

Healthy Coping for Caregivers Using Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Strategies with Katy Albert

Neurodivergence can bring both joy and struggle for individuals and families. We can recognize and celebrate neurodiversity while understanding that it may come with both emotional and practical challenges. Many dedicated and loving caregivers experience feelings of conflict, guilt, overwhelm, exhaustion, and anxiety as they advocate for their autistic loved ones, access services, and respond to daily needs. Support for caregivers is a crucial part of caring for autistic individuals.

Emerging evidence supports Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) as an effective intervention for caregivers, clinicians, and educators supporting the autistic community and individuals with disabilities (Garcia et al., 2022). ACT provides valuable tools for managing difficult situations and the uncomfortable emotions that accompany them, allowing us to respond with pride.

The goal of ACT is cognitive flexibility. Rather than reacting impulsively or avoiding negative emotions, we can choose to respond with openness and align our actions with our values.

You can begin practising ACT in three steps:



ACCEPT AND ACKNOWLEDGE

Recognize the situation and your feelings about it. Instead of trying to eliminate your emotions, accept their presence. This doesn't mean you like them; it means you trust yourself to handle them.



CHOOSE A VALUED DIRECTION

Reflect on your values. Ask yourself, "Who do I want to be in this situation or while feeling this way?"



TAKE ACTION

Determine what actions you can take that align with the kind of person you want to be and that move you toward your goals.

Self-Compassion: At its core, self-compassion involves treating yourself kindly during difficult experiences, emotions, and thoughts. This can mean giving yourself a moment to cry, acknowledging that you are doing your best, or allowing yourself to rest even while there are things that need to be done. Being compassionate towards yourself is a flexible response to help you navigate feelings of guilt, frustration, worry, or overwhelm and compliments ACT beautifully.

By embracing ACT and self-compassion, we can work toward a joyful and fulfilling life, even amid times of struggle.

This article accompanies the webinar, *Healthy Coping for Caregivers Using Acceptance Commitment Therapy Strategies*.

[View the entire presentation here.](#)

References

Garcia, Y., Keller-Collins, A., Andrews, M., Kurumiya, Y., Imlay, K., Umphrey, B., & Foster, E. (2022). Systematic Review of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy in Individuals with Neurodevelopmental Disorders, Caregivers, and Staff. *Behavior Modification*, 46(5), 1236-1274. DOI: [10.1177/01454455211027301](https://doi.org/10.1177/01454455211027301)