

Cognitive Behavioural and Acceptance-Based Approaches for Managing Pain: Tools for Pain-Related Suffering

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For Webinar Series:
Chronic Pain



My Assumptions

- Complexity
 - Medical Closure
 - Pain Neurophysiology
 - Role of Psychology “Not all in your head” and related insinuations
- Control
- Discipline
- Paradox

Goal

- Intro to CBT and ACT
- Research background
- Most important:

Convincing framework and skills for managing the often interwoven experiences of physiological distress and emotional distress

Intended Outcomes

- Mind-body connection
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Pros and Cons, Reality Testing, Reframing, Positive self-coping statements
- Non-judgmental stance
- Willingness, Mindful breathing and the Pain/Willingness dial

Diaphragmatic breathing

- One hand on chest and other on stomach
- Breathe in through the nose
- Stomach expands
- Breathe out very slowly

Rationale: Pain creates a 'stress response' +
cognitive functioning doesn't work well under
stress

Evidence

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy has been a well researched approach to treatment (see Wetherell et al. 2011)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is now a well established complementary/competing paradigm (Veehof et al., 2011)
- Need more Canadian samples (most from Europe and Scandinavian Countries)

CBT and Chronic Pain

“Persistent attempts to react and adapt to pain and its widespread destructive consequences often result in a range of emotional problems...chronic persistent pain, fear and depression inevitably have negative effects on other aspects of cognition.” Ecclestone, (2001)

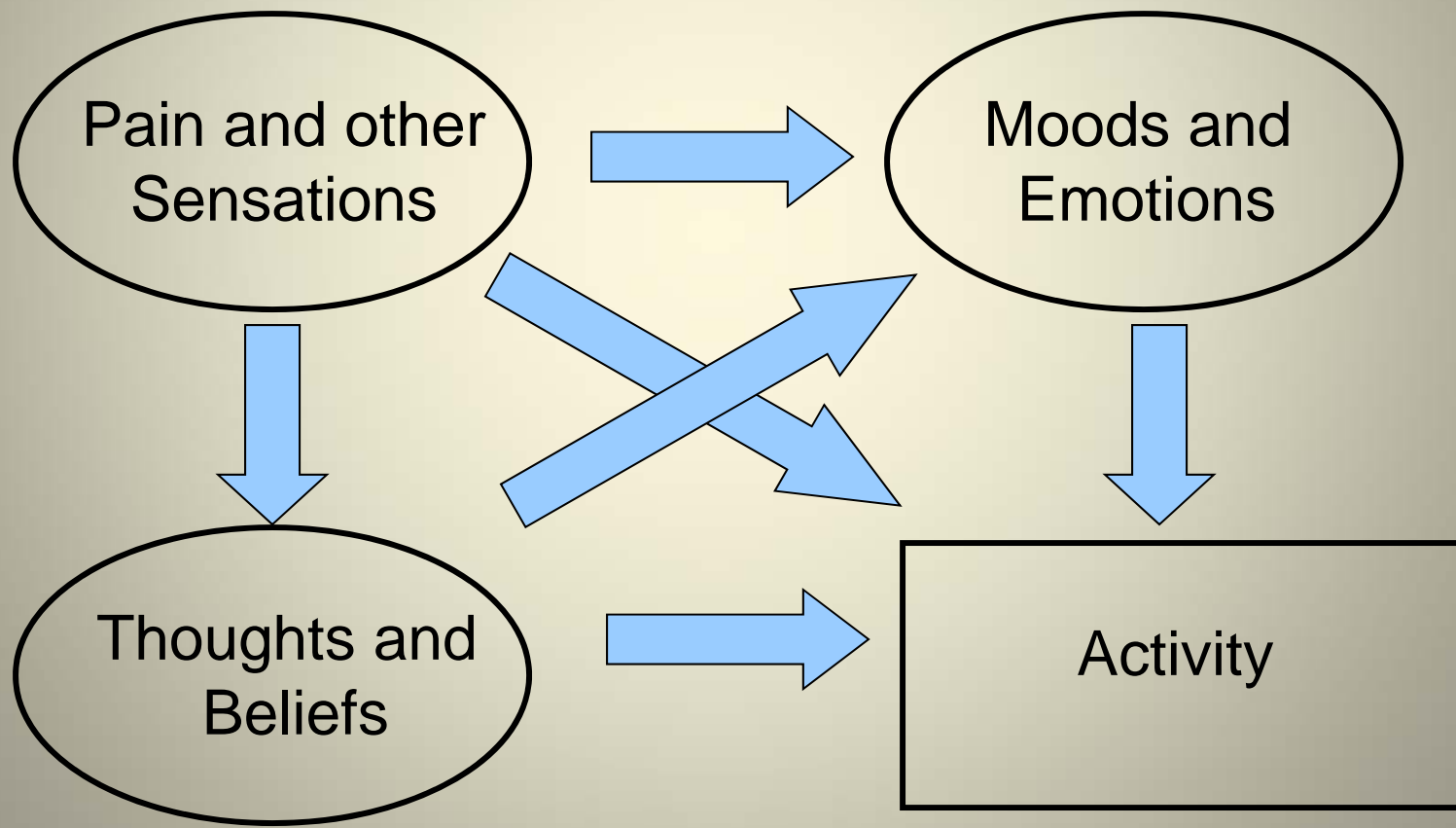
What is CBT?

Is a form of counselling that emphasizes the important role of thinking in how we feel and what we do.

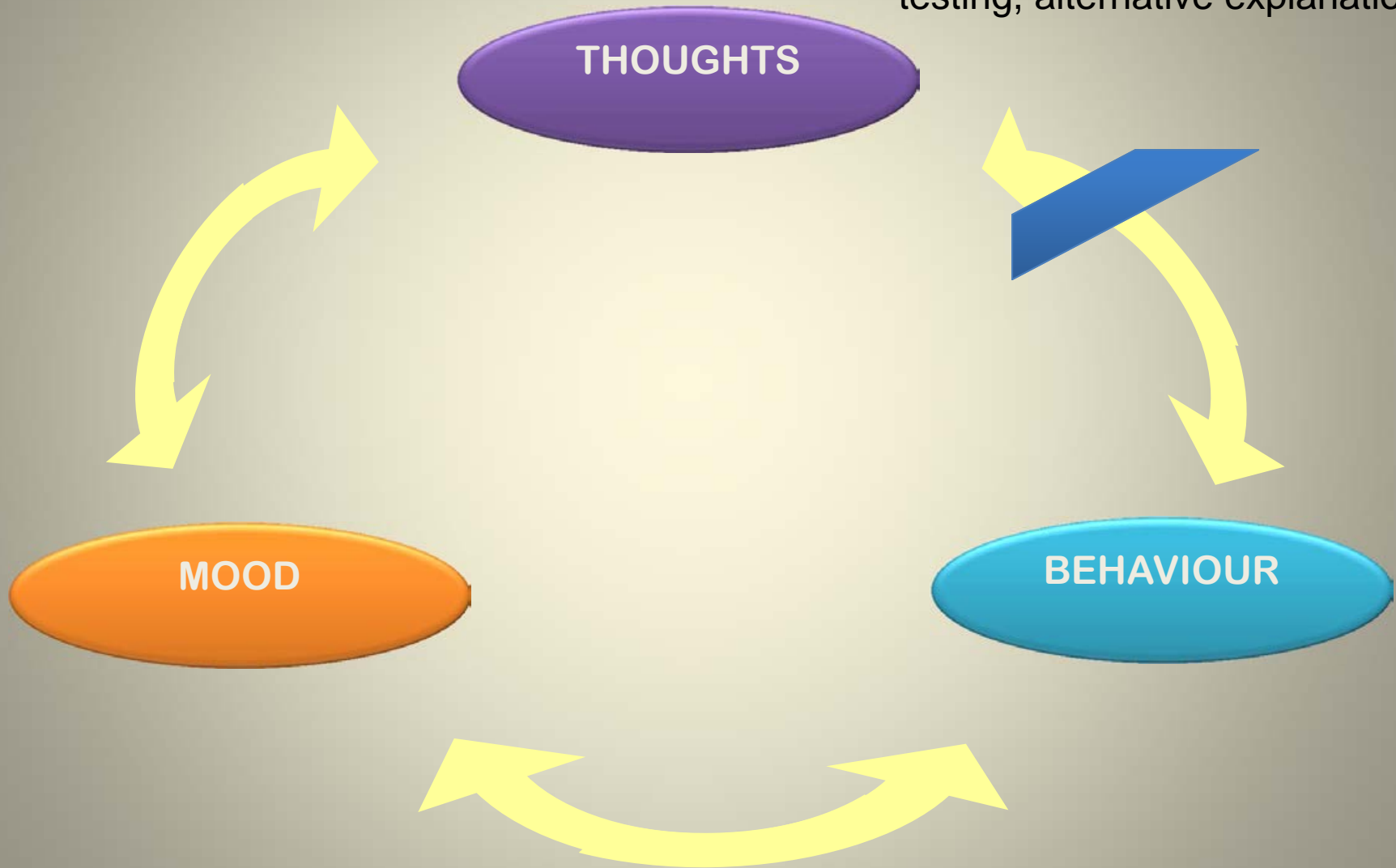
CBT Assumptions

- Humans actively process information - Learner...sense makers...
- Cognitions actively interact with physiology, emotional and behaviours.
- Behaviour interacts with environmental events.
- Affect and behaviour are largely based on how a person construes the world.

A Standard CBT Approach



Examine thoughts, reality testing, alternative explanations



Complexity of Thought

- Automatic thoughts
 - First thoughts, often unnoticed, impact feelings and behaviours. MOST AMENABLE TO CHANGE
- Intermediate beliefs
 - Expectations, rules, guidelines
- Core beliefs
 - Values, level of identity
- Patterns of responding to pain sensations

Hurt vs. Damage

Have I done something dangerous? Hurt versus harm, stress or resistance?

- Alternative explanations

Plan: Breathing, ice, stretching, microbreak, task rotations, affirmations
(Thoughts/feelings/body/behaviours)

- Positive self-coping statements (**CHALLENGE**)

Perception of Transition

- **Acute to chronic**
 - Expectations – e.g. “can’t move until ‘cured’”
 - Patterns of responding (Cognitive/affective)
 - Threat to identity and roles
- **Systemic influences + human nature leads to difficulties**
 - Search for the cure requires trust and reliance
 - Transition is often experienced as difficult
(‘violent’ ‘abandonment’ ‘disorientation’)

Mind Traps

- “Can’t do”
- Worst case thinking
- Mind Reading
- Filtering the positive
- Emotional Reasoning

Point – to learn about these and realize that getting caught in inflexible patterns of thinking prevents movement with pain management

What is ACT?

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) gets its name from one of its core messages: accept what is out of your personal control, and commit to action that improves and enriches your life.
- *Acceptance, Mindfulness & Valued Action*

How it differs from CBT

- Cognitive therapy has generally focused on changing (rather than accepting) private experiences.
- Traditional therapy treated anxiety with relaxation and CT challenged irrational beliefs with more rational ones. Essentially, better forms of experiential avoidance were presented as modes of intervention

Radical Idea!

- In many cases of human suffering pain, at least some of the time, CONTROL is not the SOLUTION; it's the PROBLEM.



Acceptance

- Psychological acceptance is defined as the willingness to remain in contact with thoughts and feelings without having to follow or change them
- Acceptance of chronic pain has been defined as living with pain without reaction, disapproval, or attempts to reduce or avoid it.
- Acceptance does not mean “liking”

Willingness – An Action

- Willing to experience, without struggle, difficult thoughts and feelings in the service of our values.
- As soon as we're struggling to try to change, decrease, alter our thoughts/feelings/sensations, we aren't really willing to have them.
- Cactus Metaphor
www.portlandpsychotherapyclinic.com

Willingness is not:

- Resisting your pain
- Ignoring your pain
- Doing what your pain says
- Not doing what your pain says

This list illustrates that its hard for the mind to grasp

We must never forget that we may also find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation, when facing a fate that cannot be changed. For what then matters is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to transform a personal tragedy into a triumph, to turn one's predicament into human achievement. When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves.

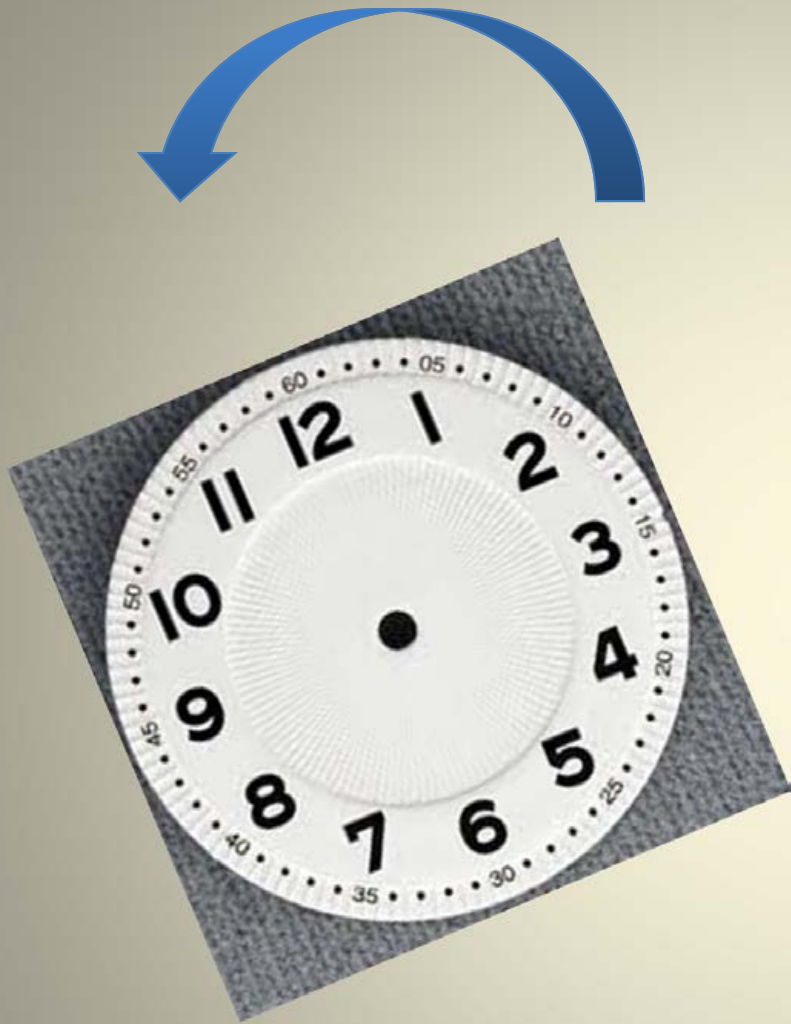
Victor Frankl: ***Man's Search for Meaning***

Mindfulness

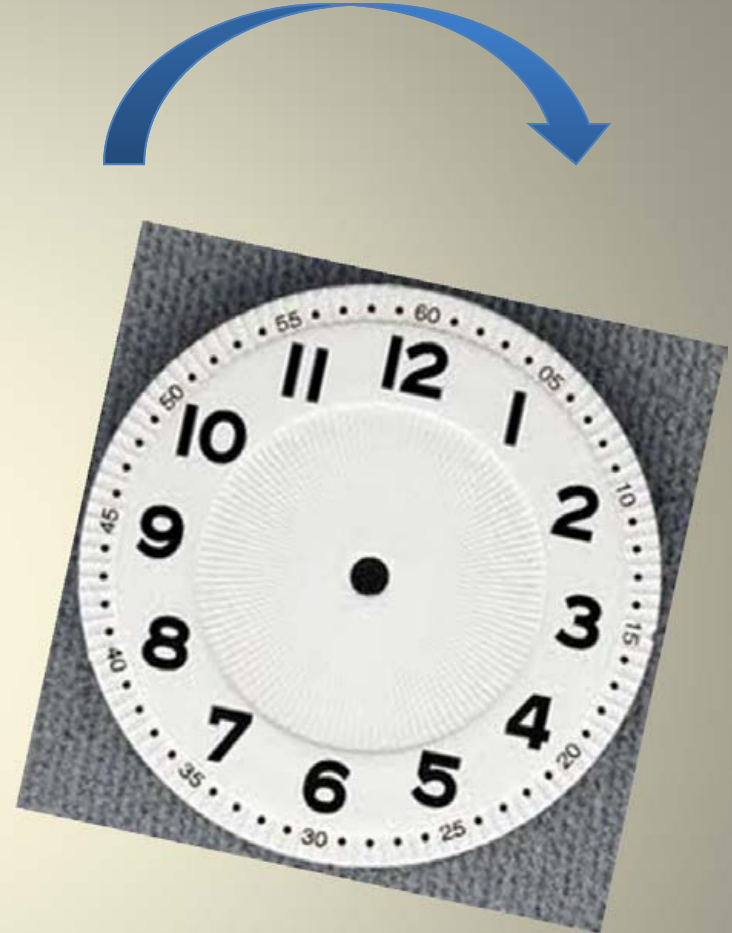
- ◎ Staying with the **present moment**
- ◎ Watching the “nature” and “content” of experience
- ◎ One notices that these experiences are generally transient
- ◎ The place of observation is “untouched” by what is observed
- ◎ Fosters a **non-defensive** approach to private experiences

Mindful Breathing

- Resistance to unwanted experience (frustration, suffering, helplessness)
- Mindfulness – paying attention to one’s experience, moment by moment, non-judgmentally
- Breathe in and out – aware of thoughts/judgments/emotions/sensations – challenge (neither good nor bad; simply how it is right now)



WILLINGNESS



PAIN

Summary

- This stuff is hard but it works
- Take stock
 - Understand transition – your patterns of responding – impact on identity
 - Understand your values and that you can move forward guided by your values
- Takes discipline combined with realistic expectations
- Recruit Support

Resources

- Mindfulness Meditation for Chronic Pain Relief CD's (Kabat-Zinn)
- Get out of your Mind and Into your Life (Stephen Hayes)
- Managing Pain before it Manages you (Margaret Caudhill)
- Living Beyond your Pain: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Ease your Pain (Tobias and Dahl)

Resources

- <https://moodgym.anu.edu.au>
- Inside Chronic Pain: An Intimate and Critical Account (Lous Heshusius)
- www.cirpd.org