got it.”

What are some ways to avoid thinking or feeling something bad?

What if you're having the thought:

“SOMETHING IS REALLY WRONG WITH ME...”

Methods of avoidance

- ▶ Behavioral avoidance
 - Not leaving the house
 - Not getting out of bed
- ▶ Distraction
 - Self talk/active suppression
 - Get busy – clean your house!
 - Self-injurious behavior
 - Worry or rumination
 - Disordered eating
 - Exercising
 - Shopping
 - Getting a new tattoo or piercing
- ▶ General numbing of experiences
 - Substance use
 - Dissociation

Is Avoidance all bad?

- ▶ We all do it
- ▶ It's not always bad unless it is your only tool for dealing with distress... EX. running

Workability

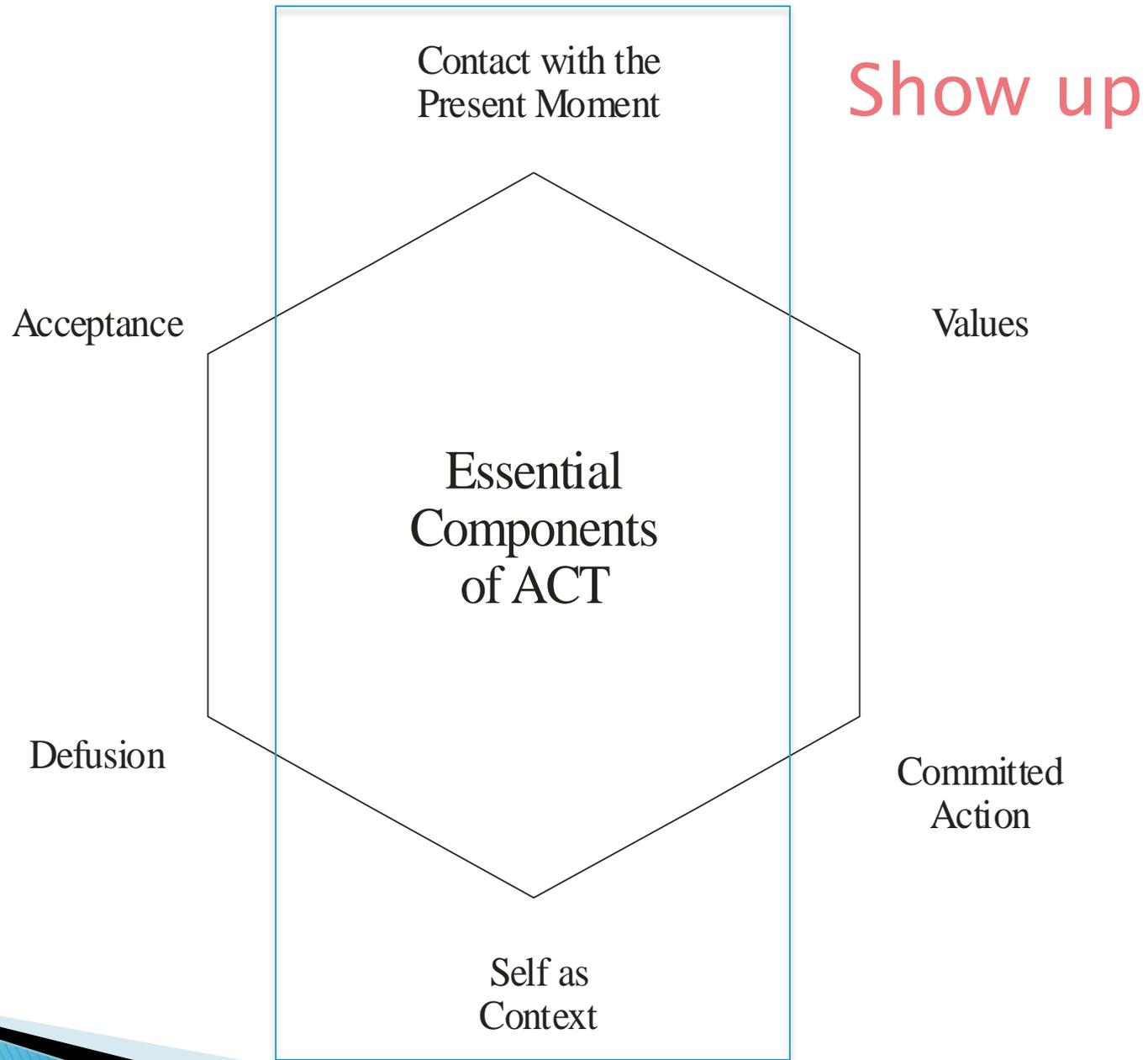
How well does your avoidance method(s) work to move you in the direction you want your life to go?

- Short-term vs. long-term

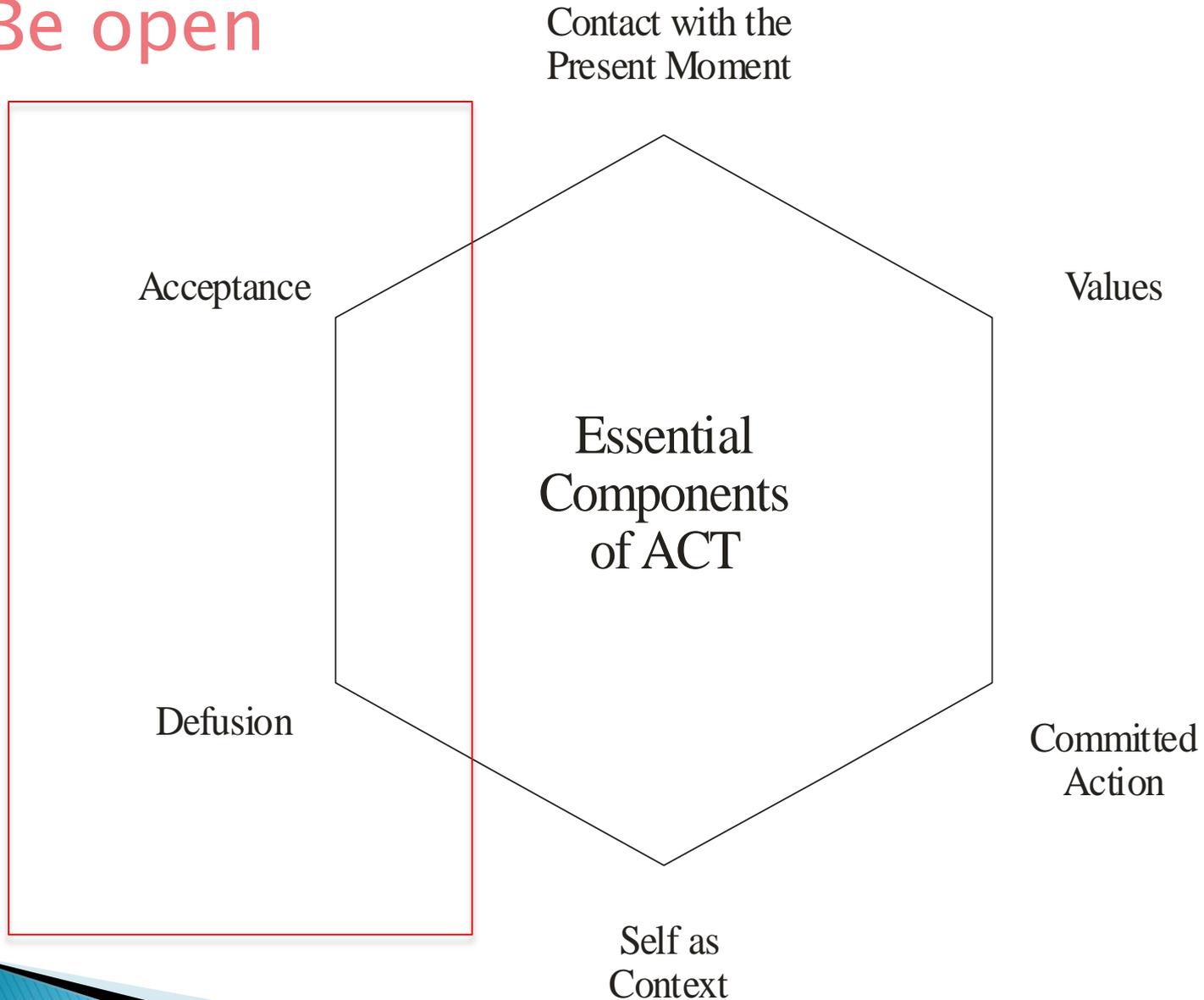
“While I’m busy avoiding my internal world [using substances], my external world is falling apart...”

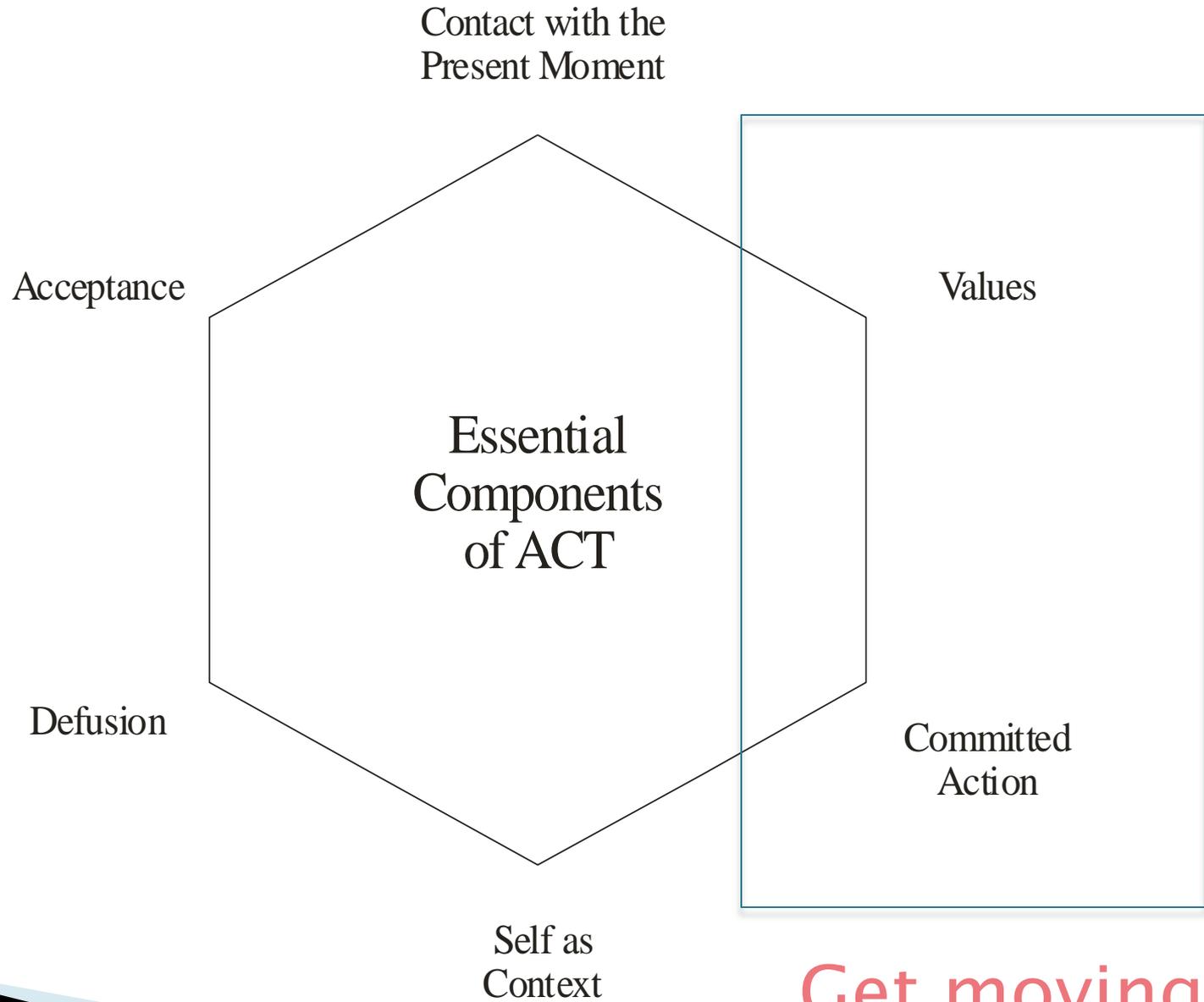
Let's re-cap

- ▶ Pain and suffering – everyone has it
- ▶ Substance abusers have found a way to reduce short-term pain by using alcohol &/or drugs.
- ▶ Trying to avoid feeling bad takes up a lot of time and has other negative life consequences.
- ▶ Common plea from clients: “Help me stop wanting to use.” – not a realistic goal.
- ▶ **Your Goal:** In the presence of thoughts/feelings about wanting or needing to use, can you help them make the decision not to?



Be open



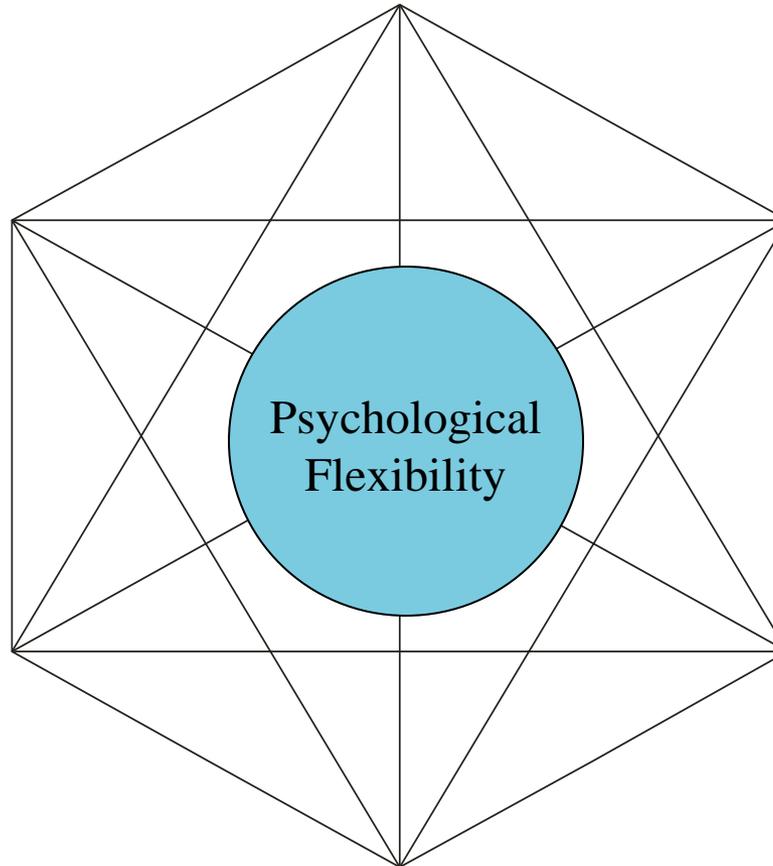


Get moving

Contact with the
Present Moment

Acceptance

Values



Defusion

Committed
Action

Self as
Context

Showing up

Eyes On Exercise

- ▶ Pair off
- ▶ Silently appreciate one another, making a conscious effort to be fully “present” with another human being for just a couple of minutes.
- ▶ Notice what your mind does, and then return your attention to the task.
- ▶ 2 minutes

What was that like?

- ▶ Were you distracted by sights, sounds?
- ▶ Were you really “present with the person?”

Noticing their eye color; facial features?

- ▶ Did your mind take you off track?
 - Were you able to bring it back?

Show up: Mindfulness

▶ Present Moment Awareness

- Being able to (flexibly, voluntarily, purposely) come into contact with what is happening right here, right now?
- Takes practice –
 - formal (e.g., meditation) or
 - informal (noticing, appreciating, yoga) practice
 - Set a timer – practice with your 5 senses

Failure of present moment processes

- ▶ In treatment sessions, lack of mindfulness may look like:
 - Distractibility: sights, sounds, and topics tend to draw the person off target.
 - Fixation on explanation or analysis – often a measure of avoiding particularly strong emotional content).
 - Worry and rumination.

What are some benefits of mindfulness/being present?

- ▶ Will help a client to slow down and be in touch with what is happening right now.
- ▶ Will help identify avoidance behaviors as they happen.
- ▶ Will help make choices based on what happening in their environment and not what's happening in their head.
- ▶ What will happen first when a client first begins to slow down and get in touch with what is happening right now in their lives?

Being Open

Be Open: Acceptance & Defusion

1. Unwanted thoughts and feelings WILL come.

What is client's experience during period of sobriety?

Our minds are wired not to forget things:

- Blonde have more _____.
- Eeny, Meeny, Miny _____.
- There's no place like _____.
- I need a _____ (drink, fix, bump, hit)

Be Open: Acceptance & Defusion

2. Efforts to control have failed.

- Your clients have tried not to use; many have tried very hard to get rid of cravings, thoughts of use...
- Quicksand metaphor: Maybe it's like falling into quicksand
- **Maybe the answer is to quit struggling**
- Tug of war with the monster metaphor

Be Open: Acceptance & Defusion

3. Alternative to struggling with unpleasant thoughts and feelings: Let them show up
 - Allowing them to come so they don't increase

“If you don't want it, you got it”

Be Open: Acceptance & Defusion

- Break the bond between thought and behavior, i.e., you can have a thought and not act on it.
- Interventions:
 - Just notice what your mind is giving you
 - Having a thought vs. buying a thought
 - “Thank your mind for that thought.”
 - Preface statement with: I’m having the thought that...
 - Mindfulness exercises: Leaves in a stream or 8 lane highway; credits on a movie screen
 - Disrupting language:
 - Describe milk: milk, milk, milk – 30 sec; failure
 - Say it loud, sing it, say it reaaaally sloooowly

Take your mind for a walk

- ▶ Pair up: 1 person, 1 mind
- ▶ Person chooses path; mind follows
- ▶ Mind communicates constantly (warning, analyzing, predicting, judging)
- ▶ Person is silent; cannot communicate with mind (nevermind your mind)
 - Person hears their mind AND goes where they choose
- ▶ Switch roles after 3–5 mins
- ▶ Walk silently for a few minutes then come back.
 - Notice you are still taking your mind for a walk...

Can you hear your mind

AND

Choose actions based on your values, what you think is important, the direction you want your life to go?

Get Moving

Get moving: Values and Committed Action

- ▶ Values work
 - Asking clients to do really hard stuff in treatment: face their fears; makes amends, personal inventory
 - Why would they do this?
 - What would make this suffering worth it?
 - Pencil/hand
- ▶ The more time you spend avoiding the pain and suffering of life (staying in bed, using substances, washing your hands (OCD), ruminating on why you are angry), the less time you have for what's really important.

Values areas of life

- ▶ Work
- ▶ Spirituality
- ▶ Intimate Relationships
- ▶ Parenting
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Physical self-care
- ▶ Family
- ▶ Community
- ▶ Recreation

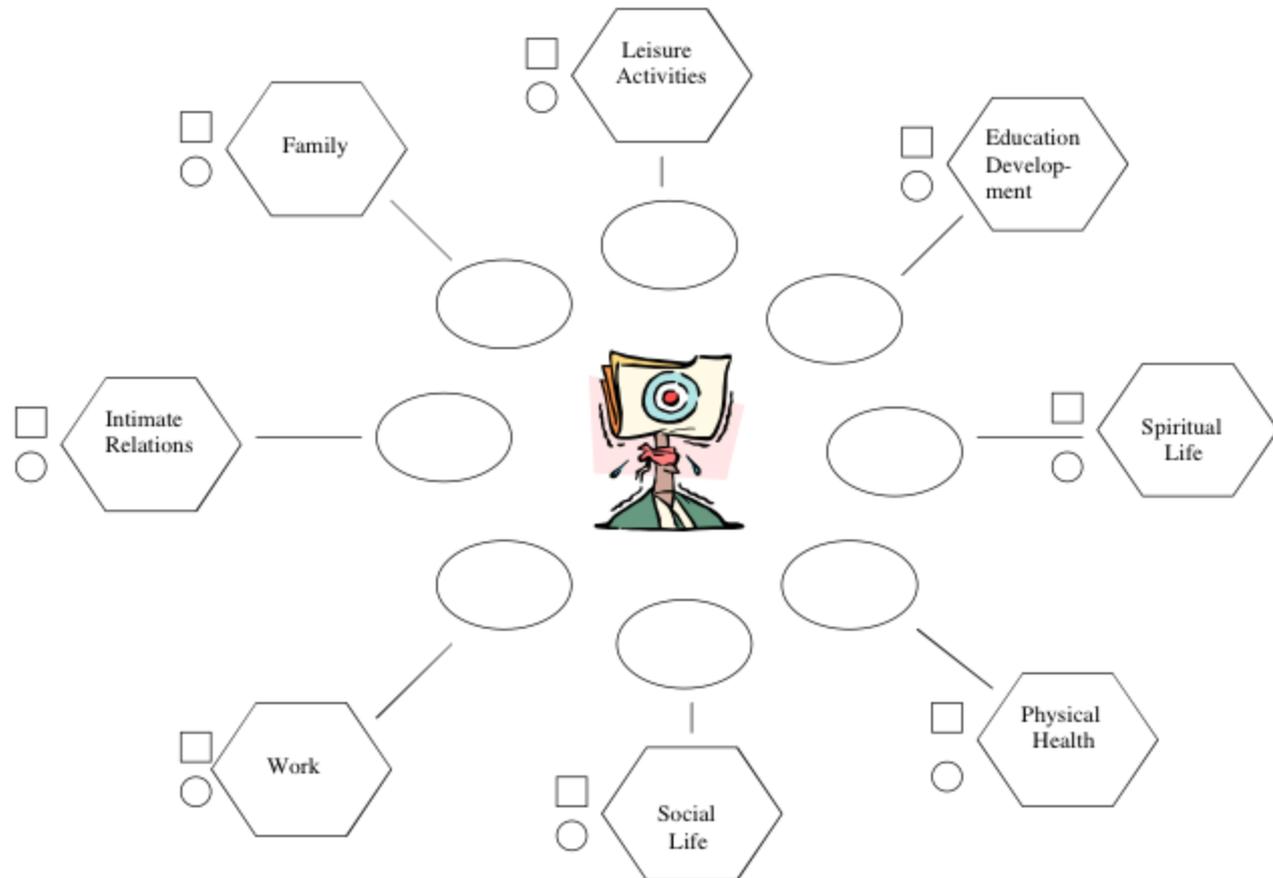
Importance

Consistency

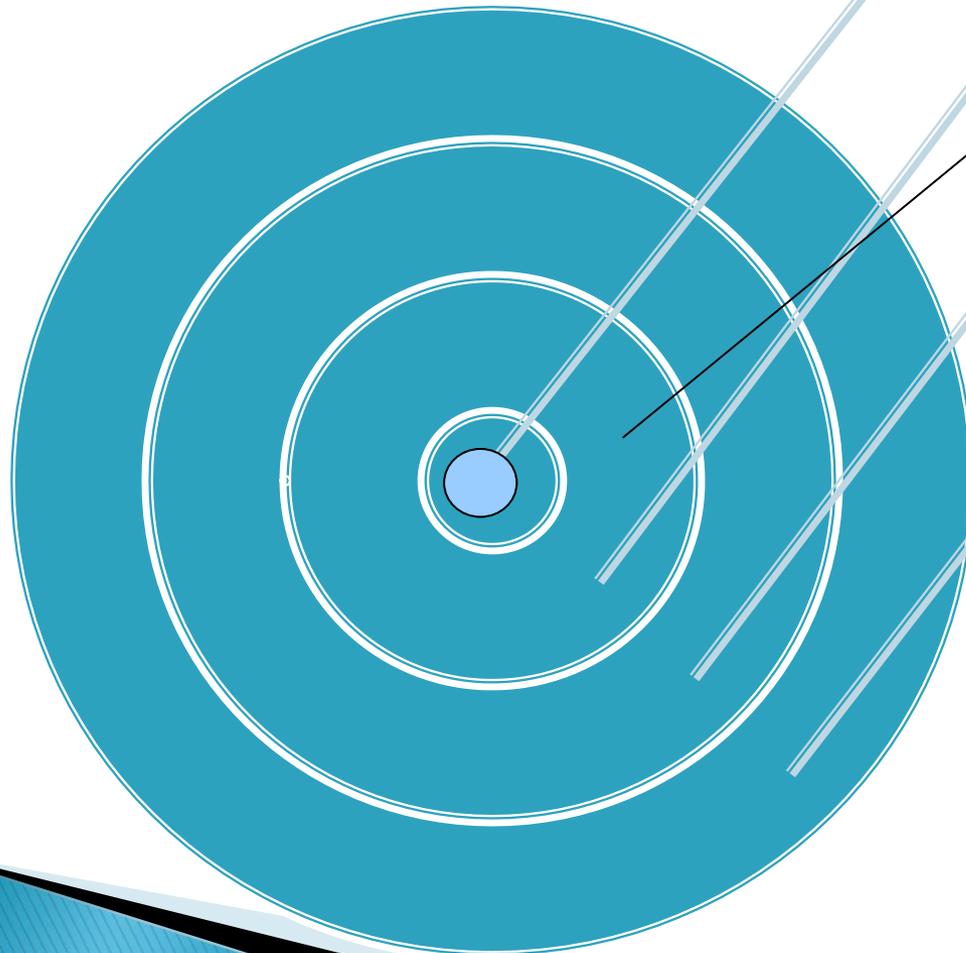
Values exercises

- ▶ Values compass
- ▶ Bullseye values assessment

The Values Compass



Bullseye Assessment



Bullseye

Very close

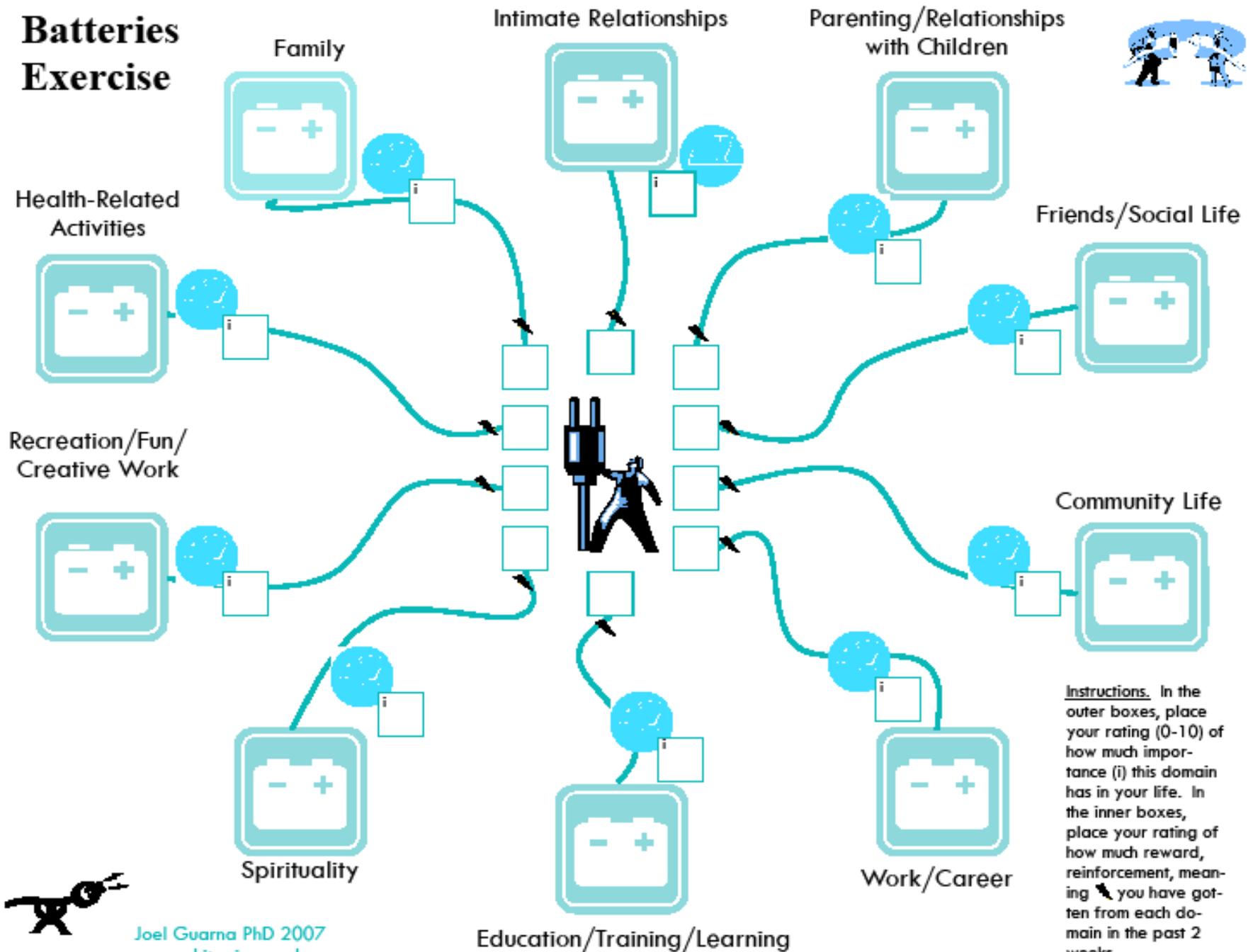
Close

In the vicinity

Far from

Developed by Tobias Lundgren and JoAnne Dahl at the University of Uppsala

Batteries Exercise



Instructions. In the outer boxes, place your rating (0-10) of how much importance (i) this domain has in your life. In the inner boxes, place your rating of how much reward, reinforcement, meaning you have gotten from each domain in the past 2 weeks.



Other values interventions

- ▶ Funeral exercise: Close your eyes and imagine you are at our own funeral, what would you want your kids to say about you; your children; your employer?
- ▶ Swamp metaphor: Suppose you begin a journey to a beautiful castle. You start the hike and immediately run into a big swamp extending as far as you can see in all directions. You say to yourself, “Well this sucks. This is hard.” And you are faced with a choice. Return to where you were or enter the swamp. Treatment is like that...life is like that...

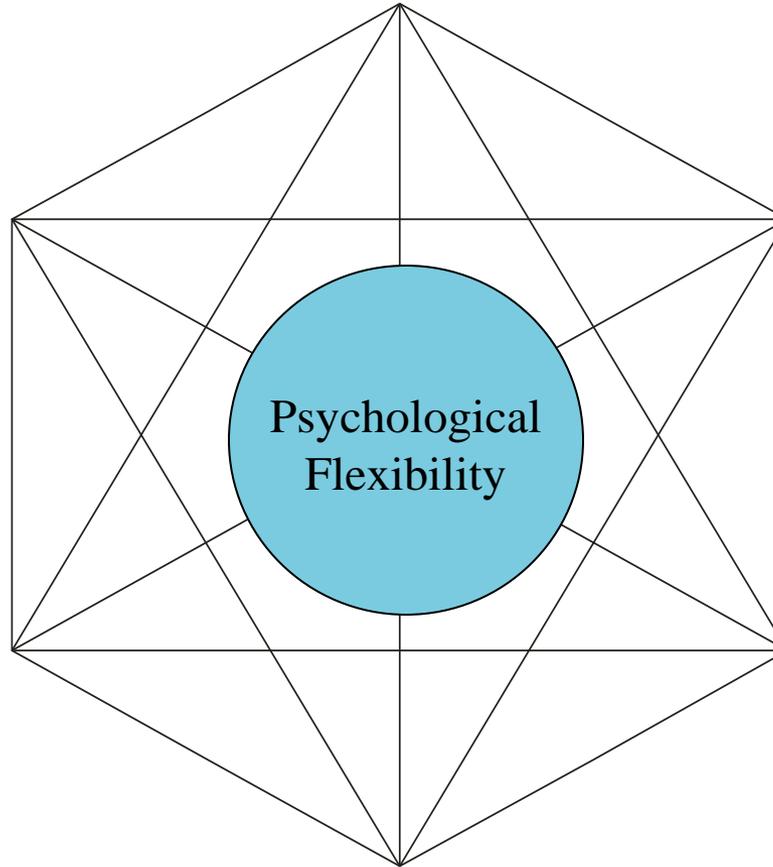
Get moving: Values and Committed Action

- ▶ After values are identified, start setting behavioral goals in at least one of these directions.
 - Start small; small goals
 - This is a process that will continue
 - When your mind is beating you up, let your values be your compass
 - Base your choices on your values and not your thoughts and feelings
 - EX. I can't possibly call my brother after what I did to him.
 - Buying thought vs. having thought
 - What's important? Based on this and in the presence of these kinds of thoughts, what are you willing to do to move in the direction of your value.

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