

Book review

ACT Companion

The Acceptance Commitment Therapy Training app

Category: App Reviews / Self-help

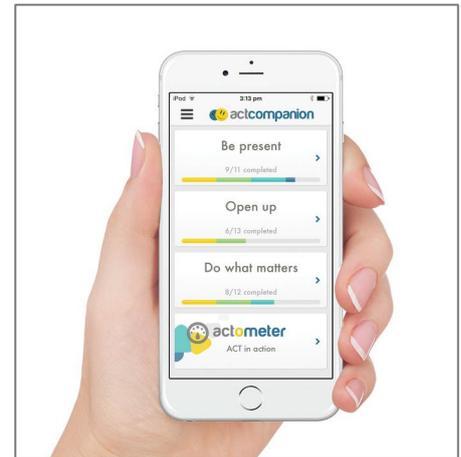
Author: Anthony Berrick, with Dr Russ Harris

Year: 2015

Publisher: Berrick Psychology Pty Ltd, AUS

Audience: Supporting Myself

Summary: A smartphone app that supports Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)



How to be a happier fish

While thinking about writing this review, I had a vision of a fish floundering in the water, which is how I feel sometimes in my busy life as a working mum.

Then I realised The ACT Companion, or Acceptance Commitment Therapy app, is useful because it gives me a chance to get present, quickly work out what's important to me, get unstuck from unhelpful thinking, and to work out the best action to take.

The app first caught my eye because it focuses not only on mindfulness, but also gently encourages staying open to what is going on in life, while at the same time remaining true to your own values.

The app is produced by Australian psychologist Anthony Berrick, who has a particular interest in behavioural psychology and mindfulness-based interventions. It has also received high praise from Russ Harris, an acclaimed ACT trainer and author of *The Reality Slap*. Dr Harris says the app is the most impressive ACT or mindfulness app he's seen yet.

Put ACT into action, with three simple steps

The ACT Companion provides three simple steps to help you get present through mindfulness exercises, open up using acceptance exercises, and engage with commitment exercises.

As with any therapy or tool, it's dependent on you to make an effort to reap the rewards. The app is easy and rewarding to use, keeps explanations simple, can be personalised and offers many insights. What is more, using an app is just way easier to use than lugging a book or journal around.

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The app has the option to set reminders to finish exercises, and you receive a weekly check-in alert where you can assess if your recent responses to life's challenges reflected your core values.

Visual cues to remember what's important

I particularly liked the treasure chest feature where you can attach a photo to represent a personal value, e.g. a photo of my son to remind me to stop, to play and have fun more often.

I like the immediacy of it, when you are out and about you can use life examples as they happen, or carry on with an exercise if fresh inspiration hits. There's also a user guide for health professionals to use during your therapy sessions.

With ACT Companion: The Acceptance Commitment Therapy Training app, I'm now perhaps less of a flapping fish and working towards being a happier fish swimming in a pond that sustains me.

Reviewed by Kim Higginson, information officer at the Mental Health Foundation

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