Stuff That Sucks

An Introduction to using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) with Young People

with Dr. Ben Sedley (NZ)

If you could help young people to get past feelings of shame, embarrassment, fear, and self-criticism, how would their life be different?

Whether you are a new or experienced clinician, incorporating Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) into your practice can have significant positive affects on your clients (and yourself). ACT is an empirically supported therapeutic approach used successfully with people experiencing a range of life challenges including low mood, anxiety, and internal conflict through to mental illness and addiction. ACT draws on behavioural and mindfulness principles to help people move past self-critical thoughts and painful emotions, and move towards committed action and change.

Life can be stressful and challenging for our rangatahi within a modern, media-driven world that promotes materialism, escapism, feel goodism whilst judging difference and weakness. Young people are particularly prone to feeling emotionally overwhelmed due to academic stress, body image, peer relationships and family conflict. This can quickly spiral into painful thoughts and feelings, and avoidance and can present as Depression, Anxiety, and a number of other mental health diagnoses, along with tension in social groups and families. In this workshop, Ben will introduce the principles of ACT and demonstrate some metaphor and exercises that can be used with teenagers. The workshop will be experiential so that you can draw on your own experiences when applying ACT with young people.

Some of the key content areas Ben will discuss include:

- The ACT model and how to adapt the core principles of ACT to make it resonate with young people.
- Relational Frame Theory: how brains form connections & hold onto those connections tightly even when not helpful.
- Supporting developmental challenges of rangatahi with ACT ideas, and normalising the range & extent of teen suffering.
- The importance of Validation, Perspective Taking and Metaphor in the therapeutic process
- Helping young people let go of their struggle against the Stuff that Sucks (self-critical thoughts and painful emotions)
- Talking about the Stuff that is Here and Now (Mindfulness) in ways that make sense to young people.
- Helping young people identify the Stuff that Matters (Values) and move towards these with committed action.
- The importance of other adults in the therapeutic process to challenge the young person's perceptions of their struggles.
- Helping clients learn from their experiences and active exercises in session, rather than being taught by a counsellor.
- Helping practitioners incorporate ACT into their own experiences to deal with negative perceptions, narrowed focus and discomfort.



Ben Sedley is a Wellington based clinical psychologist and a peer reviewed ACT Trainer. He has worked in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Victoria University Clinical Psychology Programme, Massey University Counselling Service and has a part time private practice working with adults and teens. He is the author of ' Holding the Heavy Stuff: Making Space for Critical Thoughts and Painful Emotions', 'Stuff that Sucks: A Teen's Guide to Accepting to what you can't change and Committing to what you can' and co-author of 'Stuff that's Loud: A Teen's Guide to Unspiralling when OCD gets noisy' (with Lisa Coyne).

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Seminar Details:

- INVERCARGILL: Ascot Park Hotel - Corner Tay Street and Racecourse Road, Invercargill 9810
- Monday 30 August 2027
- 9:00am - 3:00pm
- $325 inc. GST. Includes full catering, printed handbook, attendance certificate & live bookstore
- Contact the Compass Seminars team on 06 759 1647 or office@compass.ac.nz

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