

Practicing Willingness (ACT-Based)

Objective:

Help clients build willingness to experience uncomfortable emotions rather than avoid or suppress them.

Introduction (5 minutes):

Most of us want anxiety to go away completely. But what if trying to get rid of it actually gives it more power? Today we'll explore a different approach — *willingness*.

Psychoeducation (10 minutes):

ACT teaches that when we fight or avoid emotions like anxiety, we often suffer more. Willingness means making room for uncomfortable feelings and choosing to move forward *with* them instead of waiting for them to disappear.

This doesn't mean liking anxiety — it means not letting it control your actions.

Skill Building (15 minutes):

Use a **Willingness Scale** (0–10) and guided imagery:

- Visualize a situation that triggers anxiety
- Ask: “How willing am I to let this anxiety come along for the ride while I take action?”
- Practice saying: “I am willing to feel [emotion] in order to do [value-based action]”

Reflection & Discussion (10 minutes):

- What have you avoided because you didn't want to feel anxious?
- How does it feel to open the door to anxiety instead of fighting it?
- What's one thing you might try doing, even with anxiety?

Homework Options:

1. Complete a willingness scale each day and journal what came up.
2. Practice a value-based action while noticing anxiety and allowing it.
3. Create an “invitation” for your anxiety to join you — humorous or serious.

Practicing Willingness

What emotion or situation have you been avoiding lately?

On a scale of 0–10, how willing are you to allow that feeling to be present while still taking action?

Complete this sentence: “I am willing to feel _____ in order to _____.”

How did it feel to try opening the door to that emotion?

What value-based action might you take this week, even if anxiety is present?