

ACT-enhanced
ERP for OCD

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The slide features a light teal background with a large white circle in the center. The title 'ACT-enhanced ERP for OCD' is written in a dark teal serif font within the circle. Below the title, the presenter's name 'KRISTIN E FITCH, PHD' is displayed in a smaller, dark teal sans-serif font. In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for 'RISE CENTER FOR OCD & ANXIETY' featuring a stylized lightbulb icon. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular logo for 'OCD Louisiana' with the text in a script font. Two dark teal starburst graphics are positioned at the top and bottom of the central circle.

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Agenda:

- OCD and Maintaining Factors
- Exposure and Response Prevention Models
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- ACT-Enhanced Exposure Therapy
- Unhooking Techniques
- Questions

The slide has a light teal background with a white arc and a dark teal starburst graphic on the left side. The word 'Agenda:' is written in a dark teal serif font. To the right, there is a vertical list of six items, each enclosed in a rounded rectangular box with a light teal border and a white background. The items are: 'OCD and Maintaining Factors', 'Exposure and Response Prevention Models', 'Acceptance and Commitment Therapy', 'ACT-Enhanced Exposure Therapy', 'Unhooking Techniques', and 'Questions'.

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OCD

Spoiler Alert:
It's not just
handwashing and
checking



A blue starburst graphic is positioned to the right of the text, with a thin blue line extending from it towards the meme image.

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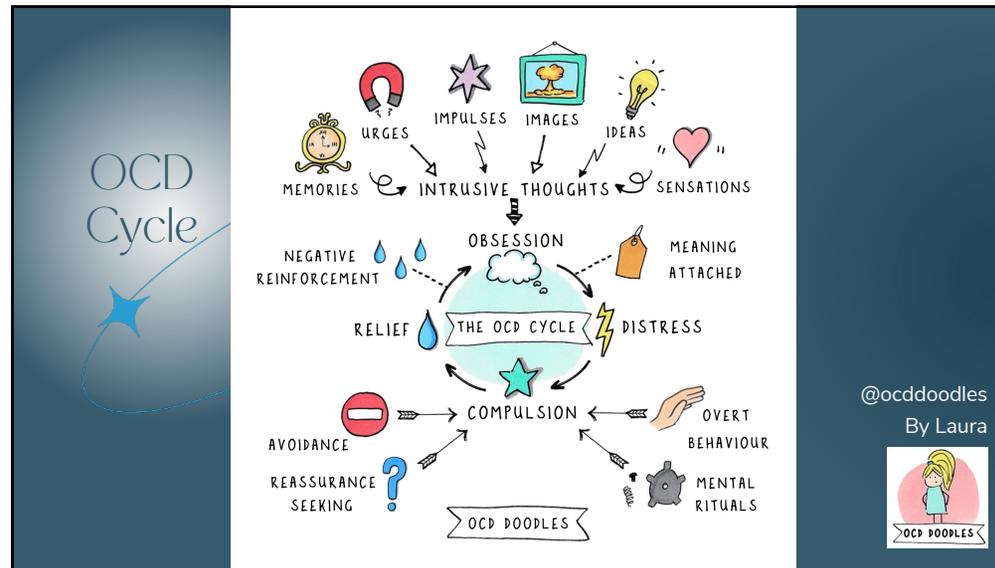
What does it feel like to have OCD?
Let's get experiential!

Grab paper
and a pen



Grayson (2014)

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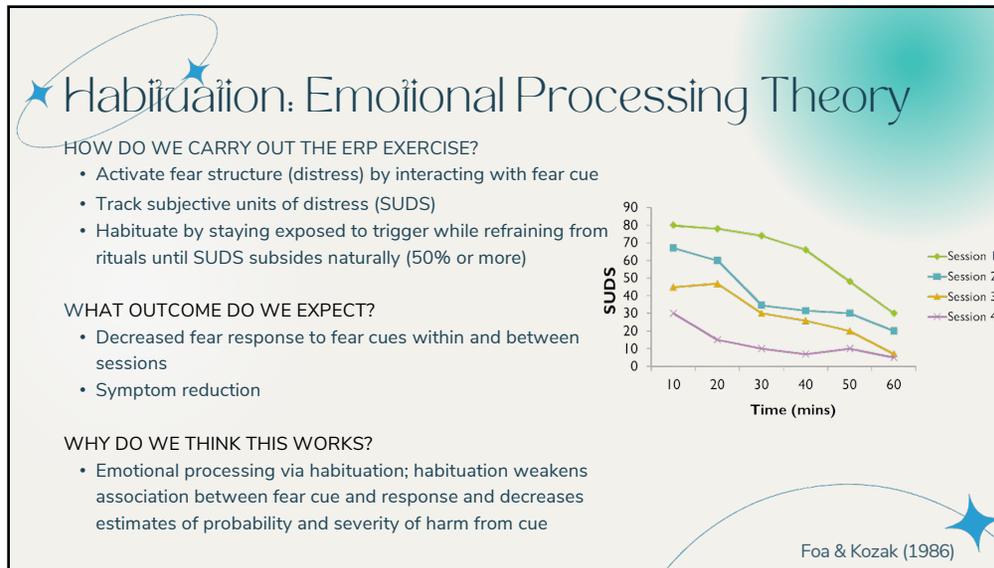
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Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP)

Three Models:

- Habituation
- Inhibitory Learning
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

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So Why Isn't Everyone Getting Better?

Craske et al. (2008) evaluated whether performance during exposure is a reliable indicator of learning

Habituation

- Usually occurs during exposure, but it doesn't have to
- Not a good predictor of outcome, not necessary for improvement
- Contributes to relapse
 - Anxiety seen as the problem, low anxiety is safer, surges of anxiety seen as failure

Fear reduction during learning \neq safety learning

Inhibitory Learning Theory

- Fear associations remain intact during exposure and safety learning is formed \rightarrow they compete with (inhibit) each other
- Focus on maximizing likelihood that safety learning inhibits access and retrieval of fear associations

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Inhibitory Learning Theory Model

HOW DO WE CARRY OUT THE ERP EXERCISE?

- Interact with feared stimuli
- Set up exposures to violate expectancies and practice having fear
 - Predict length of time can resist ritual
 - Track strength of negative expectancy during exposure
 - Track confidence of ability to tolerate distress during exposure
 - No SUDS tracking
- Consolidate learning and talk about emotions
- De-contextualize - interact with feared stimuli in as many new ways as possible
 - Combine fear cues
 - Vary exposures (intensity, context, interval)

WHAT OUTCOME DO WE EXPECT?

- Emotional tolerance in the short-term
- Fear reduction in the long-term

WHY DO WE THINK THIS WORKS?

- New learning that inhibits old learning
- Emotional tolerance

Craske et al. (2008)

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Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Relational Frame Theory

HOW DO WE CARRY OUT THE ERP EXERCISE?

- Interact with feared stimuli related to values-based living
- While practicing ACT concepts (e.g. acceptance, defusion)
- Track willingness

WHAT OUTCOME DO WE EXPECT?

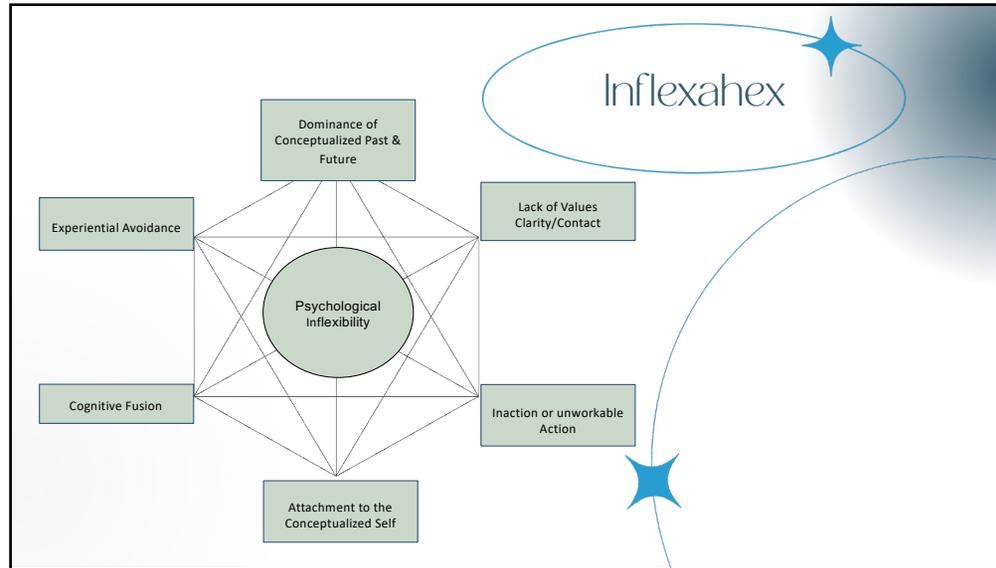
- Increase in engagement in values-directed activities; choice; curiosity
- *Not concerned about changing internal experiences (emotions, thoughts, body sensations)*

WHY DO WE THINK THIS WORKS?

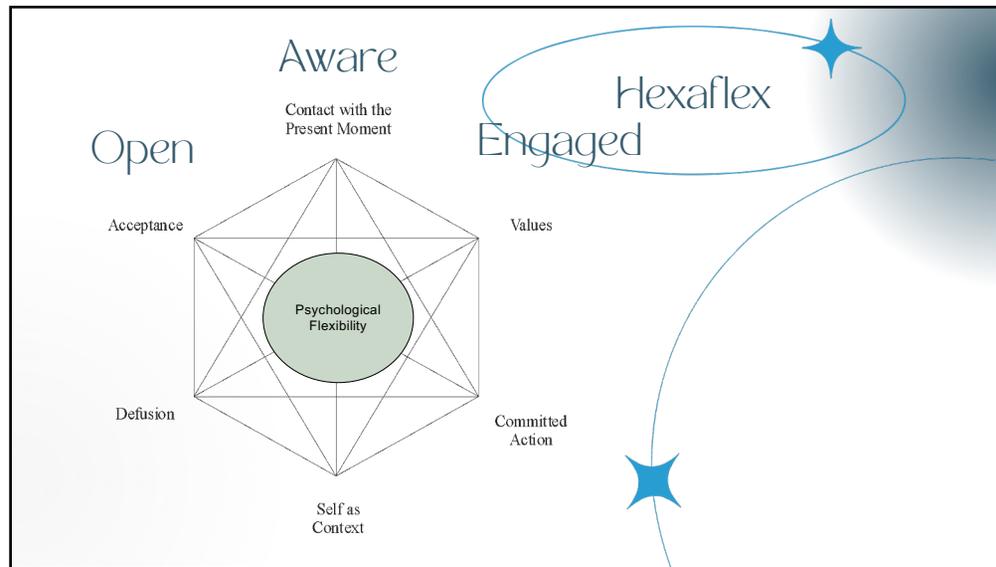
- Psychological flexibility

→

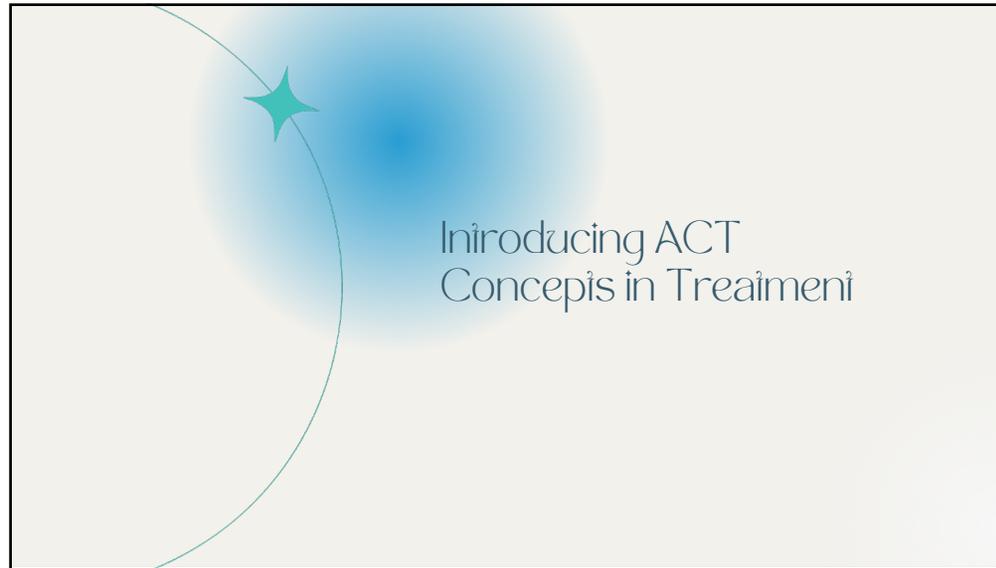
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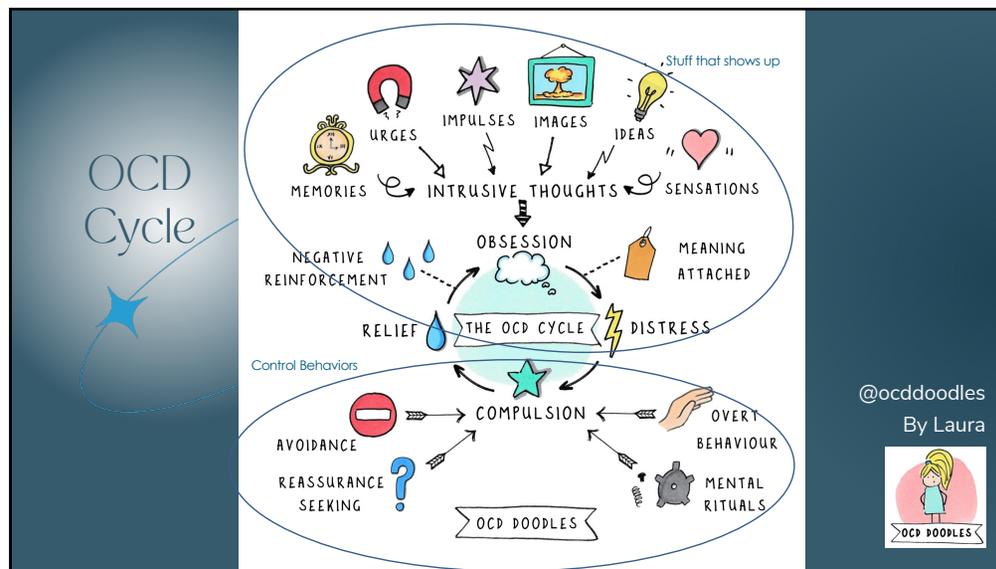
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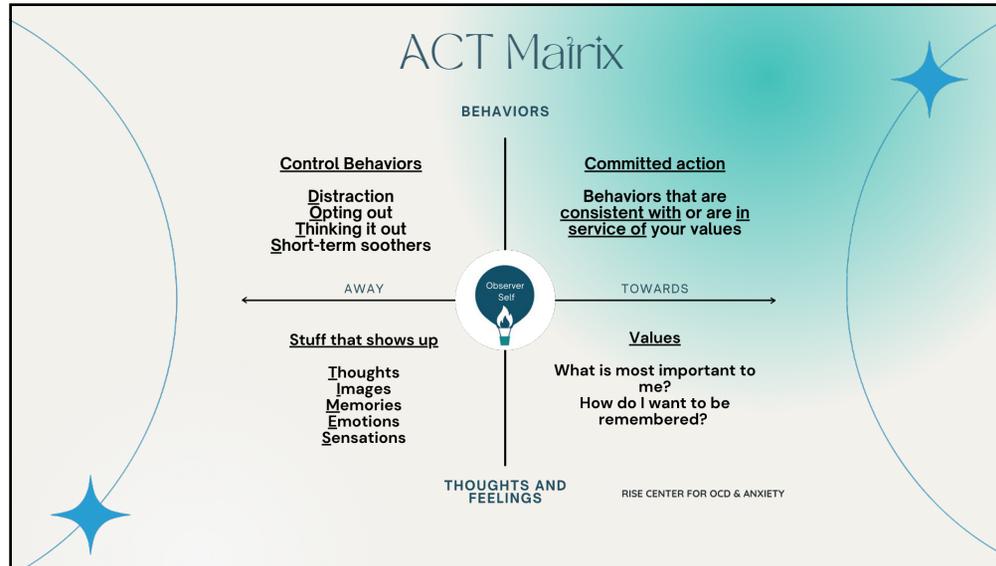
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Mindfulness

A practice for staying awake in life

Present-focused awareness

- ▶ Purposefully (curiosity and willingness)
- ▶ Paying attention (observing)
- ▶ Present moment (not the past or future)
- ▶ Non-judgmentally (acceptance, allowing, openness, and compassion)

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Acceptance

— ◆◆◆



**You can't stop
the waves,
but you can
learn to surf.**
- JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN

- Willingness to fully experience whatever comes up
- When we are unwilling to feel anxious and are attempting to control it, we have locked anxiety in place
- Only when we are open to letting anxiety be present can we allow anxiety to move around freely

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Defusion

Getting unstuck from your thoughts

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Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Relational Frame Theory

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- Track willingness

WHAT OUTCOME DO WE EXPECT?

- Increase in engagement in values-directed activities; choice; curiosity
- *Not concerned about changing internal experiences (emotions, thoughts, body sensations)*

WHY DO WE THINK THIS WORKS?

- Psychological flexibility

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ACT: an exposure-based treatment

ACT's View on Exposures

Shaping flexible, adaptive, effective behavior in the presence of fear cues

Shaping willingness to experience anxiety

- Curiosity
- Trial and error learning
- Intentional Behavior (toward values rather than away from or to "tolerate" fear)

When faced with triggers, refrain from safety behaviors, while being fully willing to experience whatever shows up



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Values-Based Exposure Menu

- CORE FEARS**
 - Identifying core fears allows understanding of the *function* of the behavior (how it works), rather than the *topography* (what the behavior looks like)
 - i.e. not everyone who washes their hands excessively is concerned about getting sick
- FEAR CUES (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)**
 - Ultimately the external cues also result in internal cues; it is the internal experiences (thoughts, emotions, body sensations) that client wishes to avoid
- SAFETY BEHAVIORS (INCLUDING COMPULSIONS AND AVOIDANCE)**
 - How is client trying to control their internal experience?
- CONSEQUENCES IN LIFE**
 - It is the engagement in safety behaviors that results in impairment, not the presence of the distressing internal experience
- VALUES**
 - What does client want to stand for in life? What is important about how they act in their various roles?
- VALUES-BASED EXPOSURE PRACTICES**
 - Interact with fear cue while refraining from safety behavior because of specific values
- UNHOOKING SKILLS**
 - List strategies clients can use to create space between their thoughts and themselves

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Planning Exposure Exercises

- Details – when and how, people or props needed?
- What will help client remain present-focused?
- What safety behaviors does client need to refrain from during and after exposure?
- What value is this exposure in service of? How will practicing this exercise bring client closer to who they are and what is important to them?
- Feared outcome (primary, secondary, etc.)
- Level of willingness to experience whatever shows up – thoughts, feelings, physical sensations

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Values-Based Exposure Menu Example

CORE FEARS

- I am a pedophile
- I will be rejected/ostracized
- I don't know myself

FEAR CUES (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)

- Intrusive image of molesting a child
- Seeing children playing → thought "Could I wake up one day and be attracted to a child?"

SAFETY BEHAVIORS (INCLUDING COMPULSIONS AND AVOIDANCE)

- Checking for arousal (or lack thereof) when in the presence of appropriate (girlfriend) or inappropriate individual (child)
- Mentally reviewing interactions for inappropriate behavior
- Avoiding meeting girlfriend's family

CONSEQUENCES IN LIFE

- Strain in relationship with girlfriend (she thinks client is not serious about relationship because he has avoided meeting her family; he is worried that he could act inappropriately around her young siblings and be "found out" as a "pervert."

VALUES

- Authenticity, supportive, connected, freedom

VALUES-BASED EXPOSURE PRACTICES

- Listen to imaginal exposure recording of not knowing if he will one day be attracted to children while refraining from analyzing his past actions because this brings him one step closer to OCD recovery

UNHOOKING SKILLS

- Free form writing of his thoughts, feelings, etc to assist with processing emotions

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Unhooking Strategies

Write them out/ create art

I'm a horrible person

It's a possibility, but I can't know for sure

MURDERER



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Verbalize thought/obsession

- "I'm having the obsessions of..."
- "I notice I'm having the obsession of...."
- "I'm spotting the obsession of ..."

Say it in a funny voice or use a funny translator

idday iyay ustjay ithay omeonesay ? ityay illway ebay ymay aultfay ifyay eythay ieday .

- Make up a funny song about the intrusive thoughts
- Resist getting into an argument with OCD
 - Acknowledge feeling anxious
 - Acknowledge that can't be certain
 - Acknowledge that the feared outcome would really stink

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Unhooking Strategies: Lean into Uncertainty with Self Compassion

1. Take stock of emotions and any sensations you feel in your body - be curious about what you are feeling. note this: "I feel [sad, mad, guilty, scared]."
2. "I'm noticing the fear that [enter what you are most afraid of]." - you can elaborate here beyond that I may have hit someone with my car - to get arrested - to jail, get beat up, etc.
3. "I don't know if [enter what you are most afraid of] will happen. It may." or that it is possible
4. Take stock of emotions and any sensations you feel in your body again - be curious about what you are feeling. note this: "I feel [sad, mad, guilty, scared]."
5. "It's okay that I feel [enter same feeling as above]."
6. "Everyone feels [enter same feeling as above] sometimes." - you can be more specific here about the fear
7. "May I be accepting of my vulnerabilities, including my OCD."
8. "May I be [kind to myself, courageous] to move closer to the things that are important to me in life, such as [love, learning, independence, freedom]." - for this one, may I begin to accept myself, trust myself, be courageous, persist even in the face of ocd; make decisions based on what I want and not what ocd says, so that I can be free, in charge of my life, have confidence in myself, focus on my work and relationships, etc
9. Take stock of emotions and any sensations you feel in your body again - be curious about what you are feeling. note this: "I feel [sad, mad, guilty, scared]."

Adapted from *The ACT Workbook for OCD: Mindfulness, Acceptance & Exposure Skills to Live Well with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder* by Marisa T. Mazza (<https://www.newharbinger.com/9781684032891/the-act-workbook-for-ocd/>)

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Thank you!

Questions?

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OCD Louisiana

Virtual OCD/OC Spectrum Disorders Consultation Group

- Meets 1x per mo using Zoom
- Alternates between the second Friday at 1pm CT and the third Tuesday of the month at 7pm CT
- <https://ocdlouisiana.org/resources/resources-for-professionals>

Presentation Topics - in collaboration with Rise

- **Assessment and Differential Diagnoses**
 - OCD, Body Dysmorphic Disorder, Hoarding Disorder, Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors, Emetophobia, Illness Anxiety Disorder
 - Pedophilia, HI, SI, psychosis, etc. vs OCD?
- **Treatment**
 - ERP, ACT, CBT, and more
 - Personalizing treatment to patient
 - Comorbid conditions (Eating Disorders, Autism, Depression, etc.)
- **Family Issues**
 - Accomodation
 - Response to Hoarding Disorder

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Resources and Training

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

- Association for Contextual Behavioral Science (ACBS): <https://contextualscience.org/>
- Praxis (ACT trainings): <https://www.praxiscet.com/our-courses/>

OCD

- International OCD Foundation (IOCDF): <https://iocdf.org/>
- IOCDF Training Institute: <https://iocdf.org/professionals/training-institute/>

ACT and OCD/Anxiety

- ACT for Anxiety Disorders Training – Mike Twohig: <https://www.praxiscet.com/act-for-anxiety-evergreen-signup/?ref=5>
- ACBS OCD and Related Disorders Special Interest Group: https://contextualscience.org/ocd_and_related_disorders_sig
- IOCDF ACT Special Interest Group: <https://iocdf.org/special-interest-groups/act/>

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Books

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (for clinicians)

- ACT in Steps (Twohig, Levin, & Ong): <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/act-in-steps-9780190629922?cc=us&lang=en&>
- Mindfulness for Two (Wilson): <https://www.newharbinger.com/9781608822669/mindfulness-for-two/>

For clients (and as a clinician I learn a lot from them as well)

- OCD: Freedom From OCD (Grayson): <https://www.amazon.com/Freedom-Obsessive-Compulsive-Disorder-Updated/dp/042527389X>
- ACT and OCD/Anxiety
 - For Adults: The ACT Workbook for OCD (Mazza): <https://www.newharbinger.com/9781684032891/the-act-workbook-for-ocd/>
 - For Teens: Stuff That's Loud (Sedley & Coyne): <https://www.newharbinger.com/9781684035366/stuff-thats-loud/>

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