

Introduction to ACT & FAP for Mindfulness and Acceptance for Gender & Sexual Minorities

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Aspiration for this Training

- Deepening an understanding of our own histories of gender and sexuality training
- Relating our own heartfelt experience to the transformative work we do
- For the sake of deepening our ability to share, we invite everyone to treat what is shared with confidentiality, including what the facilitators share in the service of modelling

Two Kinds of Skills that Increase Your Potency as an Agent of Change

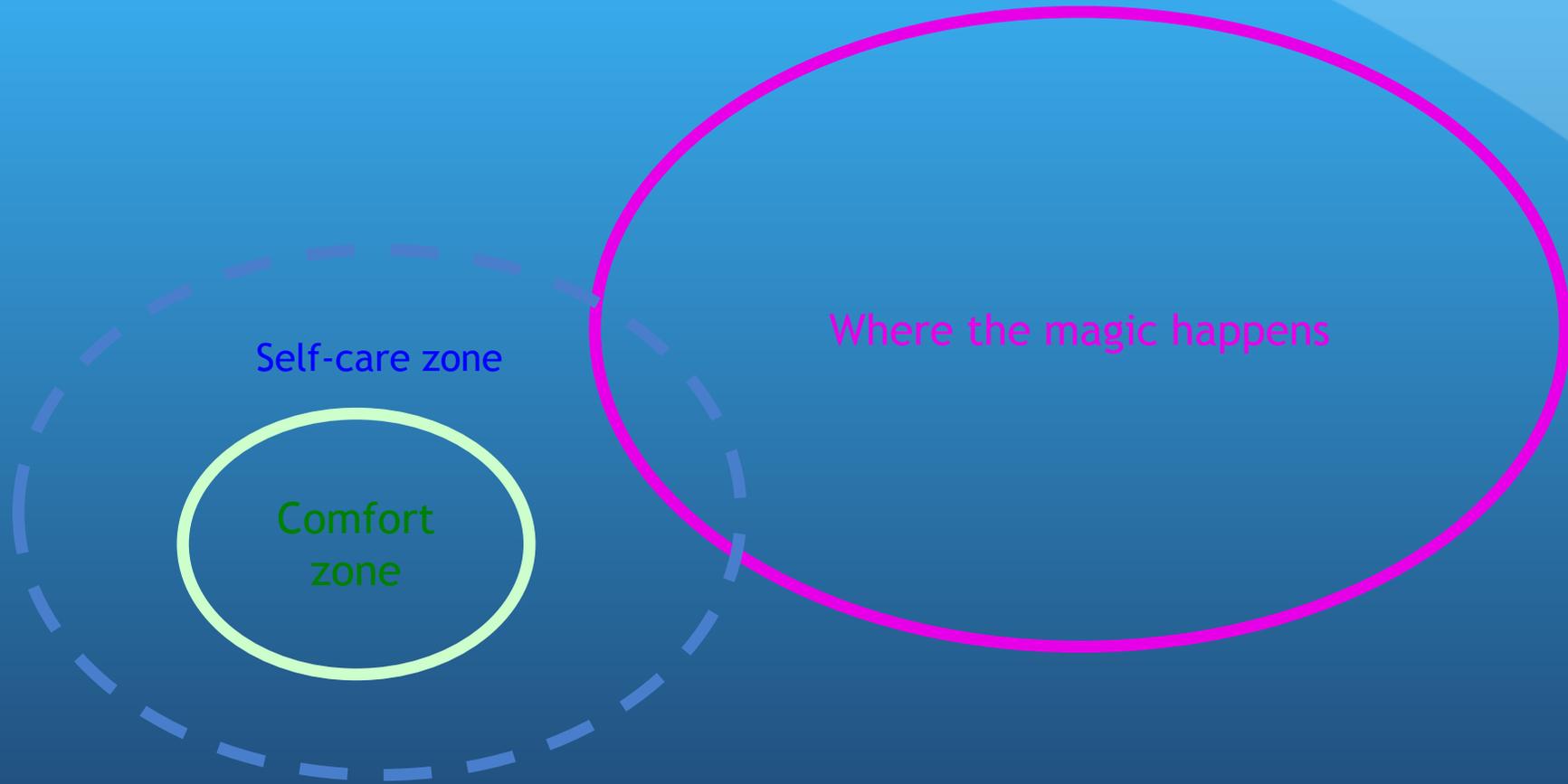
Contact
Increasing contact with and decreasing avoidance of your experience of emotions, self, and spirit

Difficult to learn and to do

“Intellectual” Knowing
Knowing the rules or guidelines of therapy and how to apply them

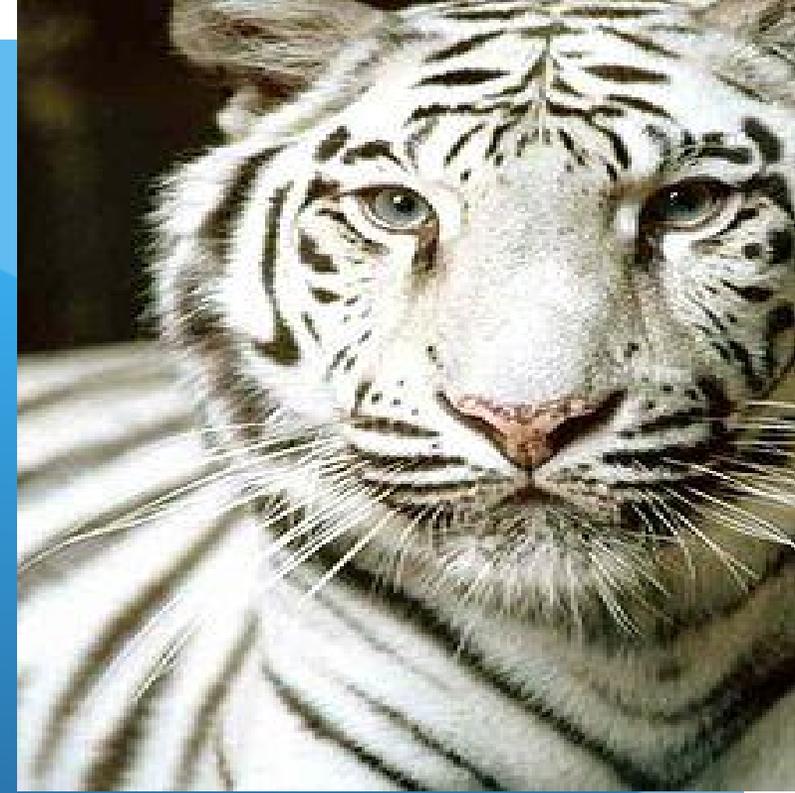
Relatively easy to learn and do

3 zones



Mohini was a regal white tiger who lived for many years at the Washington DC National Zoo. For most of those years her home was in the old lion house—a typical twelve-by-twelve-foot cage with iron bars and a cement floor. Mohini spent her days pacing restlessly back and forth in her cramped quarters. Eventually, biologists and staff worked together to create a natural habitat for her. Covering several acres, it had hills, trees, a pond and a variety of vegetation. With excitement and anticipation they released Mohini into her new and expansive environment. But it was too late. The tiger immediately sought refuge in a corner of the compound, where she lived for the remainder of her life. Mohini paced and paced in that corner until an area twelve-by-twelve feet was worn bare of grass.

Perhaps the biggest tragedy in our lives is that freedom is possible, yet we can pass our years trapped in the same old patterns. Entangled in the trance of unworthiness, we grow accustomed to caging ourselves in with self-judgment and anxiety, with restlessness and dissatisfaction. Like Mohini, we grow incapable of accessing the freedom and peace that are our birthright. We may want to love other people without holding back, to feel authentic, to breathe in the beauty around us, to dance and sing. Yet each day we listen to inner voices that keep our life small. Even if we were to win millions of dollars in the lottery or marry the perfect person, as long as we feel not good enough we won't be able to enjoy the possibilities before us. Unlike Mohini, however, we can learn to recognize when we are keeping ourselves trapped by our own beliefs and fears. We can see how we are wasting our precious lives.



Mohini
(Tara Brach)

Mohini

- When have you felt closeted (in a 12 X 12)?
- Name one thing you have done to keep yourself in that 12 X 12/Closet
- Write down your two answers anonymously & give to one of the facilitators if willing
- Take 2-3 minutes to read what people have wrote in silence
- What did you notice?

Minority Stress and Stigma

- Minority stress theory suggests a broad range of mechanisms for the impact of societal stigma
 - Self-stigma (e.g., internalized homophobia; Yadavaia & Hayes, 2012)
 - Stigma/Expectation of Rejection
 - Outness/Concealment
 - Discrimination
 - Community connectedness
- Related to a broad range of psychological symptoms
 - May be due to reduced emotion regulation

Loneliness/lack of social connection equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day



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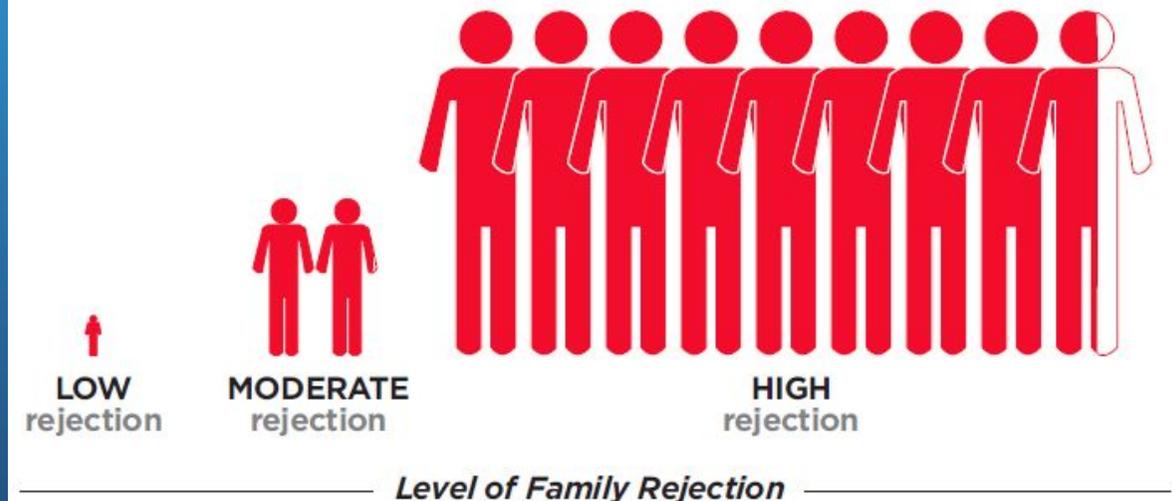


However...

- **most humans are hurting**
 - Among gay men, the lifetime occurrence of depression is nearly 4 times that of heterosexual men; among lesbians, double that of heterosexual women (IOM, 2011)
 - 50% of transgender individuals have experienced sexual assault. Transwomen have a 1 in 12 chance of being murdered, and 1 in 8 for transwomen of color. 41% have attempted suicide (TSER, 2015)
 - Despite a greater utilization of mental health services, most psychologists report little or no training in working with sexual minorities

Lifetime Suicide Attempts for Highly Rejected LGBT Young People

(One or more times)



Ryan, Family Acceptance Project, 2009



Targeting Emotion Dysregulation

- Mindfulness and acceptance based approaches promote emotion regulation skills, with specific evidence in mechanism-of-action studies supporting:
 - Dialectic Behavioral Therapy
 - Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy
 - Acceptance & Commitment Therapy
 - Barlow's Unified Protocol (e.g., Prochaska et al, 2016)

What does the GSM Hexaflex look like?

Discrimination - Preoccupied with past/future mistreatment

Expectation of Rejection - Unwillingness to experience fears of being seen as GSM

Concealment - Overachievement or avoidance of attention



Self-stigma - Fusion with thoughts about GSM stereotypes

Unclear or unexamined desires for authentic and full living

Rigid Perspective taking - small picture

(ACBS, 2015)

How GSM Individuals become Psychologically Flexible...

Connection to present moment

Emotions- Willingness to experience any fears & cultivating compassion

Thoughts- Unhooked from Unwanted Thoughts about GSM Identity

Clear on what is important, including relationships and community

Doing things that matter as a whole, present GSM person



Flexible Perspective Taking - Part of a Larger Community

(ACBS, 2015)

Clinically Relevant Behaviors (CRBs) are the operants that are the HEART of FAP



CRB1s-----CRB2s

**“problem”
behaviors
in session**

**improved
behaviors
in session**

While sometimes cumbersome, functional contextual language helps clarify what we are trying to do and why it matters.

Awareness

- Discrimination of one's behavior as well as its impact on others
- Noticing what responses may be reinforcing or punishing (function)
- Recognizing two different behaviors as part of a functional class (generalization)

Courage

- Engaging in behaviors that may not be immediately reinforced but are aimed toward reinforcing more effective responses and repertoires (attempts at goal)
- Not only escaping aversive states (negative reinforcement)
- Creating a context to evoke more effective behaviors

Love

- Providing positive reinforcement
- Withholding reinforcement when it sustains ineffective responding
- Creating a context where clients can generate new behaviors

Sexuality & Gender Life History

- Speak for 6 minutes about ways that you have been taught to express your gender or your sexuality professionally and personally - regardless of your identity
 - Consider your personal “12x12”, and what would be a toward move in disclosure
- Listener - focus primarily on listening non-verbally
 - If you notice it, you might consider a gentle or minimal encouragement to share more deeply
 - Authentically and openly share the impact that hearing your partner’s story has had on you

GSM Hexaflex Processes in the Life History

- Acceptance - of unwanted emotional experiences, including shame
- Defusion - from fears that others might reject us for our stories
- Present-Moment Awareness - attending to what it is like to connect with this content, here and now
- SAC/Perspective-Taking - having the chance to experience our stories through the eyes of another, shifting the context
- Values -the willingness to take this conversation as deeply as you are ready
- Committed Action - consider the intention set at the beginning of the day

Sources of Resilience (Glenda Russell's response to the Orlando Massacre)

- Cultivate a Movement Perspective

- We are part of a community that extends across time and place, in this nation and beyond.
- We are also connected to other movements for equality. We must keep this in mind and resist the temptation to see one person in another stigmatized group (the shooter) as representing all members of that group (Muslims, people of color, etc.). We all benefit from seeing the broader movement for equality as a struggle we all share.
- It does not mean the movement is ending or even in trouble. It is part of a bigger backlash.
- The movement will go forward despite these events, though it may not feel possible now.
- We have the power to make that happen. It requires us to work, but is there any more important thing to do with our energies?

Sources of Resilience

- Do Something
 - Active coping is virtually always better than doing nothing.
 - Read a book on queer history
 - Think of 10 good things about being LGBTQ.
 - Express your sadness, anger, and fear or whatever you're feeling.
 - Get your friends together to talk about this event.
 - Send money to your local LGBTQ community center.
 - Volunteer with a community organization.

Sources of Resilience

- Pay attention to your allies.
 - When danger is afoot, it is tempting to focus exclusively on possible sources of danger. While it is important to be as safe as possible, it is also important to focus on who your allies are. Movements rarely make progress solely through the efforts of people who are the targets of oppression. We need allies.
 - Pay at least as much attention to our allies as you do to the people who are against us.
 - Tell your straight and cis friends what you would like them to do.

Sources of Resilience

- Watch for the negative messages about our community that may float around.
 - Actively resist such messages.
 - Learn the truth about who we are.
 - Read some LGBTQ history to remind yourself of what an amazing movement we have.
 - Read about LGBTQ elders and what they have accomplished.
 - Remember the words of the great South African freedom fighter, Steven Biko, who said, “The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.”

Sources of Resilience

- Find and make use of your LGBT and allied community.
 - Go where you feel safe. Play when you feel like it.
 - You'll be contributing to the community even as you get good things from the community.
 - Support community events.
 - Use the Orlando tragedy as a way to re-energize yourself and your local community.
 - Have hot sex.
 - Look at everything you have ever gained from the LGBTQ community, and dare to pass it on to others.

Sources of Resilience

- Do the usual things that help people.
 - Take care of yourself.
 - Get enough sleep.
 - Eat well.
 - Be careful what you put into your body.
 - Get some exercise.
 - Pay attention to the temptation to isolate.

Considering how to apply them

- Cultivate a Movement Perspective
- Do Something
- Pay Attention to your Allies
- Watch for the negative messages about our community that may float around
- Find and make use of your LGBT and allied community
- Do the Usual Things that Help People

Tonglen

- Rehearsal for being in the presence of pain/suffering that cannot be mitigated
- Practicing resilience for moments of leadership

Headline of the San Francisco Chronicle

Female humpback whale who had become entangled in a spiderweb of crab traps and line weighted down by hundreds of pounds of traps that caused her to struggle to stay afloat.

She also had hundreds of yards of line rope wrapped around her body, tail, Torso, and a line tugging in her mouth.

A fisherman spotted her just east of the Farallon Islands and radioed an environmental group for help.

Within a few hours, the rescue team arrived and determined that she was so bad off, the only way to save her was to dive in and untangle her. They worked for hours and eventually freed her.



When she was free, the divers say she swam in what seemed like joyous circles. She then came back to each and every diver, one at a time, and nudged them, pushed them gently around as she was thanking them.

Some said it was the most incredibly beautiful experience of their lives. The guy who cut the rope out of her mouth said her eyes were following him the whole time, and he will never be the same.

May you, and all those you love, be so blessed and fortunate to be surrounded by people who will help you get untangled from the words and stories that are binding you.

And, may you always know the joy of giving and receiving gratitude.

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