



COGNUS COACHING



Coaching for Workers Living With Chronic Conditions

Dr Rachael Skews

Behavioural Scientist &
Chartered Psychologist

A third of middle-aged UK adults have at least two chronic health issues - study

Childhood poverty and health issues before adulthood all factors in decline in mid-life wellbeing



📷 One in six adults born in 1970 have high blood pressure; other common problems include back trouble and asthma. Photograph: Anthony Devlin/PA

The 1970 British Cohort Study has been periodically tracking the lives of about 17,000 people born in England, Scotland and Wales in a single week.

Nearly 8,000 of them were surveyed for the University College London work, published in journal **BMC Public Health**.

And 34% had two or more chronic health problems, such as high blood pressure and mental ill-health, at age 46-48.

The most commonly recorded health problems were:

- high-risk drinking - 26%
- recurrent back problems - 21%
- mental-health problems - 19%
- high blood pressure - 16%

Arthritis, type 2 diabetes and asthma or bronchitis also featured.

Gondek, D., Bann, D., Brown, M., Hamer, M., Sullivan, A., & Ploubidis, G. B. (2021). Prevalence and early-life determinants of mid-life multimorbidity: evidence from the 1970 British birth cohort. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1-11.



Health Coaching

Health coaching aims to educate individuals on specific health-related topics, and support them in achieving health-related goals.

Health coaching produces positive effects on individuals in terms of their:

- Physiology
- Behaviour
- Psychological conditions
- Social life



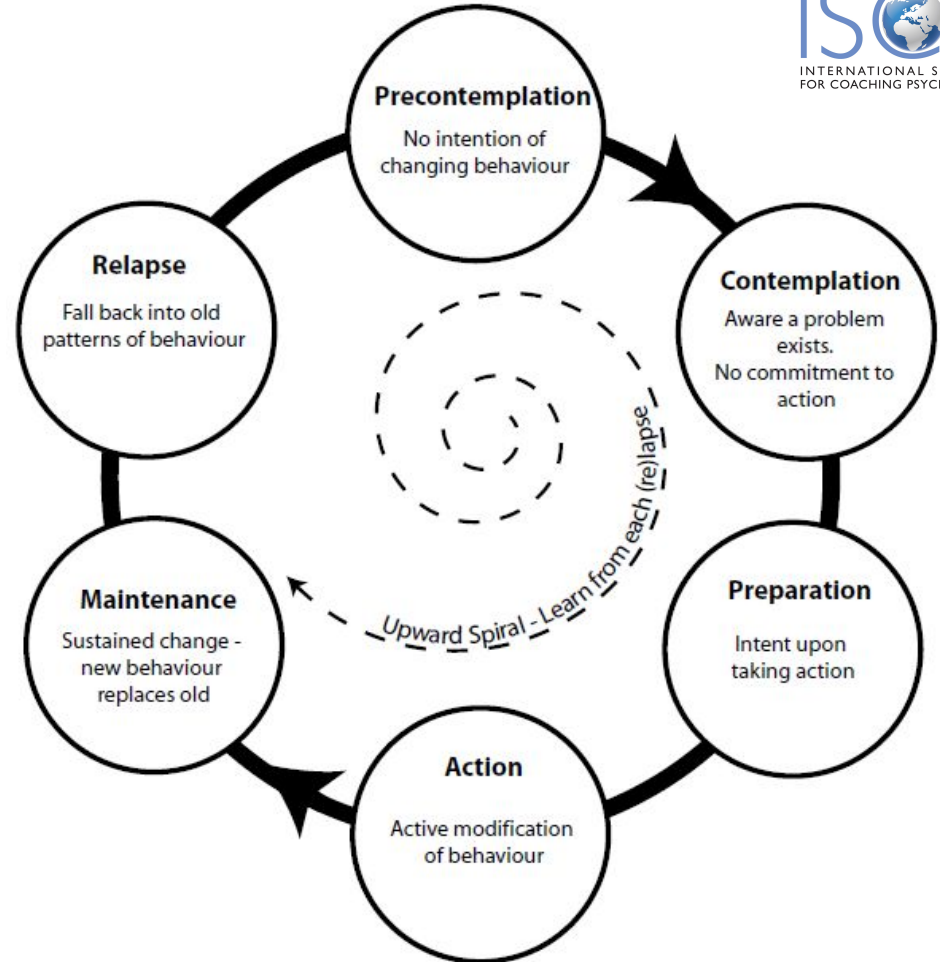
Acceptance & Commitment Coaching

Acceptance and commitment coaching involves partnering with coachees in a psychologically informed process to maximize their personal and professional potential.

It is an evidence-based coaching approach that aims to increase psychological flexibility and generate learning to positively impact outcomes such as health, performance, goal-directed thinking and self-efficacy.



Health-Related Self-Efficacy





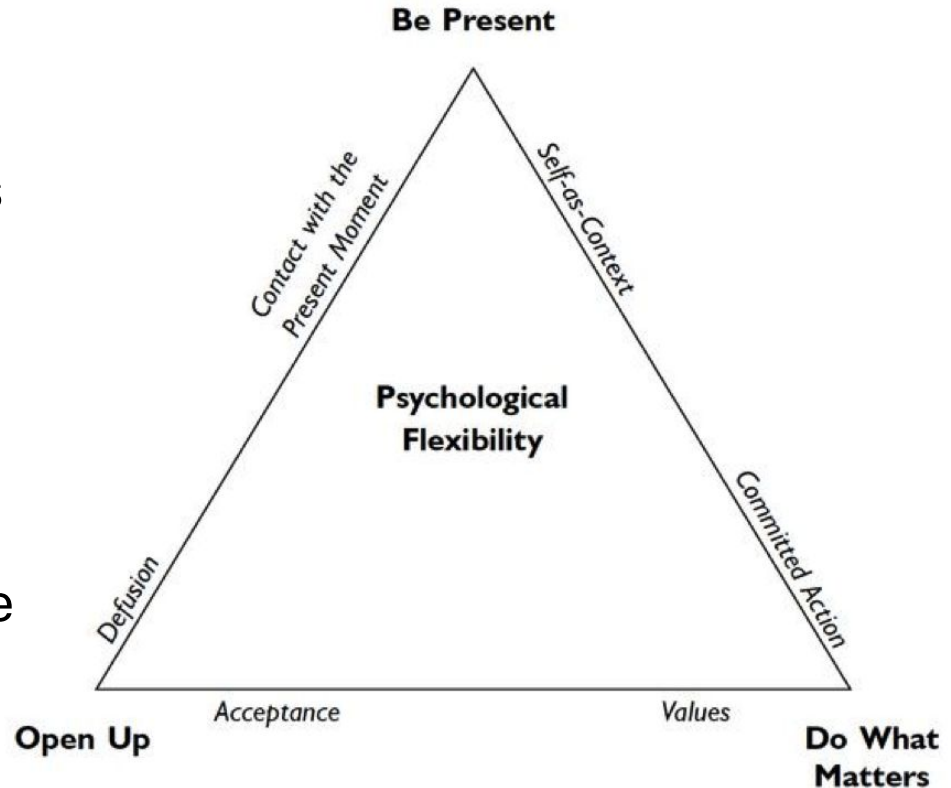
Psychological Flexibility

“... the ability to fully contact the present moment and the thoughts and feelings it contains without needless defense and, depending upon the situation, persist in or change behavior in the pursuit of values and values-based goals.”

Psychological Flexibility & Chronic Health

In chronic conditions, psychological flexibility lowers levels of distress thereby reducing the interference of conditions in individuals' lives.

Psychological flexibility improves the daily functioning of individuals with a wide range of health conditions.





**Doing What
Matters**





Technique: One New Thing

I encourage coachee's to try one new thing each week. This could be:

- New strategies to manage their condition
- New things they want to make happen in their life
- Ways they want to change and grow

Try this yourself. Think of one thing you could try in the next week that connects you with meaning and purpose in your life.

Focus on what you want to achieve, rather than what you want to reduce. For example: I want to spend less time inside and more time outside in nature

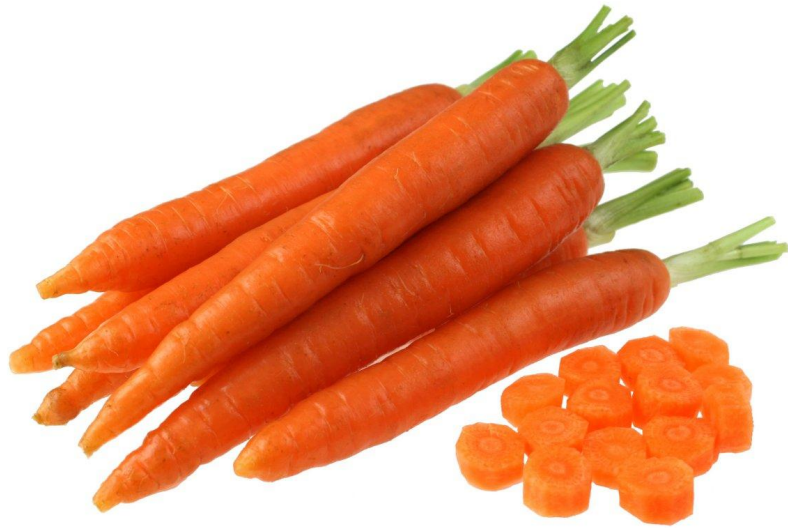


Being Present



Self & Condition

Motivation & accountability





Technique: Compassionate Noticing

Acceptance and commitment coaching asks coachees to notice opportunities for compassion towards themselves, and for others around them.

Try this yourself. Think of the **one thing** you decided to try. Think about what you are going to do, and what might get in the way. Notice the ‘voice in your mind’ as you do this.

What kinds of things is it saying? Are they helpful, or unhelpful?

Opening Up



Experiential Avoidance



Emotions are messages



Technique: Stepping Into the Swamp





DR RACHAEL SKEWS

rachael@cognuscoach.com

www.cognuscoach.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/rachael-skews/>



Useful Reading

- Graham, C. D., Gouick, J., Krahé, C., & Gillanders, D. (2016). A systematic review of the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) in chronic disease and long-term conditions. *Clinical psychology review*, 46, 46–58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.04.009>
- Flaxman, P. E., Bond, F. W., & Livheim, F. (2013). *The mindful and effective employee: An acceptance and commitment therapy training manual for improving well-being and performance*. New Harbinger Publications.
- Hayes, S. (2019). Coping with Illness and Disability. In *A Liberated Mind: The essential guide to ACT*. 363-377. Random House.
- Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., & Wilson, K. G. (2011). *Acceptance and commitment therapy: The process and practice of mindful change*. Guilford press.
- Kivelä, K., Elo, S., Kyngäs, H., & Kääriäinen, M. (2014). The effects of health coaching on adult patients with chronic diseases: a systematic review. *Patient education and counseling*, 97(2), 147-157.
- Palmer, S., Tubbs, I., & Whybrow, A. (2003). Health coaching to facilitate the promotion of healthy behaviour and achievement of health-related goals. *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education*, 41(3), 91-93.
- Skews, R. (2018). *Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) informed coaching: Examining outcomes and mechanisms of change* (Doctoral dissertation, Goldsmiths, University of London).
- Veehof, M. M., Trompetter, H. R., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Schreurs, K. M. (2016). Acceptance- and mindfulness-based interventions for the treatment of chronic pain: a meta-analytic review. *Cognitive behaviour therapy*, 45(1), 5–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16506073.2015.1098724>
- Vowles, K. E., McCracken, L. M., & O'Brien, J. Z. (2011). Acceptance and values-based action in chronic pain: a three-year follow-up analysis of treatment effectiveness and process. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 49(11), 748-755.