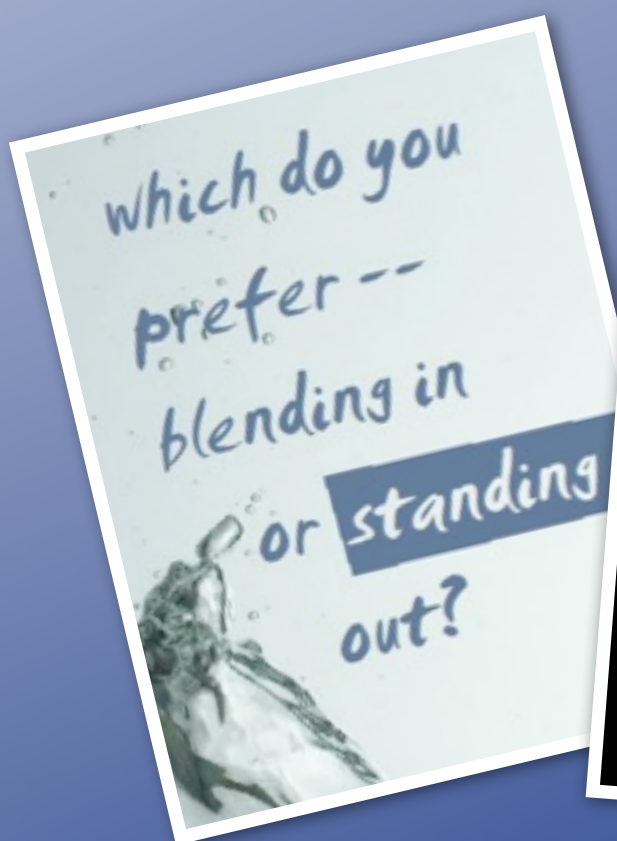




ACT Conversations

Values cards for use in individual and group therapy with young people

Dr Louise Hayes and Dr Lisa Coyne





Conversations of a different kind

What are ACT Conversations

ACT conversations cards are a therapeutic tool for working with values.

These conversation cards create, evolve and shape surprisingly meaningful perspectives on life. Creating perspectives that are sometimes new, and always far from ordinary.

The physical properties and richness of ACT conversation cards make values discussions a place to linger. The use of cards creates a physical property that seems to facilitate easier conversations, especially with young people. The cards seems less intimidating than direct questioning.

Using just a few questions, phrases or pictures, clients and therapists can explore rich and meaningful valued living and choosing behaviours that are consistent with what they care about most.



If these cards are useful to you,
perhaps you can help us support an
impoverished village with health care?

We had initially hoped to have these cards professionally designed and produced. Our motivation was to use the profits to support a health service in Nepal, providing health care to 6000 villagers.

Unfortunately finding a designer and printer that could produce them economically was difficult, so the DIY version seemed an easier way to get them out to ACT folks.

If you find these cards useful for your clients, **please consider making a small values based donation** to help the Sanjiwani Health Service. Louise Hayes is the public officer and 95% of all donations goes to the clinic.

To find out more or donate, go to **sanjiwani.net.au**

ACT Conversations

What are values in ACT?

In Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, valuing is the process used to help people create meaning in their lives. Valuing is evident when clients choose behaviours that are consistent with what they care about. Often this means turning toward desired life consequences, even though there are personal difficulties or obstacles.

The definition and function of values work with clients can become lost because the term 'values' is used so widely in Western society. However, values in ACT have a behaviorally specific definition and function. In ACT, values can be defined simply as desired global qualities of ongoing action (Hayes, Bond, Barnes-Holmes, & Austin, 2006). Or more theoretically precise as:

"Values are freely chosen, verbally constructed consequences of ongoing, dynamic, evolving patterns of activity, which establish predominant reinforcers for that activity that are intrinsic in engagement in the valued behavioral pattern itself." (Wilson & DuFrene, 2009)"

While many ACT practitioners attest to the rich client work that can be created when working in the values domain, they will also acknowledge that the definition takes time to become clear. These ACT conversations cards will help you work with clients to discover values processes in rich, meaningful, and life changing ways.

Why all the fuss about simple questions?

Many people who seek help from a professional have spent a lot of time talking and thinking about their problems. Moreover, if they have seen a few professionals they will have become adept at telling and retelling their story. In fact, as they tell their story they will be walking a well-worn path, and each re-telling of their story strengthens that well-worn path even more.

The alternative path, one that leads to valued living, is rarely spoken of in everyday life.

For many people this makes values discussions new, scary, and even painful. What we value most can seem distant or impossible.

ACT Conversations

Valuing as an alternative

When you glance at these cards the questions may look quite simple, ordinary, and even easy to answer. Let's try one, briefly, and see.....

Close your eyes and take time to linger over the question you are about to be asked.

Imagine that standing before you is someone who is important to you, someone you hold dear, perhaps a friend or family member seeking answers – take time and imagine one person who is close to you.

Then, imagine that they are about to ask you a question that has important implications to your life and theirs. See their image as they stand before you. Pause, with your eyes closed, taking time to consider your answer, and noticing that the answer is important to your loved one.

“What makes a good life?”

Let your mind wander as you try to choose just the right words, and then with your eyes still closed, see yourself answering this question to the person you hold dearest.

How did it go?

Did you have a quick answer? Perhaps your mind quickly raced to a well-worn answer with something like, “I know what makes a good life, being with loved ones, or maybe you said something like, “Bringing peace into the world”.

Maybe, like others, you tried to argue with the question, with thoughts like, “But I can't have a good life” Or even thoughts like, “This exercise is silly”.

Maybe you struggled to even formulate an answer; or to answer such a big question using just words.

Perhaps you found yourself wanting to avoid answering the questions at all.

Now, can you imagine answering these questions in a therapeutic setting where your life is out on the table? Where your life is being examined? It isn't surprising really that many clients avoid values discussions.

With ACT we want to spend time on these questions - values work is the heart of ACT. We want to help clients see new perspectives, and then choose behaviours that set them living in valued directions.

ACT conversation cards facilitate the space to linger on these questions. They allow time to explore living.

Set 1

Simple phrases with images
For children and youth



Images to create conversations



These cards use images and simple phrases.

The images are evocative, but ambiguous enough for clients to develop their own meaning, reflection and dialogue.

For example, “[embracing the moment](#)” could lead to conversations on: being present, developing carefree behaviour, valuing ones children or friends, and even childhood reflections.

Therapists can use these cards to start conversations, and to help clients explore. Always listening with ACT ears for the valued content.

These simple phrases and pictures are especially useful for children or youth. For clients who have little practice at discussing values, and may find questions too confronting.



Simple phrases with images to create conversations

**Print cards on cardboard, then cut and use approximately 8 to 10 per
conversation**

Valuing ourselves (blue)

1. seeing possibilities
2. moving
3. feeling pleasure
4. giving thanks
5. finding peace
6. asking for help
7. understanding
8. accepting yourself

Valuing living (green)

17. creating
18. dancing with joy
19. achieving
20. daring to dream
21. seeking knowledge
22. seeking freedom
23. embracing the moment
24. imagining

Valuing relationships (white)

9. being compassionate
10. trusting
11. belonging
12. being truthful
13. loving and being loved
14. connecting
15. admiring
16. appreciating

Valuing in the presence of difficulty (charcoal)

25. letting it be
26. seeking wisdom
27. staying with uncertainty
28. struggling
29. saying goodbye
30. feeling secure
31. feeling different
32. forgiving

Set 2

Questions to create rich conversations



Questions to create rich conversations



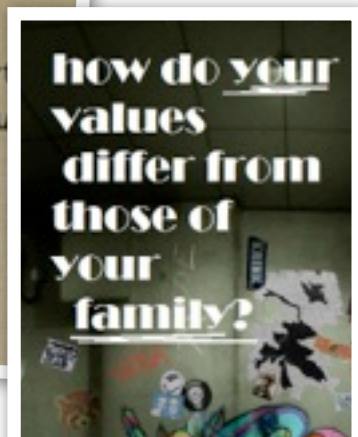
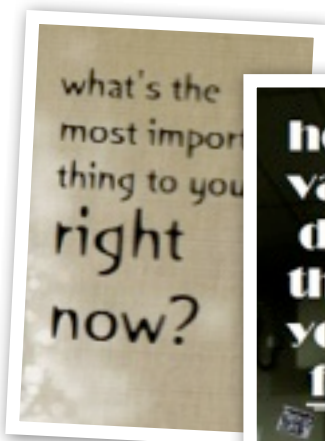
Typically, therapy or counselling involves many, many questions. Questions about what is most important can be the hardest of all to discuss and even more difficult to answer.

Exploration is the aim. To encourage choice, openness and curious discussion.

It is important to maximize the physical properties of the cards, as well as the indirect method of discussing. Place about 10 cards casually on the table.

And saying something like, "We have talked a lot about problems, lets talk about something different today. Which of these can we talk about?"

Together, therapist and client discuss several cards, with the therapist having the role of shaping dialogue through further exploration. Finally, turning to how a client might behave if they were acting in accordance with their value.



Questions to create conversations

(without images)

Print cards on cardboard, then cut and use approximately 8 to 10 per

Valuing ourselves

1. What do you think is your main purpose in life?
2. Who is the wisest person you know?
3. What does freedom mean to you?
4. What do you hope for?
5. Which do you prefer, blending in or standing out?
6. What would you most like to achieve?
7. What's the most important thing to you right now?
8. Imagine you could achieve anything - what would it be?
9. Have you dreamed of doing something extraordinary?

Valuing relationships

10. How do your values differ from those of your family?
11. What do you hope people will remember about you?
12. What does it mean to love?
13. What does forgiveness mean to you?
14. Who is the most compassionate person you know?
15. What would it be like to trust?
16. What does it mean to be seen or heard?
17. Who would you most like to thank?
18. What makes a friend?

Valuing living

19. What makes a good life?
20. What does independence mean to you?
21. What makes you strong?
22. Have you ever wanted to create?
23. What is it like to learn?
24. What would you do if you were rich?
25. Who has taught you the most in life?
26. What does it mean to find peace?
27. Have you longed for something?

Valuing in the presence of difficulty

28. Has struggling taught you?
29. Have you felt despair?
30. What is the hardest thing to accept about yourself?
31. Have you ever been let down?
32. Have you ever been bullied?
33. Have you ever felt unsafe?
34. Have you ever thought of dying?
35. Have you ever been lost?
36. Has fear travelled with you?