



## Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (A New Harbinger Self-Help Workbook)

By Steven C. Hayes, Spencer Smith



**Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (A New Harbinger Self-Help Workbook)** By Steven C. Hayes, Spencer Smith

**Get ready to take a different perspective on your problems and your life—and the way you live it.**

Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) is a new, scientifically based psychotherapy that takes a fresh look at why we suffer and even what it means to be mentally healthy. What if pain were a normal, unavoidable part of the human condition, but avoiding or trying to control painful experience were the cause of suffering and long-term problems that can devastate your quality of life? The ACT process hinges on this distinction between pain and suffering. As you work through this book, you'll learn to let go of your struggle against pain, assess your values, and then commit to acting in ways that further those values.

ACT is not about fighting your pain; it's about developing a willingness to embrace every experience life has to offer. It's not about resisting your emotions; it's about feeling them completely and yet not turning your choices over to them. ACT offers you a path out of suffering by helping you choose to live your life based on what matters to you most. If you're struggling with anxiety, depression, or problem anger, this book can help—clinical trials suggest that ACT is very effective for a whole range of psychological problems. But this is more than a self-help book for a specific complaint—it is a revolutionary approach to living a richer and more rewarding life.

- Learn why the very nature of human language can cause suffering
- Escape the trap of avoidance
- Foster willingness to accept painful experience
- Practice mindfulness skills to achieve presence in the moment
- Discover the things you really value most
- Commit to living a vital, meaningful life

*This book has been awarded The Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Self-Help Seal of Merit — an award bestowed on outstanding self-help books that are consistent with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) principles and*

*that incorporate scientifically tested strategies for overcoming mental health difficulties. Used alone or in conjunction with therapy, our books offer powerful tools readers can use to jump-start changes in their lives.*

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Trying to "change" negative thoughts through cognitive gymnastics is like trying to win a war single-handedly. Why waste a life trying the impossible? In *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*, advocate Dr. Steven Hayes escorts the mildly depressed, angry, and anxiety prone through a new approach to handling suffering--universal human suffering caused by language's illusions. Rather than fighting off bad thoughts and feelings with internal pep talks, Hayes beautifully explains how to embrace those pessimistic and foreboding mental voices (much like welcoming home one's cranky, play-worn children), "defuse" them with respectful attention, and commit to leading a purposeful life that includes their occasional ranting.

Intriguing exercises help readers identify their core struggles, parse these into manageable pieces, and develop effective ways to move beyond rumination. The work progresses easily, thanks to Hayes' engaging style and his grace in coaching readers. Critics of cognitive and behavioral therapies will warm to Hayes' logical explanations of language's pitfalls (even language used by other therapeutic approaches); his sometimes goofy--but surprisingly effective--exercises; well-timed etymology lessons; and his uncanny ability to predict and skillfully address reader reactions throughout the workbook. Ironically, the path to life clocks many hours in the mind; plan to dedicate an intensive month of introspection to this program. Anyone who has been accused of thinking too much, who begrudges compliments, pines for a different life, or feels trapped at a mental dead end can benefit from Hayes' superior guidance.--*Liane Thomas*

Dr. Steven Hayes answers a few questions about his book, and describes how his research was inspired by his own struggles with panic and anxiety.

### Questions for Steven Hayes

**Amazon.com:** Can you give us a lay person's primer on acceptance and commitment therapy?

**Steven Hayes:** Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is based on a rather remarkable fact: when normal problem solving skills are applied to psychologically painful thoughts or feelings, suffering often increases. Our research program has shown this in thousands of patients, in almost every area of human suffering. Fortunately, we have discovered why this is and we have developed some ways of correcting it.

The basic research underlying ACT shows that entanglement with your own mind leads automatically to experiential avoidance: the tendency to try first to remove or change negative thoughts and feelings as a method of life enhancement. This attempted sequence makes negative thoughts and feelings more central, important, and fearsome--and often decreasing the ability to be flexible, effective, and happy.

The trick that traps us is that these unhelpful mental processes are fed by agreement OR disagreement. Your mind is like a person who has to be right about everything. If you know any people like that you know that they are excited when you agree with them but they can be even more excited and energized when you argue with them! Minds are like that. So what do you do?

ACT teaches you what to do. I will say what that is, but readers need to understand that these mere words will not be useful in and of themselves. Minds are too clever for that! That is why the book has so many

exercises and why we have a free discussion group on line for people working through the book ([http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ACT\\_for\\_the\\_Public/](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ACT_for_the_Public/)). What ACT teaches is acceptance of emotions, mindful awareness of thoughts, contact with a transcendent sense of self, and action based on chosen values. This constellation of skills has shown itself in controlled research to help with an amazingly large range of problems, from anxiety to managing the challenges of physical disease, from depression, to stopping smoking.

**Amazon.com:** Some of this work is said to have come from your own battles with anxiety and panic. How did these ideas apply to your own struggles?

**Steven Hayes:** It was my own panic disorder that first put me on to the problem we have now confirmed in our research. My panic disorder began a little over 25 years ago. I watched in horror as it grew rapidly, simply by applying my normal problem solving skills to it. Anxiety felt awful and seemingly made it impossible to function, so it was obvious to me that I first needed to get rid of it before my life would improve. I tried lots of things to do that. But this very effort meant I had to constantly evaluate my level of anxiety, and fearfully check to see if it was going up or down as a result of my efforts. As a result, anxiety quickly became the central focus of my life. Anxiety itself became something to be anxious about, and meanwhile life was put on hold.

After two or three years of this I'd had enough. I began to experiment with acceptance, mindfulness, and valued action instead of detecting, disputing, and changing my insides.

I remember a moment that symbolizes the change in direction. In the middle of a panic attack, with a guttural scream like you hear in the movies, I literally shouted out loud to my own mind. "You can make me feel pain, you can make me feel anxiety," I yelled. "But you cannot make me turn away from my own experience."

It has not been a smooth path and it was several years before anxiety itself was obviously way down (getting it to go down was no longer my purpose, remember, but ironically when you stop trying to make it happen, often it does), but almost immediately life opened up again. ACT is the result of over 20 years of research, following the lead this provided.

**Amazon.com:** You are a language researcher and chapter two of *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life* is called "Why Language Leads to Suffering." Can you tell us why you suggest that language is a source of human suffering?

**Steven Hayes:** Human language (by that I mean our symbolic abilities generally) is central to effective human cognition. It evolved to keep us from starving or being eaten--and it has done a pretty good job of that.

The key to symbolic processes is the ability to relate events in new and arbitrary ways. Our research program has shown this ability even in 14 month old babies, and we now know it comes from direct training from parents and others as part of normal language development. It is a wonderful skill. It allows us to imagine futures that have never been, and to compare situations that have never actually been experienced. That is the every essence of human verbal problem solving.

But that same process has a downside for human beings. For example, it allows us to fear things we have never experienced (e.g., death). It allows us to run from the past or compare the dull present to a fantasized future and to be unhappy as a result. And in my case it led to the common sense but ultimately unhelpful idea that I needed to get rid of anxiety before I could live well.

We get a lot of training in how to develop and use our minds, but we get very little training in how to step out of the mental chatter when that is needed. As a result, this mental tool begins to use us. It will even claim to BE us. The overextension of human language and cognition, I believe, is at the core of the vast majority of human suffering in the developed world and human technology (the media) is only amplifying the problem by exposing us to an ever increasing stream of symbols and images. Learning how to get out of your mind and into your life when you need to do that is an essential skill in the modern world.

## Review

“With kindness, erudition, and humor, the authors of *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life* educate readers into a new way of thinking about psychological issues in general and life satisfaction in particular. Their combination of cutting-edge research and resonance with ancient, tried-and-true practices makes this one of the most fascinating and illuminating self-help books available. If you’re tired of standard psychological parlance and still frustrated with your quality of life, this book can be a godsend.” —**Martha Beck**, columnist for *O Magazine* and author of *Finding Your Own North Star* and *Expecting Adam*.

“This manual, firmly based on cutting-edge psychological science and theory, details an innovative and rapidly growing approach that can provide you with the power to transform your very experience of life. Highly recommended for all of us.” —**David H. Barlow**, professor of psychology, research professor of psychiatry, and director of the Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders at Boston University.

“This is the quintessential workbook on acceptance and commitment therapy. Written with wit, clinical wisdom, and compassionate skepticism, it succeeds in showing us that, paradoxically, there is great therapeutic value in going out of our minds. Once released from the struggle with thought, we are free to discover that a life of meaning and value is closer at hand than thought allowed. This book will serve patients, therapists, researchers, and educators looking for an elegant exposition of the nuts and bolts of this exciting approach.” —**Zindel V. Segal, Ph.D.**, the Morgan Firestone Chair in Psychotherapy and professor of psychiatry and psychology at the University of Toronto and author of *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*.

“This book is a user-friendly tool for clinicians who may be looking for adjunct handouts for clients with a wide variety of issues. Exercises found within can help deepen, structure, or guide experiences contacted in session. As a stand-alone self-help book, it brings to light the guiding principles that make ACT such an empowering approach. I highly recommend this book to clinicians and laypeople alike.” —**Sandra Georgescu, Psy.D.**, assistant professor at the *Chicago School of Professional Psychology*.

## From the Publisher

This book develops acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), a revolutionary and exciting new direction in psychotherapy, into step-by-step exercises readers can use to get relief from emotional pain. Written by ACT’s founding theorist, the book offers a self-help program proven to be effective for coping with a range of problems, from anxiety to depression, eating disorders to poor self-esteem.

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

#### Mildred Wright:

The book *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (A New Harbinger Self-Help Workbook)* can give more knowledge and information about everything you want.

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### **Virginia Glass:**

Now a day those who Living in the era exactly where everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources inside can be true or not demand people to be aware of each data they get. How individuals to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Examining a book can help individuals out of this uncertainty Information especially this Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (A New Harbinger Self-Help Workbook) book because this book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the data in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it you probably know this.

### **Linda Livingston:**

The actual book Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (A New Harbinger Self-Help Workbook) will bring you to definitely the new experience of reading a book. The author style to clarify the idea is very unique. In case you try to find new book to learn, this book very appropriate to you. The book Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (A New Harbinger Self-Help Workbook) is much recommended to you you just read. You can also get the e-book in the official web site, so you can quicker to read the book.

### **Donald Foster:**

The publication with title Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (A New Harbinger Self-Help Workbook) possesses a lot of information that you can study it. You can get a lot of help after read this book. This kind of book exist new know-how the information that exist in this reserve represented the condition of the world currently. That is important to yo7u to be aware of how the improvement of the world. That book will bring you within new era of the syndication. You can read the e-book with your smart phone, so you can read it anywhere you want.

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