



South London and Maudsley **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Psychosis Clinical Academic Group (CAG)

KING'S
College
LONDON
Founded 1829

University of London

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy as a Recovery Technology

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|  KING'S HEALTH PARTNERS

A Journey through Recovery





time to change

let's end mental health discrimination

- The stigma of mental health problems is (slowly) reducing in many countries, including the UK
- Service users/ patients are becoming more influential on MH services
- As consumers of MH services people are expecting more: individualized care, talking therapies, social inclusion
- Recovery is a central MH policy for delivery of services in many countries

Recovery principles

“Recovery is about building a meaningful and satisfying life, as defined by the person themselves, whether or not there are ongoing or recurring symptoms or problems.”

Shepherd, Boardman and Slade 2008

Personal recovery

Recovery involves the development of **new meaning and purpose in one's life** as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness.

Anthony WA (1993) Recovery from mental illness:
the guiding vision of the mental health service system
in the 1990s,
Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal, **16**, 11-23.

Recovery Concepts: CHIME

- Connectedness
- Hope & optimism about the future
- Identity
- Meaning in Life
- Empowerment



From: Leamy et al (2011) Conceptual framework for recovery in mental health, BJPsych, 199, 445-452

Recovery & Social Inclusion

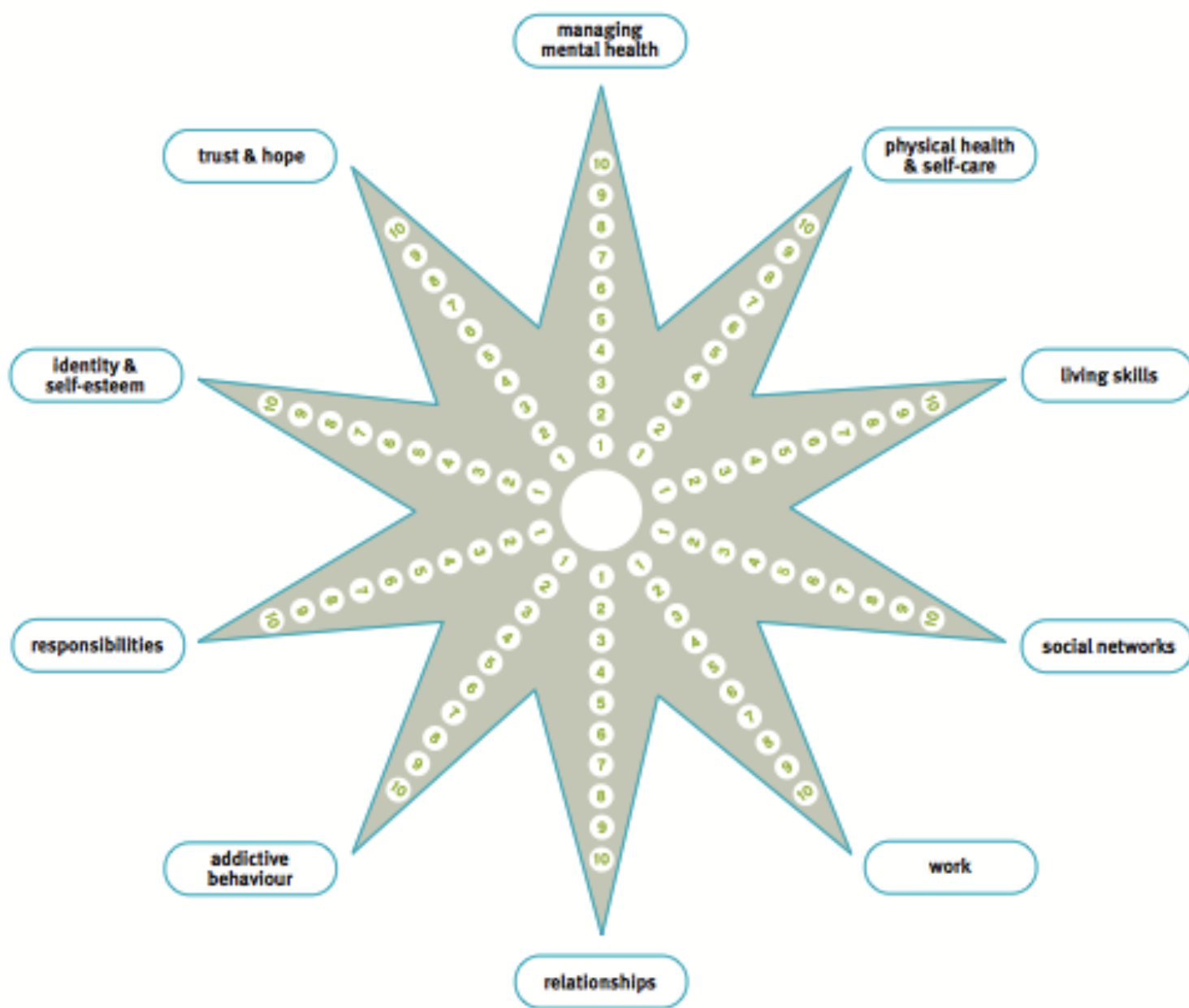
- A strong link
- Growing body of evidence demonstrates that participation in a variety of contexts can support recovery (social, education, work, training, volunteering)
- Key role for services to support people to take part in mainstream activities and opportunities.



The tasks of recovery

1. Developing a positive identity
2. Framing and self-managing the
‘mental illness’
3. Developing valued social roles

Slade M (2009) *Personal recovery and mental illness.
A guide for mental health professionals*, Cambridge, Cambridge
University Press.



Mental Health Recovery Star

managing mental health



'The Ten Dimensions'

Illustrations by K. E. Flores

Promoting recovery: evidence based principles?

- A focus on social environments
- Continuum models of unusual experiences
- Learning from experience / Relapse prevention
- Behavioural activation to enhance well-being
- Values-based goal setting
- Self-acceptance and compassion
- Considering treatments pragmatically / workability as yardstick

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of water ripples, likely from raindrops hitting a surface. The ripples are concentric circles of varying sizes, creating a textured, organic pattern. The color palette is monochromatic, consisting of various shades of blue and teal, with some lighter areas where the ripples are more pronounced.

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy

ACT

A “3rd wave” therapy in the CBT tradition

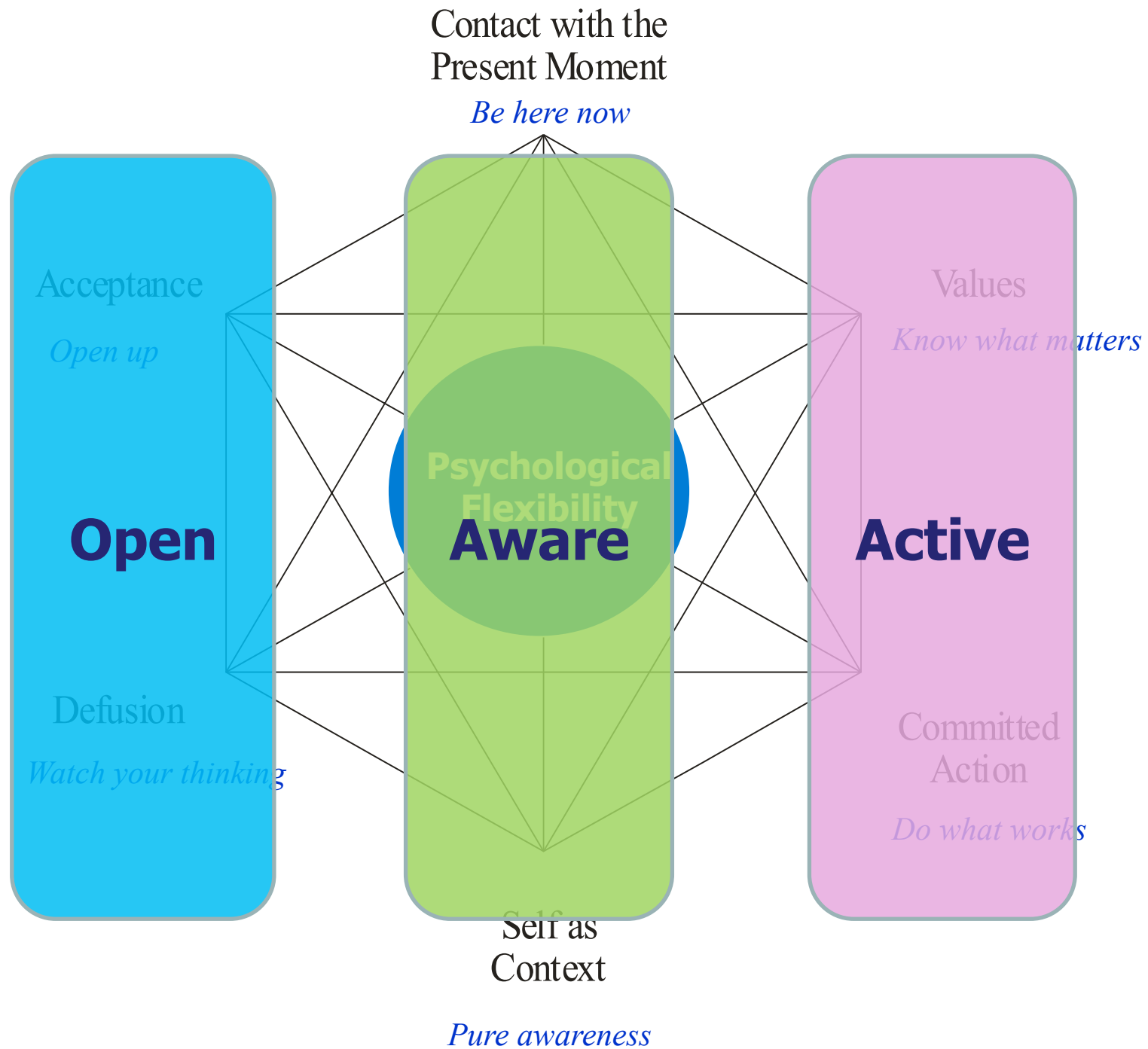
1st wave: BT - focus on direct behaviour change

2nd wave: CT - focus on changing content and frequency of cognitions

3rd wave - contextual CBT: focus on changing relationship with thoughts and feelings. Includes: DBT, mindfulness, BA, meta-cognitive therapy & ACT

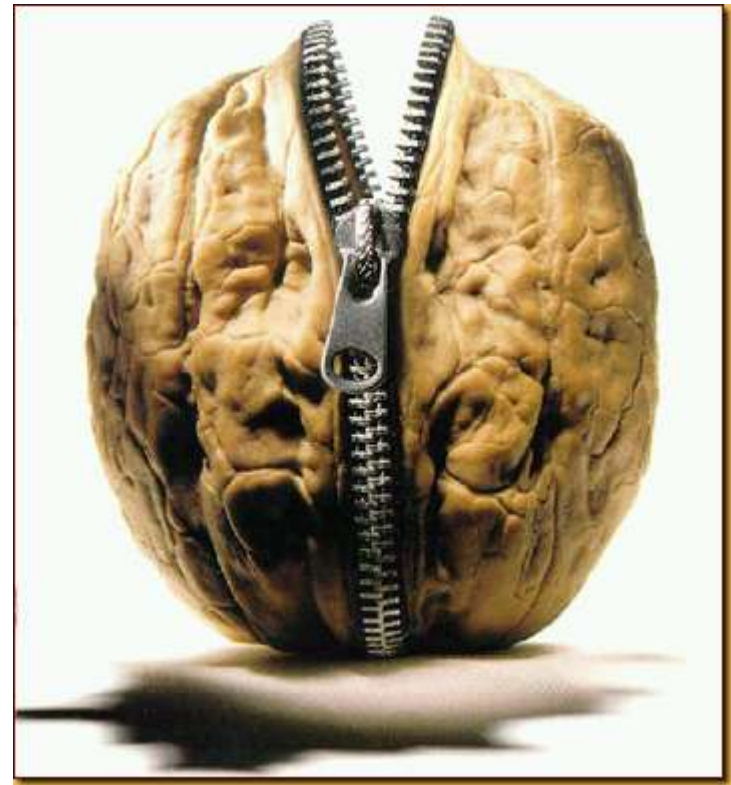
Over 60 RCTs demonstrating efficacy with depression, substance use, chronic pain, work stress, OCD, epilepsy, smoking cessation, obesity, prejudice (Hayes et al. 2011)

Including 4 RCTs with psychosis



ACT in a Nutshell

- What really matters to you in life?
- What stands in the way of you doing what matters?





MINDFULNESS

Present moment awareness training

Untangling from difficult thoughts and emotion

Finding your resilient sense of self

VALUES-BASED ACTION

Clarifying your most valued life directions

Using values as a guide to goals and daily behaviour

From: Flaxman, 2011

A Psychological View of Psychosis

- Dimensional rather than categorical: Normalising
- Work with symptoms rather than diagnoses
- Diagnoses lack scientific validity – “schizophrenia” is less useful than understanding behaviour in context
- Biological vulnerabilities undoubtedly contribute, however symptoms/behaviour are heavily influenced by the environment
- We work with whole human beings whose behaviour is influenced by context

ACT, mindfulness and psychosis

Changing the *relationship* to private events (rather than directly changing content) to increase behavioural flexibility (e.g., Pérez-Álvarez et al., 2008)

Psychotic symptoms as an one *experience* of self, not *the* self (Chadwick, 2006)

We are focused on this *whole person acting in context*, rather than a set of symptoms.

The diagram features a central light blue triangle pointing upwards, with the word 'VALUING' written vertically inside it. At the top of the triangle is a yellow starburst shape containing the text 'Private Event'. Two red arrows point from the starburst to two circular arrows on either side of the triangle. The left circular arrow is yellow and contains the text 'Escaping & Avoiding'. The right circular arrow is yellow and contains the text 'Clinging & Craving'. The entire diagram is set against a solid blue background.

**Private
Event**

Escaping
&
Avoiding

V
A
L
U
I
N
G

Clinging
&
Craving

Based on: Dahl, 2009

In a typical ACT session...

We do exercises to:

- notice what is happening in the here and now
- Practice willingness toward experiences
- Clarify chosen life directions (values) & encourage action guided by these
- Encourage a “stepped back” approach toward thinking in general
- Validate the client being a human being

These people are working hard...
really.



ACT Made Even Easier

1. Explore unworkable coping strategies (struggle, avoidance)
2. Suggest acceptance (and other underused coping strategies) as an alternative stance
3. Place acceptance in the context of a valued life domain
4. Identify a valued goal and formulate specific action plan (however small to be accomplished today)

Gaudiano, 2005

**OK, so how about ACT
& Recovery?**

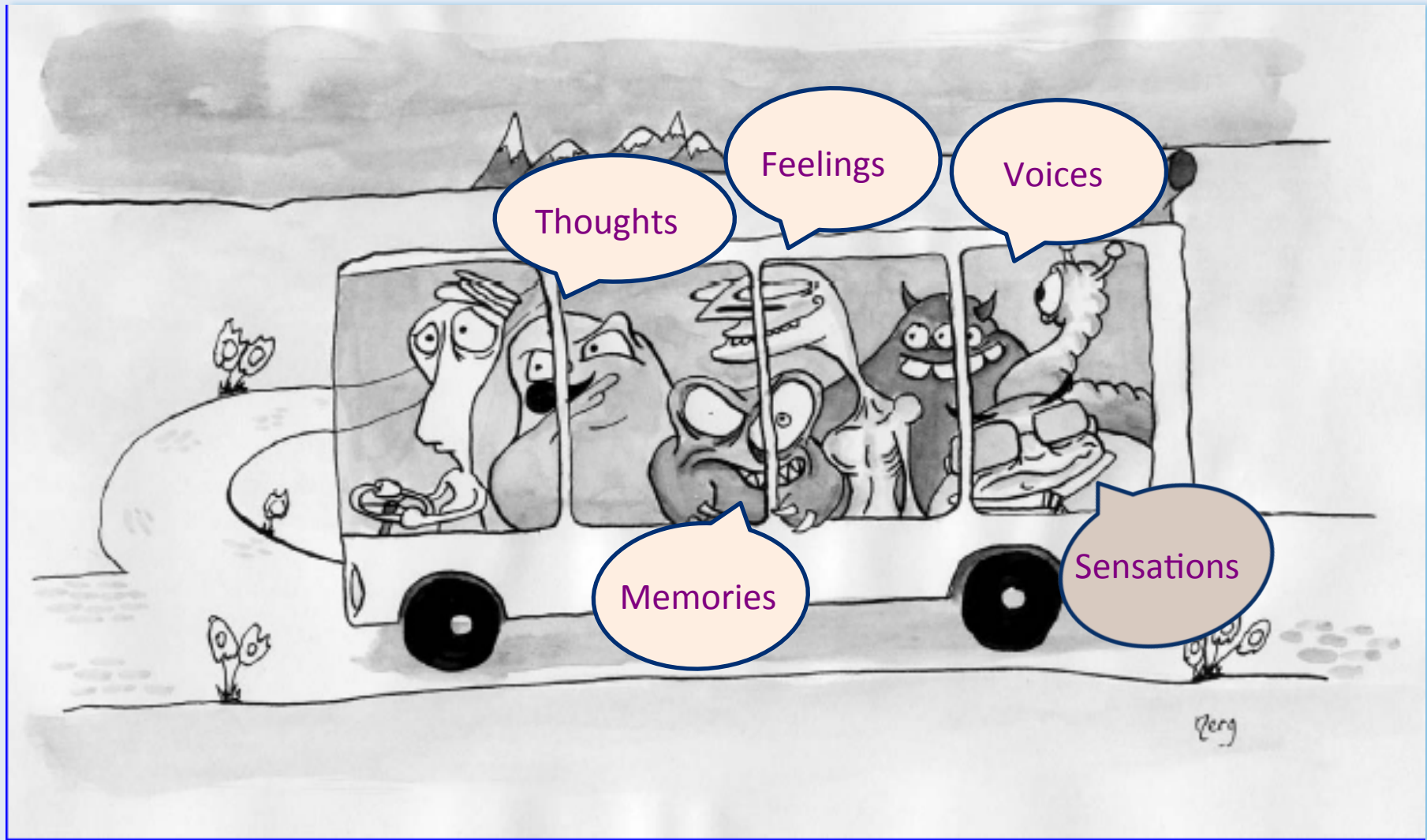
ACT for Life Study

- To evaluate an ACT group intervention for psychosis, focused on recovery.
 - Do clients find the intervention acceptable?
 - Do they show improvements in daily functioning, mood, and relationship with symptoms?
 - What processes mediate any change?
- Community based, naturalistic setting
- Participants from across the spectrum of psychosis

Protocol

- Four, 2-hour weekly sessions
- 6-8 participants in each group, 2-3 facilitators
- Protocol based around Passengers on the Bus metaphor
- Use of actor-video to allow participants to approach content at their own pace
- Main components include:
 - Values clarification
 - Mindfulness/ noticing exercises
 - Willingness
 - Defusion
 - Committed action – out of session planning

Passengers on the Bus



My Values and Goals

My goals are to:

My actions to move me closer to my goals:



My values guiding these goals and actions:

ACT & Recovery

- ACT provides an evidence-based technology for doing therapy consistent with Recovery Principles
- ACT uses personal values to guide therapeutic focus, emphasis on functioning and life meaning.
- Therapy is defined by what the person wants to be doing with their lives.

Suffering and Values

Two sides of the one coin



If we didn't value something we wouldn't worry about it.

What values sit beneath our worries?

Advantages of a values focus

- Provides constructive and consistent direction
- Enhances response flexibility and motivation
- Encourages persistence in the face of unwanted private experiences (especially in values-related situations)
- Views responses to unwanted internal experiences in the context of personal values - this helps to focus on usefulness of responses / coping methods
- *“It’s good to go over and remember what’s important rather than get wrapped up in worries or thoughts that go on”*

Recovery Principle	The ACT approach
Finding and maintaining hope	Hope is an active stance we can take. Feelings may come and go; our hopeful actions are a way we can change our world.
Encouraging self management	Our actions and choices can be judged by whether they are taking us in the direction of our values , rather than whether they are “right”, “make sense” or “look cool”. Learning from experience.
The re-establishment of a positive identity	Encourages contact with self as awareness , noticing the process of how our minds create stories about us. Instead of being entangled in the mind’s judgements, we observe whether they are useful for our chosen life directions.
Finding meaning in life	Life’s pain can be dignified if it is a part of doing the things that are important to us. Through acting on personal values , contact with meaning is increased.
Taking responsibility for one’s life	We help people to be “response-able”: to act on their values rather than their fear , through developing an open, compassionate stance toward their own experiences & themselves.

ACT & Recovery 2

- Assumes that people are capable of living meaningful lives with the verbal abilities that they have, that normative processes contribute to distress and disability (language)
- Focuses on increasing personal control over the environment, through the balance of acceptance and change

INSTEAD OF PRESCRIBING
MORE **DRUGS**, WHY DON'T
YOU HELP ME DISCOVER WHAT
MY **VALUES** ARE AND HOW
TO LIVE MY LIFE IN
ACCORDANCE WITH THEM?

WHATEVER
HE'S **SMOKING**,
I **WANT SOME!**

