Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT): The Experience of Adaptation and Application for HIV Stigma Reduction


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OHTN Research Conference
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The CHAMP Study (2011-2014)
Community Champions HIV/AIDS Advocates Mobilization Project

- To Engage ethno-racial PHA and Non-PHA leaders
  - Asian (East, SE & S. Asian)
  - Black (African & Caribbean)
  - Latin American (Hispanic)

- To develop community HIV champions to address stigma & other social justice issues

- To build research capacity through community-campus partnership
  - 6 Peer Research Associates hired, 2 from each community
  - multidisciplinary research team
CHAMPS: Pilot and Test Two Interventions
- Acceptance Commitment Training
- Social Justice Capacity Building

PHA Group: ACT + SJCB
N=35
Interpersonal, community, & societal

Non-PHA Group: ACT + SJCB
N=31
Intrapersonal, interpersonal

Acceptance Commitment Training (ACT)
To engage, develop skills & mobilize

Social Justice Capacity Building (SJCB)
To increase psychoflexibility

2 evenings + 1 full-day
ACT Core Processes

Be here now

Contact with the Present Moment

Open up

Acceptance

Defusion

Watch your thinking

Psychological Flexibility

Be present

Open up

Do what matters

Know what matters

Values

Committed Action

Do what it takes

Self as Context

Pure awareness

Harris R, 2009
ACT Group Interventions

• Experiential Exercises & Metaphors

• Examples:
  • Acceptance – Chair Exercise
  • Defusion – Paired Singing
  • Present Moment – Leaves-on-a-stream
  • Self-as-context – Lego Exercise
  • Values – Reunion
  • Committed Action – Bus Driver
Modifications

- HIV Stories
- Reunion Exercise (vs RIP)
- Lego Exercise (vs Guided Imagery)
Challenges

- Time

- Group heterogeneity
  - Differences re: exposure to and skill in mindfulness
  - Trauma
  - Linguistic and cultural differences
  - Differences in learning styles – concrete vs abstract

- Group Dynamics
  - With facilitator
  - With each other

- Coping with external issues
Observations

- Individually - heterogeneous response
- Powerful affect can be stirred up
  - Crying
  - Dissociation
- Can become powerful, esp those who are able to work through these emotions
- Group cohesion in spite of heterogeneity
- Commonalities – PHA and CL groups
Thoughts about ACT

- “Help me a lot to get out of the closet of HIV, give me a roadmap to reconstruct my values, hoping for positive living, new communities from here” – ACT Goodbye

- “I will think positively about myself and not be afraid to disclose my HIV status when I feel I want to.” – ACT Post Session Check Form

- “ACT group gave me strength and being able to speak out for myself and help me tell my family. Change: educate my kids and help them move along with their lives” – reflecting on ACT in SJCB Gp
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