

# Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

- Do you feel like your life is on hold waiting for the pain to get better?
- Are you stuck, wishing that the pain would just go away?
- Do you struggle with the idea of accepting your pain?
- Do you feel that pain has taken away who you used to be?

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) could help you live your life again despite having pain.

## What is ACT?

The aim of ACT is to do more of what matters to us and have the most fulfilling life we can - despite having difficulties along the way.

Emotions can affect how we behave. Have you ever pushed through pain rather than have the frustration of not finishing a job, even though you know you will probably feel worse tomorrow? Do you avoid things because of concerns about what others might think, such as not going out because of embarrassment about using walking aids?

It is also easy to get caught up in unhelpful or self-critical thoughts such as “I’ll just do five more minutes”; “I’m letting everybody down”. ACT is a type of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) where we learn to get ‘unhooked’ from unhelpful thoughts.

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**Pain  
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## Patient Information

ACT uses mindfulness skills and meditation and it has two main parts:

Doing more of what matters	Mindfulness skills
Deciding what matters most to you	Spending more time in the present moment - rather than feeling trapped in the past and worrying about the present.
Committing to goals to help you do more of what matters most	Unhooking from thoughts which get in the way of you doing what matters  Coping with difficult feelings which stop you doing what matters  Becoming more resilient

## How can ACT help me?

The Gloucestershire Pain Self-Management Service supports people with persistent pain. People attending our service will have been referred by their GP or another Health Care Professional. Parts of ACT are used in our 'Pain Self-Management Programme'. We may also offer one-to-one sessions focusing on ACT skills.

Below are comments from patients about how their ACT-based sessions helped them:

- *“Accepting my new self doesn’t mean giving in to my illness but adjusting to my limitations and refocusing on my values”*
- *“I’ve learned how to accept how things are now and let go of who I used to be, and to find out who I am now”*
- *“My illness is part of me yet it doesn’t define me; my values do”*

## Patient Information

### Try ACT out

The ACT Companion app is available to download, on iOS and android devices, at [www.actcompanion.com/](http://www.actcompanion.com/).

Meditation is a key part of ACT, helping us to get in touch with the present moment and distancing us from unhelpful thoughts.

Our mindfulness webpage ([www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk/our-services/services-we-offer/pain/mindfulness/](http://www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk/our-services/services-we-offer/pain/mindfulness/)) has links to several meditation tracks. **Warning: do not listen to any meditation tracks while driving, or doing similar activities that require concentration.**

### ACT Resources

The following short videos show key parts of the ACT approach. Type the title into YouTube or another search engine.

- Experiential avoidance
- Passengers on the bus Link
- The Unwelcome Guest Link
- Leaves on a Stream' Exercise Link
- The Struggle Switch
- The Choice Point

Copies of the following books can be supplied by Gloucestershire Library Services:

- The Happiness Trap (Based on ACT: A revolutionary mindfulness-based programme for overcoming stress, anxiety and depression) by Russ Harris
- ACTivate Your Life: Using acceptance and mindfulness to build a life that is rich, fulfilling and fun by Joe Oliver, Jon Hill and Eric Morris
- Living with the Enemy: Coping with the stress of illness using CBT, mindfulness and acceptance by Ray Owen.

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