

Acceptance and Commitment
Therapy for Depression (ACT-D)
is an effective treatment
available to Veterans with
depression in the Department of
Veterans Affairs health care
system. ACT-D is a highly
recommended treatment for
many individuals with depression.



Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression



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For more information, about
ACT for Depression, please
talk with your local VA provider.

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 Evidence-Based
PSYCHOTHERAPIES



Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression (ACT-D)

ACT-D is a talk therapy for treating symptoms of depression which may include:

- Feeling sad, depressed or hopeless
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Feeling worthless or having extreme guilt
- Being irritable or agitated
- Difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Loss of energy or fatigue
- Increase or decrease in appetite or sleep

ACT-D can help individuals with depression make changes such that they can have fuller and richer lives guided by what is personally meaningful and helpful. In ACT, the therapist works with the individual to assist them in becoming more accepting of themselves, to have better relationships with others, and to improve functioning in their personal situations. Individuals learn to identify and take part in activities that are in line with what they care about and that make a difference in their lives as well as their emotional experience.

By participating in ACT, the individual learns to:

- A** Accept
- C** Choose
- T** Take Action

In ACT-D, the client may learn to:

- **Be more present** to the “here-and-now.” This focus helps to decrease being caught up in what happened in the past. It also frees individuals from worrying about the future. Being present helps one to more fully connect and enjoy the moment.
- Observe thoughts and feelings in such a way that they no longer keep one “stuck” in life. Learning to observe through **openness and acceptance** can help individuals find a sense of freedom from negative thoughts and feelings such that they no longer control one’s life.
- Clarify values and then **take action**. Finding what is most meaningful to the client and choosing to act on these values are important parts of the therapy. This will be part of the process of building a rich and full life.



What happens during ACT-D?

ACT-D usually requires 10 to 16 individual sessions, but may take more or less time depending on the goals the individual sets for treatment. Each session lasts about 50 to 60 minutes. During ACT-D, the client will practice what is learned in the session in their daily life. For example, a client may be asked to do an activity, that he or she chooses, that is in line with a personal value before returning to the next session.

With the help of the therapist, clients will work on improving their overall functioning by focusing on what is meaningful to them. This is accomplished by:

1. Practicing being mindfully aware, and;
2. Participating in activities that increase their quality of life.

Does ACT for depression work?

Research has shown ACT-D to be effective for the treatment of depression, and that Veterans who have completed treatment have reported a significant decrease in depression and an improved self-awareness. They also report experiencing a better quality of life.

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

Clients participating in ACT-D may notice the following:

- Improved mood
- Less anxiety or irritability
- More openness and understanding with yourself and others
- Feeling connected to others
- Engaging in important and meaningful activities

