

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: How is ACT-D different than other psychotherapy treatments?

A: Many depression treatments focus on learning ways to challenge distorted thinking and flawed behaviors. In ACT-D, you learn to reduce symptoms of depression through mindfulness exercises, acceptance, and other behavioral strategies. Value-based, helpful behaviors, such as mindful acceptance, will help reduce distressing thoughts, emotions, or sensations commonly found in those suffering from depression.

Q: Who can benefit from ACT-D?

A: ACT-D is particularly helpful for those coping with mild to moderate depression. In ACT-D, the provider will work with you to become more accepting of yourself, enhance your relationships with others and improve functioning in personal situations.

Q: How will I know if ACT-D has been helpful?

A: Participating in ACT-D will help you to acquire skills for accepting the feelings of depression by developing a new understanding of pain and suffering. In other words, ACT-D will help you let go of the struggle with difficult thoughts and feelings in order to pursue a richer, fuller, and more purposeful life. Research has shown that ACT-D helps to improve mood, decrease anxiety and irritability, as well as enhance interpersonal relationships.

Who We Are

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences' Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP) trains military and civilian behavioral health professionals to provide high quality, culturally-sensitive, evidence-based behavioral health services to Service members, Veterans and their families.



Army photo by Master Sgt. Michel Saure. VIRIN: 171117-A-TI382-207C.JPG
<https://dod.defense.gov/OIR/gallery/gphoto/2001846273/>

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression

What is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression?

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression (ACT-D) is one of the therapies recommended by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense for depression. It focuses on accepting your emotions and working toward desired goals. Research shows that ACT-D is very effective for the treatment of depression and improves quality of life. ACT-D usually requires 10 to 16 sessions to lead to significant improvement. Sessions last about 50 to 60 minutes and can be done individually or in a group setting.

ACT-D can help individuals with depression make positive changes in their life guided by what is personally meaningful. You will learn to identify and become actively involved in things you care about. ACT-D addresses symptoms by decreasing avoidance, one of the underlying causes of depression. Your provider will work with you to accept yourself more, improve relationships with others, and enhance functioning in personal situations.

If you decide to participate in ACT-D, you will learn to:

- A** = Accept your reactions
- C** = Choose a valued direction
- T** = Take action



ACT-D is a short-term psychotherapy for treating symptoms of depression, which may include:

- Feeling sad, depressed or hopeless
- Experiencing loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Feeling worthless or having extreme guilt
- Being irritable or agitated
- Having difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Experiencing loss of energy or feeling fatigue
- Having an increase or decrease in appetite or sleep

What are the Goals of ACT-D?

The overall goal of ACT-D is to help individuals with depression gain skills to promote full, rich and meaningful lives. ACT-D helps you focus on living life by participating in activities that match your personal values. The goal of ACT-D is not to remove certain parts of your experience (e.g., anxiety, sadness, negative thoughts, bad memories, etc.). Sometimes, the effort to get rid of pain becomes the source of pain itself. In ACT-D, you learn to appreciate your thoughts and emotions from a different point of view. The ultimate goal is to learn how to experience life more fully and to increase the overall quality of life.

What Will I Be Doing in ACT-D?

In ACT-D, you will work together with your provider to do the following:

- Learn to be more present, in the “here-and-now”.
- Learn to observe your thoughts and feelings without trying to control or change them.
- Discover values most important to you.
- Set goals according to your values and carry them out.
- Improve your interpersonal relationships and feel more connected to others.