



# ACBS MYS

ASSOCIATION FOR  
CONTEXTUAL BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

**MALAYSIA CHAPTER**

## **Advance ACT Workshop 2023 Reflection by Zayn Ng Education Fund Sponsorship Recipient**

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) has gained popularity in recent years and I was attracted by its unique approach that emphasizes mindfulness, values, and flexibility. So, I have been researching and reading up for quite some time. Despite understanding the main theoretical framework, I noticed I struggled in practicing the skills and integrating my newly learned information in my therapy work. With hopes of becoming a more confident ACT informed therapist, I was highly motivated to sign up for the Advanced ACT Online workshop 2023.

Overall, I found the entire learning experience to be highly valuable and transformative. I have observed significant personal and professional growth. I would like to share some of the highlights of my interesting journey. In my sharing, other than exploring the key insights and my main takeaways, I will also be highlighting my feelings and thought processes.

Right after the workshop, I did a quick reflection and asked myself “What came up to me upon completing this intensive training?”. To my surprise, I felt a strong sense of confusion and a sudden deep sense of void. I was expecting to feel confident, accomplished and motivated to try out the learned and practiced ACT techniques after the training, but on the contrary I was left feeling insecure and doubtful. The first thought that came to me was “The course has ended, but my primary goal to master the skills has yet to be met”. Upon recognizing this thought, I was suddenly reminded that this could be the best opportunity for me to practice some of the techniques learned.

To my surprise, I was able to see the entire situation from a different perspective. I realized my goals to learn and sharpen my ACT skills have indeed been met, however, the dissonance occurred when my intensity of fear and self-doubt persisted. My negative thoughts and emotions were mainly driven by my fear of making mistakes/ having imperfection. All these while, I have been having a preconception that the only way to track my learning progress is by assessing how confident I feel after. However, it has finally dawned on me that this could be an “unhelpful rule” that I have been carrying with me all these while. Learning itself can be an incredibly rewarding and satisfying experience, but we often forget that the process might also be accompanied by some discomfort. This uncomfortable feeling is a natural part of the process and can be a sign of growth and progress. Then it suddenly struck me, my insecure feelings does not mean that I am not making any progress, but rather, it could be a sign that I am on the right track.

Upon realization, I acknowledge that I am currently operating outside of my comfort zone. I was also able to reassure myself that this uncomfortable feeling can be temporary as I am yet to be familiar with the new techniques and may not know what to expect. With this information, I feel more relieved and motivated to work through my discomfort. Throughout this reflection, I have also accepted that the uncomfortable feeling will always be there, but I will be more mindful to not give in to these negative thoughts such as “I can’t do it”, “I might make a mistake”. Rather, I will allow myself to be more open to new experiences, step out of my comfort zone and “just do it”- practicing ACT in both my personal life and in therapy sessions.

After taking a few baby steps in practicing ACT concepts these few weeks, I get multiple glimpses of the “aha feelings”. It can be described as a sudden, intense, and often exhilarating feeling after gaining an insight or understanding. I usually experience this feeling when I gain the sudden shift in perspective or after connecting seemingly unrelated pieces of information to form new understanding. I attribute these sparks of “aha moments” to the newly gained psychological flexibility. Congruent to my learning experience, I strongly believe that these small moments of clarity can help me to deepen my knowledge and understanding of the world around me, which then lead to more personal growth and development.

Moving forward, I am excited for the continuous learning and growth in both personal and professional aspects. ACT concepts have helped me to become more congruent in general and I am excited to model my learning to my clients and invite them to join my learning journey. This process might not be all rainbows and butterflies, but I remain hopeful that ACT principles can help in facilitating greater awareness and acceptance of our experiences, and encourage us to live more meaningful and purposeful lives.