What is Acceptance & Commitment Therapy?

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (or “ACT”, pronounced “act”), is an empirically-based psychological intervention that uses acceptance and mindfulness strategies to help individuals increase “psychological flexibility” by learning to contact the present moment and, depending on the situation, change or persist in behavior in line with their values.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF ACT:

- **Being Present**: Awareness of the here and now, experienced with openness.
- **Acceptance/Willingness**: Allowing experiences, emotions, and thoughts to come and go without struggle.
- **Self as Context**: Accessing a transcendent sense of self (You are more than your thoughts, emotions, actions etc.)
- **Cognitive Defusion**: Methods used to lessen the impact of cognitive content—such as thoughts or memories—when it interferes with the experience of present reality or desired action.
- **Values**: Discovering what is most important and motivating to one’s true self.
- **Committed Action**: Setting goals according to values and taking healthy steps to achieve those value-based goals.
How does ACT Work for Smoking Cessation?

WILLINGNESS VS WILLPOWER: Most people try to quit smoking using willpower. However, willpower runs out and then the self-judgments can start. So what is the alternative?

ACT encourages people to notice and accept their urges to smoke, with the understanding that they are temporary and will fade on their own. In the SmartQuit program, personal values are used as a guidepost to direct one’s actions and powerful defusion skills are taught to help smokers deal with cravings and unhelpful thoughts. Instead of fighting with urges, smokers are encouraged to notice them and practice defusion skills in order to let the “urges pass.” This is a radical departure from traditional smoking cessation programs, which encourage people to avoid and suppress smoking urges. This “Zen-like” approach to quitting might seem a bit unconventional, but it works.

ACT AS APPLIED IN THE SMARTQUIT SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAM

- **Being Present**: Record Urges - Become more aware of your cravings, triggers, thoughts
- **Acceptance/Willingness**: Track Urges Passed - Allow an urge to smoke to exist without fighting it
- **Self as Context**: Understand that you are more than your thoughts and cravings
- **Cognitive Defusion**: Exercises - Learn skills to deal with the urges to smoke
- **Values**: Quit Plan - Discover what is important to you
- **Committed Action**: Learn, Practice, Track, Quit - Make efforts that move you toward your goal of being smoke-free

It is very hard to change if your thoughts are rigid. With ACT, a smoker develops greater psychological flexibility through education, practice, and committed action.
What is the Evidence Behind Using ACT for Smoking Cessation?

The evidence behind ACT as a psychological intervention is abundant and continues to grow\textsuperscript{i}. There are at least six published studies on using ACT for smoking cessation with several more in the works. SmartQuit (which uses ACT) is the first smoking cessation app to be proven effective in clinical trials. Results from the first two clinical trials show smokers using SmartQuit were 2-3 times more likely to quit than unaided quitters. And, those who completed the program had quit rates of 28% (intent-to-treat, 30-day point prevalence). This was without NRT or other coaching. For a list of published studies, visit our resources page at www.2morrowinc.com/resources/

ACT for Other Behavior Changes

ACT has been shown to be effective in helping people change many types of unhelpful behaviors and reducing psychological suffering. With ACT, people learn skills so that they can live with some discomfort if it moves them toward their goals. For more information on ACT, contextual behavior science, and psychological flexibility, visit https://contextualscience.org/

About 2Morrow

2Morrow is a digital health company with a focus on behavior change. 2Morrow’s programs use a combination of ACT and other evidence-based models to help people create the lives they want to live. The SmartQuit program was developed in collaboration with behavioral scientists at Fred Hutch Cancer Research Center. Powered by their proprietary Behavior Change Engine, all programs are delivered to the end users via the convenience of their smartphone. Visit www.2morrowinc.com/SmartQuit to learn more.

\textsuperscript{i} "The Six Core Processes of ACT | Association for Contextual ..." 2015. 26 Jul. 2016
<https://contextualscience.org/the_six_core_processes_of_act>
\textsuperscript{ii} "State of the ACT Evidence | Association for Contextual Behavioral ..." 2015. 26 Jul. 2016
<https://contextualscience.org/state_of_the_act_evidence>