What is ACT?

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: making room for what you cannot control, and acting on what matters.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (said as one word, "act") starts from one observation. A lot of suffering comes from the struggle to get rid of painful thoughts and feelings, more than from the thoughts and feelings themselves. The harder we fight them, the more they run our lives.

ACT does not aim to remove difficult thoughts and feelings. It aims to change how you respond to them, so they have less say over what you do.

The two parts

Acceptance
Opening up to thoughts, feelings and sensations as they are, without fighting them or being pushed around by them.

Commitment
Getting clear on what matters to you, and taking action towards it, even when difficult feelings come along.

Six skills, in everyday words

Skill	What it means
Being present	Paying attention to here and now, instead of being lost in the past or future
Unhooking	Seeing thoughts as thoughts, not as orders or facts
Making room	Letting feelings be there without a struggle
The noticing self	Finding the part of you that observes, and is bigger than any thought or feeling
Knowing what matters	Getting clear on your values: the kind of person you want to be
Doing what matters	Taking steps guided by those values

What it is like

ACT is practical. We use exercises, metaphors and experiments more than debate. I will not try to convince you that your thoughts are wrong. I will keep asking a different question: "If you act on this thought, does it take you towards the life you want, or away from it?"

The aim
To be able to have difficult thoughts and feelings and still do what matters to you. The aim is not to feel good all the time.

ACT was developed by Steven Hayes, Kirk Strosahl and Kelly Wilson.

My notes and questions

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