

MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY AND CHRONIC PAIN

With Reference to Acceptance and
Commitment Therapy (ACT)

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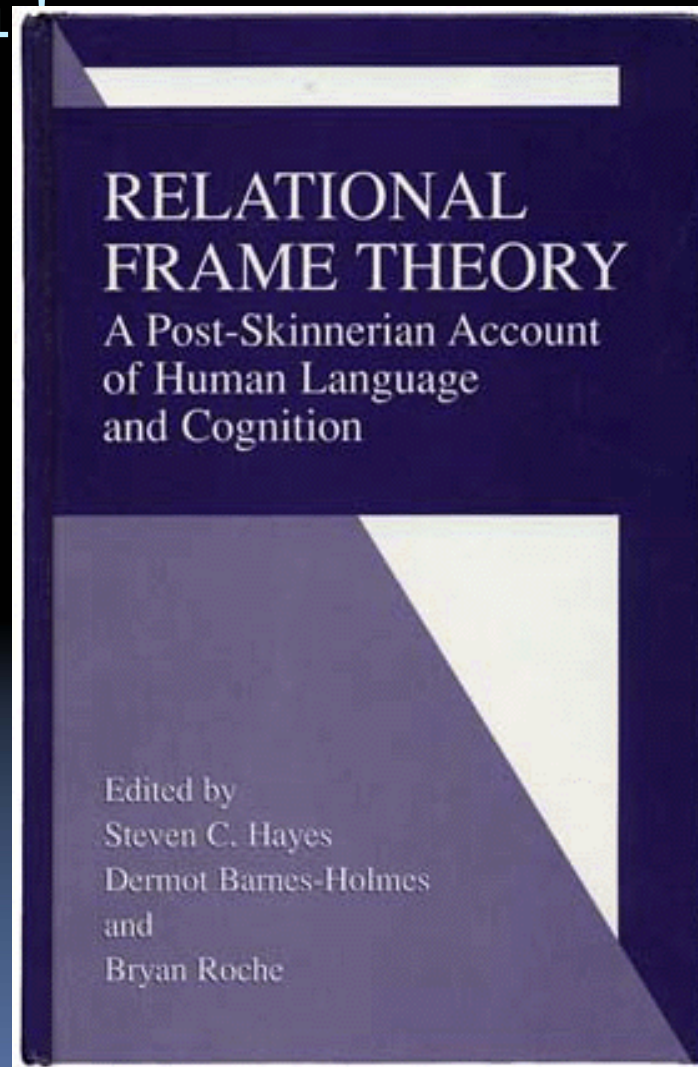
Goals of the Presentation

- What are the defining characteristics of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)?
 - Scientific underpinnings
 - Therapeutic techniques and goals
- What do empirical data suggest about its effectiveness in emotional disorders and in chronic pain?

Scientific Underpinnings

- The research foundation of ACT is *relational frame theory*, which is not only scientifically compelling, but is also....

An effective cure for
insomnia!

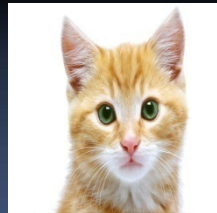


Relational Frame Theory

- Verbal behaviours emerge early and readily, are dominant in human experience
- From a functional perspective, the human world is primarily verbal
- Verbal relations are controlled by context
- In some contexts, symbols and referents become cognitively fused

Stimulus Equivalence

“Cat”



“Cat”

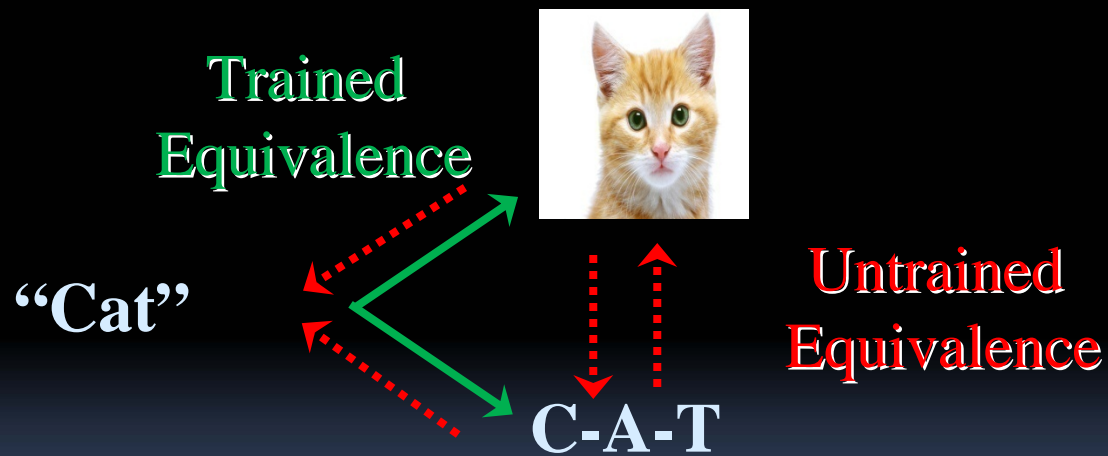


C-A-T

S-K-Y

C-A-R

Stimulus Equivalence



Derived Relations Create New Functions

furry
purrs
small

plays
scratches
jumps



More Assumptions Derived from Relational Frame Theory

- Changing verbal relations by adding new verbal relations elaborates the existing verbal network, it does not eliminate it.
- Verbal relations work by addition, not subtraction.
- The main way to weaken verbal relations is to alter the context supporting the verbal process, not eliminate it.

How does this apply to treatment?

- Attempts to avoid thoughts (i.e., experiential avoidance, cognitive avoidance, emotional avoidance) lead to greater enmeshment in a web of negative thoughts.
- Change is possible, but often leads to undesirable outcomes.
- Attempts at direct control of thoughts leads to contradictory results.

Components of the ACT Treatment Model

- Creative Hopelessness
- Cognitive Defusion
- Acceptance /Mindfulness
- Valuing

Components of the ACT Treatment Model

- *Creative Hopelessness:*
 - The patient has tried everything, but the problem remains
 - The problem is not one of specific strategies
 - The problem is not one of insufficient motivation
 - The patient is not to blame if their attempts to solve the problem have not worked.
 - The problem is not like those in the external world
 - The more you don't want it, the more you have

Components of the ACT Treatment Model

- *Defusion exercises*
 - Metaphors
 - Reducing words to nonsense syllables
 - “Just noticing” thoughts
 - Thought labelling
 - Physically externalizing thoughts

Components of the ACT Treatment Model

- *Acceptance/Mindfulness:*
 - Serenity creed
 - Willingness to experience emotional and physical discomfort (i.e., the opposite of avoidance).
 - Specific acceptance/mindfulness exercises
 - Meditation

Components of the ACT Treatment Model

- *Valuing*
 - Valued Living Questionnaire: designed to elicit importance and satisfaction ratings in ten life areas.
 - Values Compass
 - Values-based goal setting

Empirical Support for Mindfulness-Based Treatment

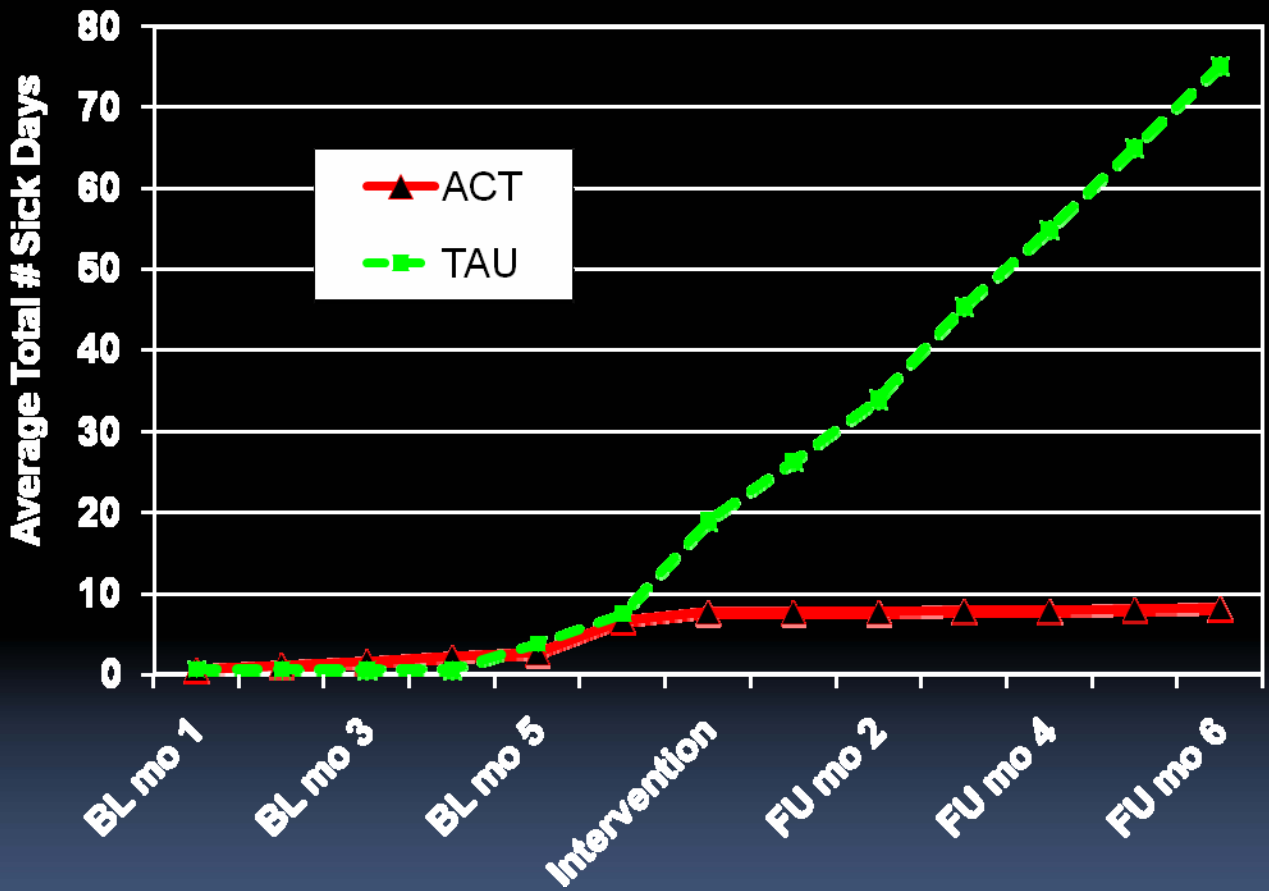
- **Panic:** Eifert & Heffner (2003). *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*
- **Drug Addiction:** Forsyth, Parker, Finlay (2003). *Addictive Behaviors*
- **Smoking Cessation:** Gifford, Kohlenberg, Hayes et al. (2004). *Behaviour Therapy*.
- **Acute Psychosis:** Guidano & Herbert (2006). *Behaviour Research and Therapy*
- **Depression:** Segal, Williams, Teasdale (2002).
- **Diabetes Self Management:** Gregg, Callaghan, Hayes (2007). *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*
- **Chronic Pain:**
 - Dahl & Wilson (2004). *Behavior Therapy*
 - McCracken, Vowles, & Eccleston (2005). *Behaviour Research and Therapy*
 - Vowles, McCracken, & Eccleston (2008). *Health Psychology*

Chronic Pain

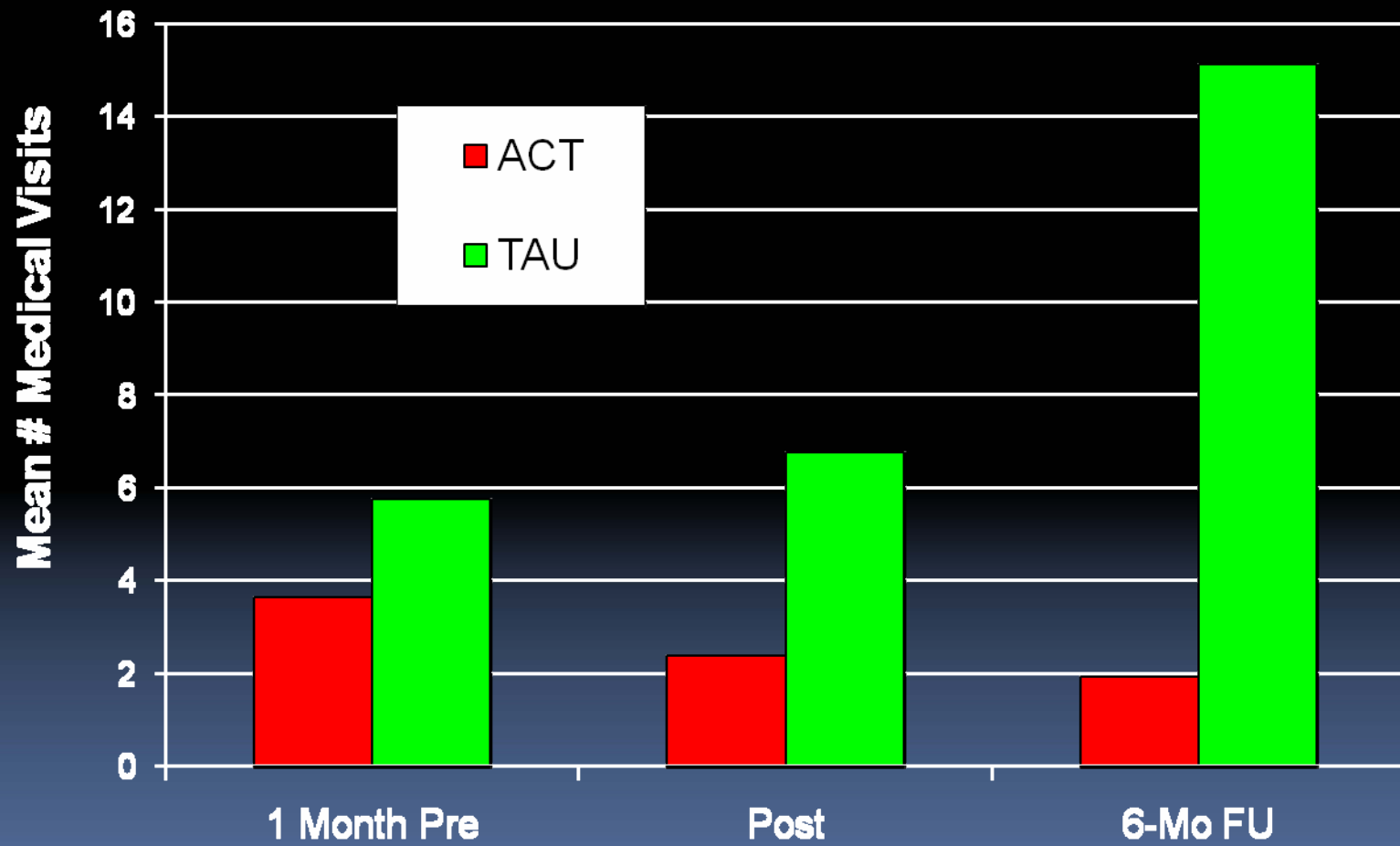
Dahl, Wilson & Nilsson (2004) Behavior Therapy

- 20 public health caretakers at risk for developing long-term pain/stress symptoms (i.e., high absentee rates due to pain)
- 10 MTAU, 10 ACT protocol, 4 treatment sessions over 30 days
- Baseline=1-6 months, intervention: four 1-hr sessions over 30 days, FU 6 months

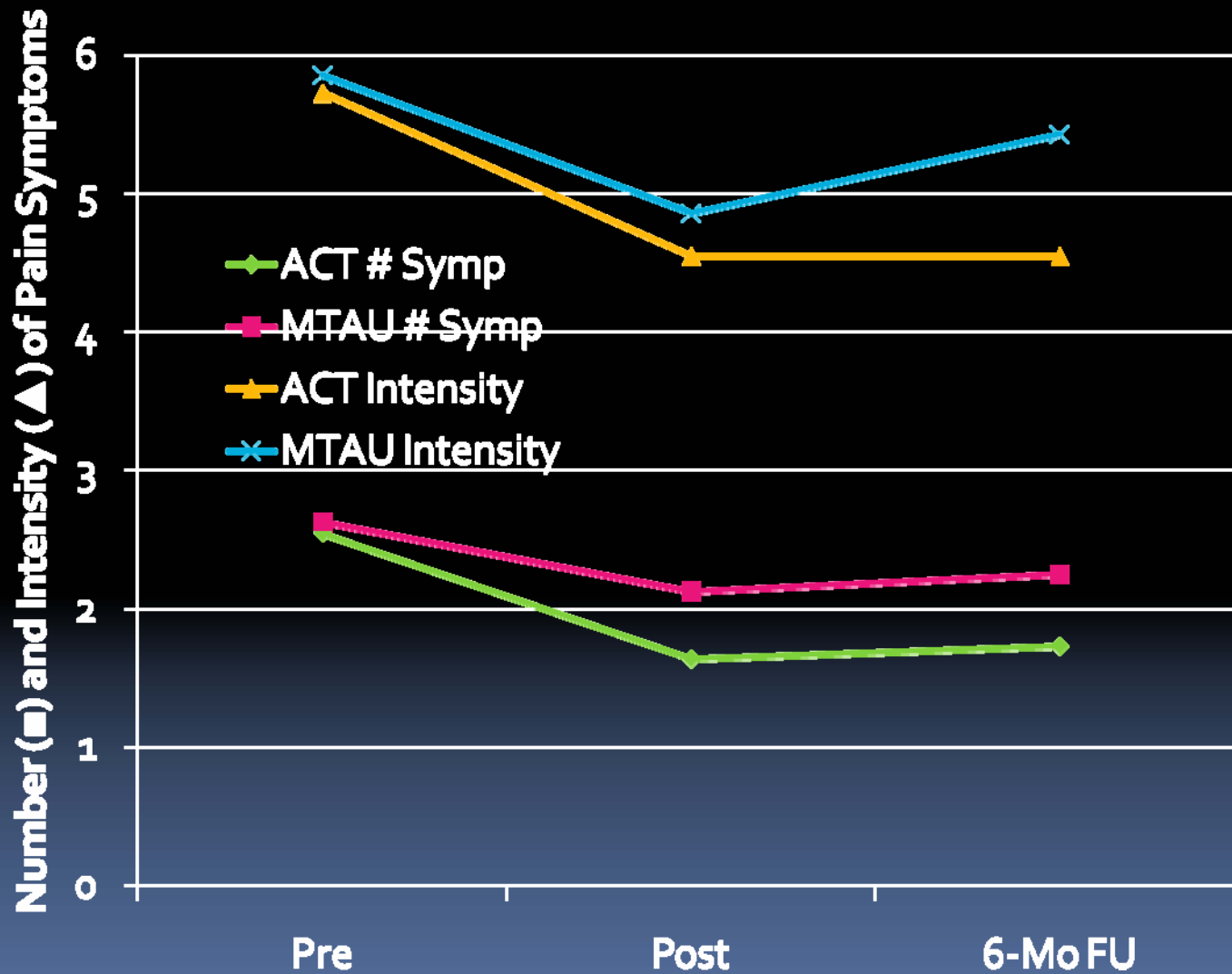
Cumulative Sick Leave



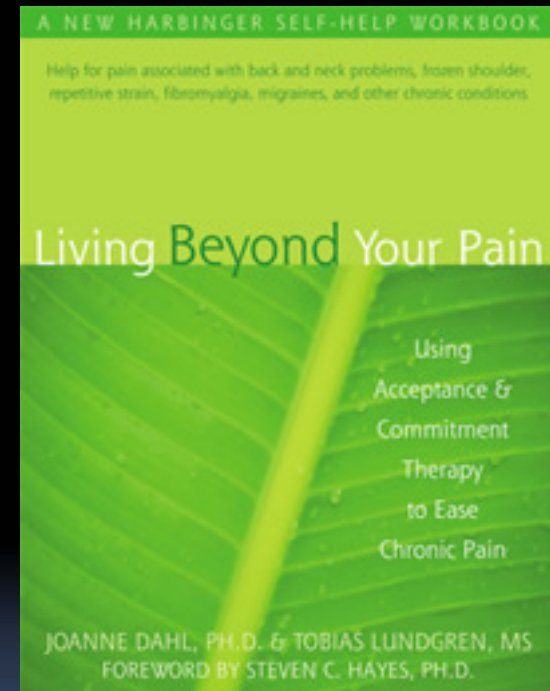
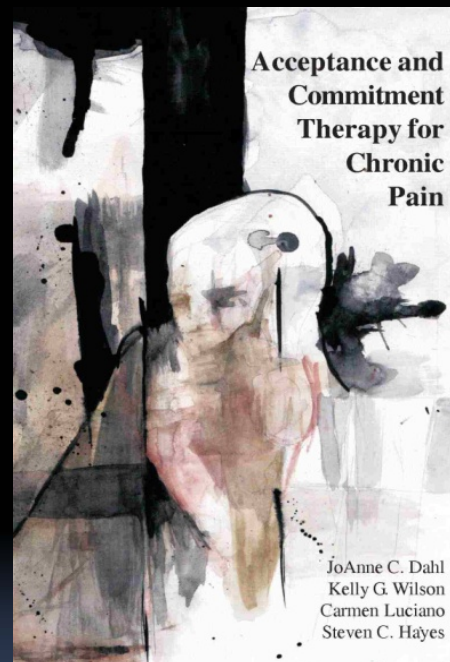
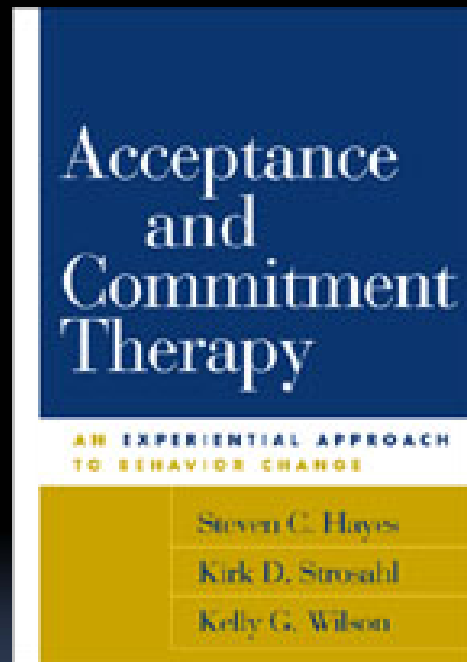
Medical Utilization



Self-Reported Pain Intensity and Number of Symptoms



ACT Resources



[www. contextualpsychology.org](http://www.contextualpsychology.org)