

TOPICAL WEBINAR FOR APA MEMBERS

An Educational Resource from Alma.

Applying Psychological Flexibility in Clinical Practice: Enhancing Effectiveness in Therapy

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Dr. Elisabeth Morray has a working relationship with Alma. As such, she has both a financial and an intellectual interest in the webinar content. The purpose of this presentation is to provide a balanced view on the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and its central concept of psychological flexibility.

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Launched in 2018 by Dr. Harry Ritter, Alma is on a mission to simplify access to high-quality, affordable mental health care by giving providers the tools they need to build thriving in-network private practices. When providers join Alma, they gain access to insurance support, teletherapy software, client referrals, automated billing and scheduling tools, and a vibrant community of clinicians that come together for education, training, and events.

ATTENDANCE

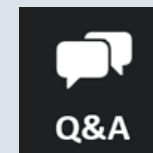
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- A “Certificate of Attendance” will be emailed to live attendees only.
- You must attend for 45 minutes to receive the certificate.

RECORDING

- A recording of this presentation will be emailed to everyone in 2 weeks' time.
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HAVE A QUESTION?

- You are on mute. Communicate using the **Q&A box** in the webinar screen. Submit your questions for our speakers using the Q&A box.
- Presentation slides will be posted in the **chat box** of your webinar screen.



Introduction & Learning Objectives

Objectives:

- Define psychological flexibility and its clinical significance.
- Identify strategies for cultivating a therapeutic environment that supports flexibility.
- Apply psychological flexibility tools to strengthen the therapeutic alliance and enhance client outcomes.



Dr. Elisabeth Morray

PRESENTER

Dr. Elisabeth Morray, VP of Clinical at Alma

Elisabeth is a practicing psychologist, as well as VP of Clinical at Alma. Her work focuses on using the principles of psychological flexibility in order to help individuals live meaningful, purpose-driven lives, and how the therapeutic relationship can be an environment in which flexibility can be learned and practiced. She also has extensive experience in the implementation and evaluation of digital tools, including outcomes measures, that support and enhance the therapeutic relationship. Recognizing a need for increased support and access to cutting-edge tools for clinicians in private practice she joined Alma in 2022.

Why Psychological Flexibility Matters

- Psychological flexibility is a fundamental aspect of health and well-being.
- **"Over 90%** of ACT studies show improved client functioning when psychological flexibility is increased."

Let's Discuss

How often do you see clients struggle because they get stuck in rigid patterns of thinking or behavior?

Defining Psychological Flexibility

- "The ability to stay open, present, and values-driven, even in the face of difficult thoughts and feelings."
- **Note:** This is a core construct within Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) but is applicable across many therapeutic modalities.

Six Core Processes of Psychological Flexibility (Hexaflex Deep Dive)

Process	Purpose	Clinical Example
Acceptance	Allowing internal experiences without trying to change them	Letting sadness be present during grief work.
Cognitive Defusion	Observing thoughts without fusion or taking them literally.	"I'm having the thought that I'm a failure" vs. "I am a failure."
Being Present	Anchoring in the here-and-now.	Mindful breathing exercises.
Self-as-Context	Seeing yourself as the "observer" beyond thoughts and feelings.	"I am the one having the thoughts, I am not the thoughts themselves."
Values Clarification	Identifying what matters most in life.	Exploring core life priorities with a client.
Committed Action	Taking values-driven steps, no matter how small	Scheduling a meaningful activity even while feeling anxious.

Psychological Flexibility as a Transdiagnostic Process

- Increasing flexibility supports recovery across a wide range of clinical presentations.
 - **e.g.** anxiety, depression, trauma, SUD, chronic pain
- **Mechanism:** It works by reducing experiential avoidance and increasing adaptability.

Cultivating a Flexible Therapeutic Environment

Strategies for therapists

- Encourage client autonomy and agency.
- Model openness to discomfort.
- Foster self-compassion and curiosity.
- Integrate values exploration into sessions.

"Therapists who embody flexibility are more effective at promoting it in their clients."

Strengthening the Therapeutic Alliance

Higher therapist flexibility is linked to a stronger therapeutic alliance, better client retention, and greater outcomes.

Practical Tips for Therapists:

- Practice present-moment awareness yourself.
- Use collaborative language.
- Invite clients to set values-based goals.

Let's Discuss

How do you already bring flexibility into your own therapeutic style?

Skill Practice: Cognitive Defusion

Case Vignette

Scenario: A client reports avoiding difficult family conversations about grief with their partner due to a fear of emotional overwhelm.

Therapeutic Application:

- **Values Clarification:** Help the client clarify the importance of authentic connection.
- **Mindfulness:** Practice observing anxious feelings without judgment.
- **Committed Action:** Develop a small, values-aligned next step, like a 5-minute conversation.
- **Interactive Prompt:** How might you adapt this for a client with trauma or generalized anxiety?

Research Evidence & Outcomes

Key Findings

- Meta-analyses show that ACT interventions improve outcomes across hundreds of randomized controlled trials.
- Psychological flexibility mediates symptom improvement and predicts better functioning.

Resource & Tools

Foundational Literature:

- Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*
- Kashdan & Rottenberg, "Psychological flexibility as a fundamental aspect of health"

Practical Tools & Communities:

- Association for Contextual Behavioral Science (ACBS)
- ACT Mindfully
- PsychFlex Toolkit

Key Takeaways

Summary

- Psychological flexibility is a powerful transdiagnostic target.
- Integrating flexibility skills enhances therapeutic effectiveness.
- Flexible therapists build stronger alliances and promote better outcomes.

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AUDIENCE Q&A

FINAL THOUGHTS

- A recording will be emailed to you in 2 weeks. It will include the presentation slides.
- Take our survey immediately after the webinar has concluded.

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THANK YOU!

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