

ACT for Trauma Guide

Grounding, self-compassion, and values-based recovery after trauma.

How to use this resource

This guide is a supplement to trauma-informed therapy, not a replacement. Move slowly, prioritize present safety, and pause any exercise that feels destabilizing.

Understanding Trauma Through ACT

Trauma can change how memory, the body, beliefs, and relationships respond to the present. Many trauma responses were protective in context. ACT work honors that history while helping you build a life that is not organized only around survival.

- Trauma responses are adaptive strategies that may now be painful or limiting.
- Healing does not mean forgetting what happened.
- You can move forward while carrying your history.
- Safety, choice, and pacing matter.

Recognizing Trauma Responses

When I feel triggered, my body tends to:

My mind tends to predict:

I protect myself by:

This response once made sense because:

The cost now is:

Grounding for Present Safety

- Name the date and where you are.

- Press both feet into the floor.
- Look around and name five neutral objects.
- Notice one sound in the room.
- Take one slow breath and lengthen the exhale.
- Remind yourself: This is a trauma response; I am in the present.

Self-Compassion

Trauma often brings self-blame or shame. Self-compassion is not denial. It is the practice of speaking to yourself in a way that supports healing rather than reenacting harm.

- I am in pain right now, and this is hard.
- My response makes sense in the context of what I survived.
- I can be kind to myself in this moment.
- I deserve support, steadiness, and choice.

Values After Trauma

A part of life I want to reclaim is:

A boundary that supports my safety is:

A relationship or community that supports healing is:

One small values-based step I can take this week is:

Clinical note

Trauma work should not be rushed. If an exercise increases flashbacks, dissociation, or unsafe urges, pause and bring it to a trauma-informed therapist.