WORKSHEET 36 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The ACT matrix

A four-box map to find your bearings (matrix)

AIM

Help the person organise their experience into four boxes: what matters to them, what gets in the way inside, what they do to move away from discomfort and what they do to move towards what matters.

WHO IT IS FOR

Adults and adolescents in general; useful for case formulation and follow-up.

DURATION

15-20 min in session; can be revisited at each session

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Draw a cross: horizontal axis “away / towards”, vertical axis “inner experience / visible actions”.
2. Start at the bottom right: who and what is important to you?
3. Bottom left: what shows up inside and gets in the way (thoughts, emotions, memories)?
4. Top left: what do you do to move away from those experiences? Top right: what do you do, or could you do, to move towards what matters?
5. Ask: “Who notices all this?” (the observing point in the centre) and choose an action from the top right for the week.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Don’t judge the actions on the left: they often bring relief in the short term. The question is their long-term effect on what matters to the person.

REFERENCES

Polk, K. L. & Schoendorff, B. (Eds.) (2014). The ACT Matrix: A New Approach to Building Psychological Flexibility Across Settings and Populations. New Harbinger.

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D. & Wilson, K. G. (2012). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: The Process and Practice of Mindful Change (2nd ed.). Guilford.

PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 36 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

My matrix

This four-box map helps you see clearly: what matters to you, what gets in the way inside, and what you do to move away from or towards what matters.

1. Bottom right: who and what is important to me?
2. Bottom left: what thoughts, emotions or memories get in my way?
3. Top left: what do I do to move away from what gets in my way?
4. Top right: what can I do to move towards what matters?

What I do to move away (top left)	What I do to move towards (top right)

What gets in my way inside (bottom left) and what matters to me (bottom right):

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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