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Acceptance & Commitment Therapy for depression

combining mindfulness and behavioural psychology
to promote effective living

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Overview

- The historical and conceptual roots of ACT
- An overview of the model
- An ACT approach to mindfulness
- Application to depression
- Conceptual aspects of the relationship between ACT and other therapies



A history lesson...

- Behaviourism as a rejection of introspection
- Flavours of behaviourism
- Radical behaviourism = everything is behaviour
- Sensibilities of humanism, Buddhism,



The ACT model

- Is not a mind model
- Is a model of 6 interdependent and overlapping behavioural processes that help us to answer:
- What is influencing behaviour in this moment?



The ACT model

“ACT is a therapy approach that uses Acceptance & Mindfulness processes and Commitment and Behaviour Change processes to produce greater psychological flexibility”

Hayes et. al., 2004



The ACT model

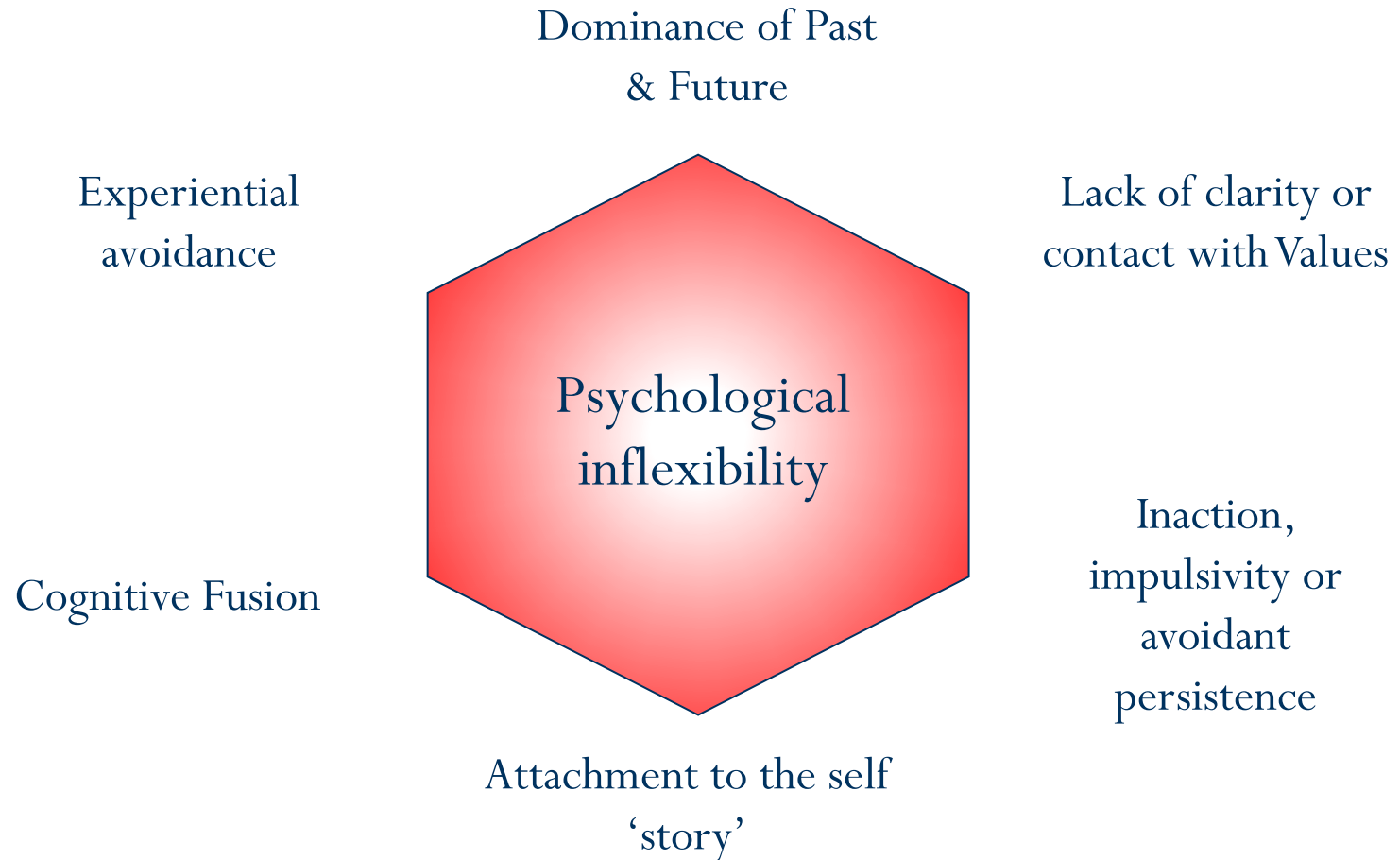
- “Psychological flexibility is the ability to contact the present moment more fully as a conscious human being and to either change behaviour or persist, when doing so serves valued ends”.

Wilson & Murrell, 2005



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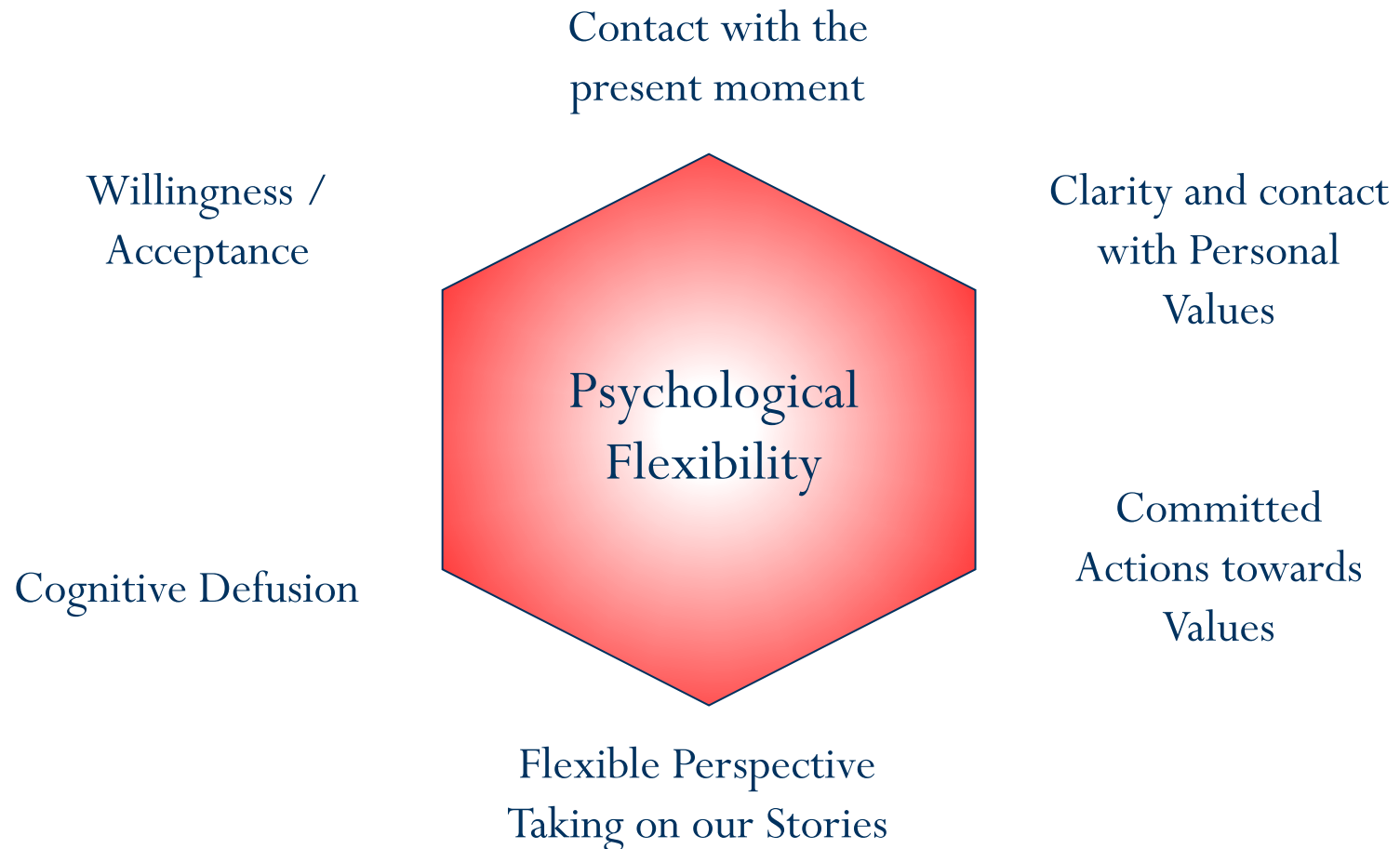
The ACT model: Psychological Inflexibility





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The ACT model: Psychological Flexibility





Focus on workability

- Much less interested in ‘causes’ of depression
- More interested in how people respond to depression
- Conceptualises the responses people make as ‘strategies for living’



Focus on workability

- Validating, compassionate stance: you are not broken...
- Are the strategies you are using working?
- Letting go of strategies that don't work and finding other strategies



Focus on values

- What do you most care about?
- If you were free to choose....
- Overarching life directions
- Specific steps linked to directions



Mindfulness and acceptance

- Use of mindfulness, defusion and willingness to behave flexibly when obstacles arise
- To change or persist



Depression

- Lack of pleasure / low motivation: unhooking feelings as reasons for action
- Pessimism and self criticism: unhooking thoughts as reasons for action
- Rumination: identifying ‘verbal problem solving’ as an unworkable strategy



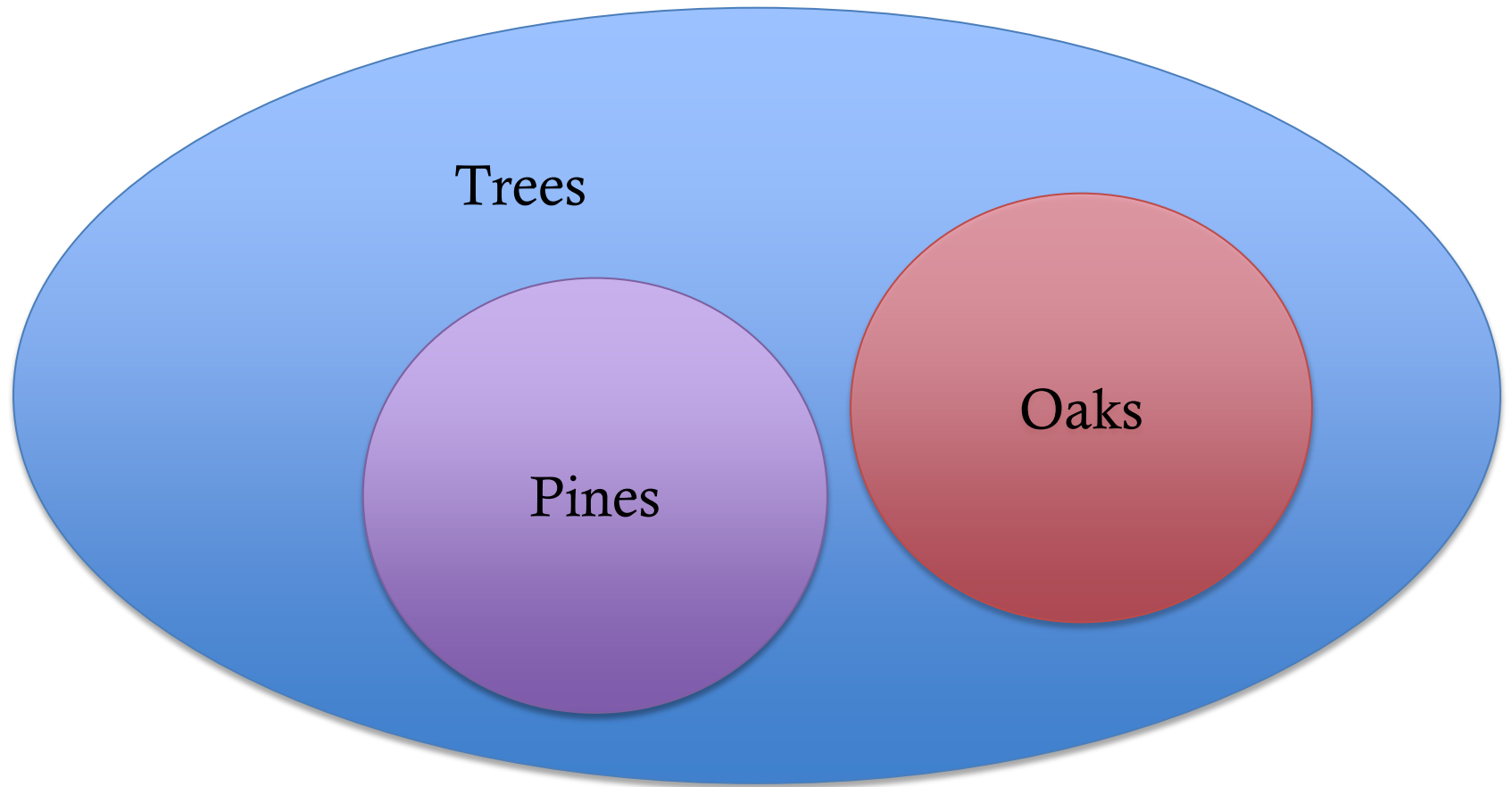
Depression

- Holding our ‘stories’ more lightly
- Specific commitments: to self, others, freely chosen.
- Connection to values is *part* of the work



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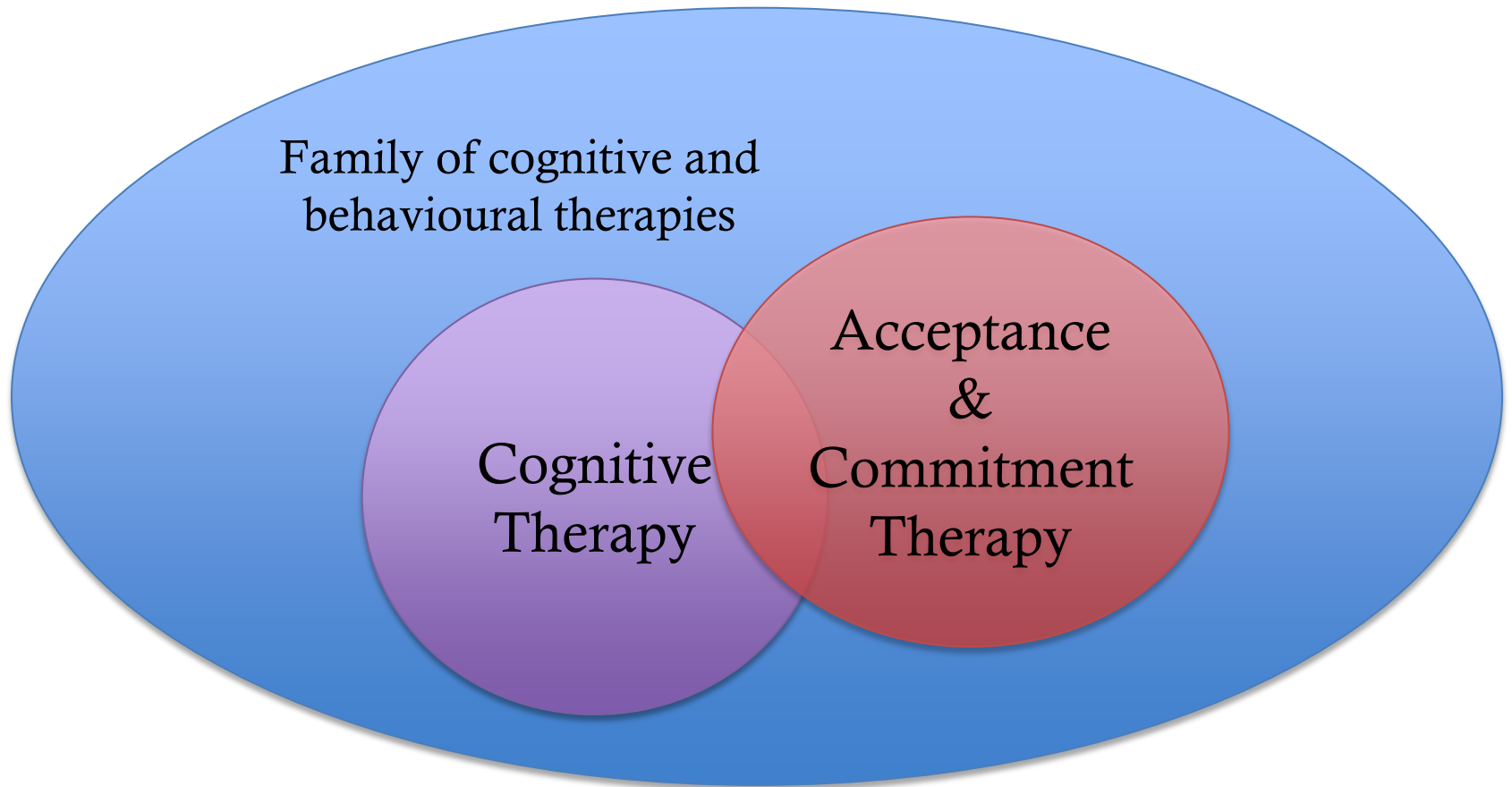
ACT & CBT





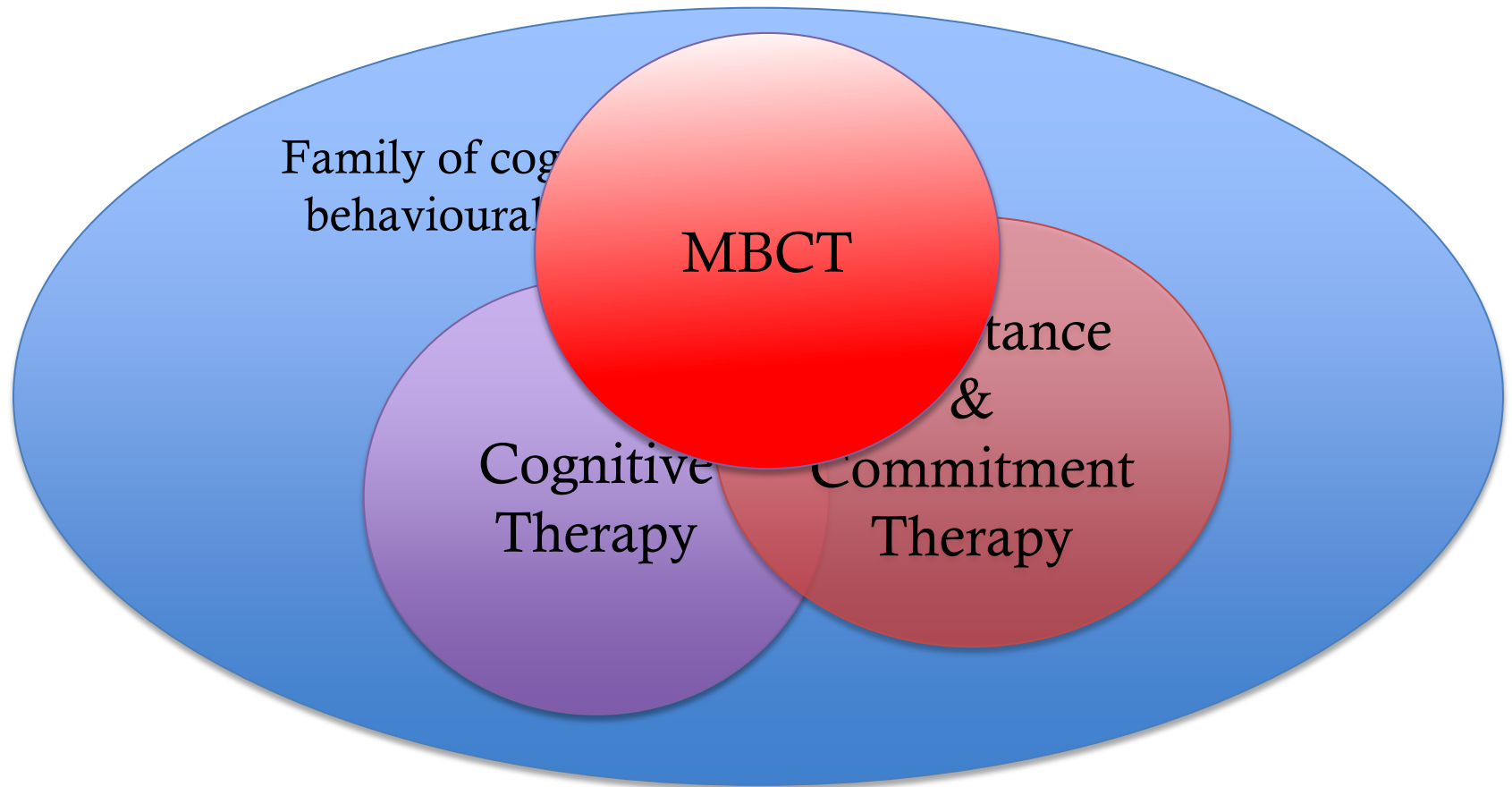
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ACT & CBT





ACT & CBT



Family of cognitive-behavioural therapies

MBCT

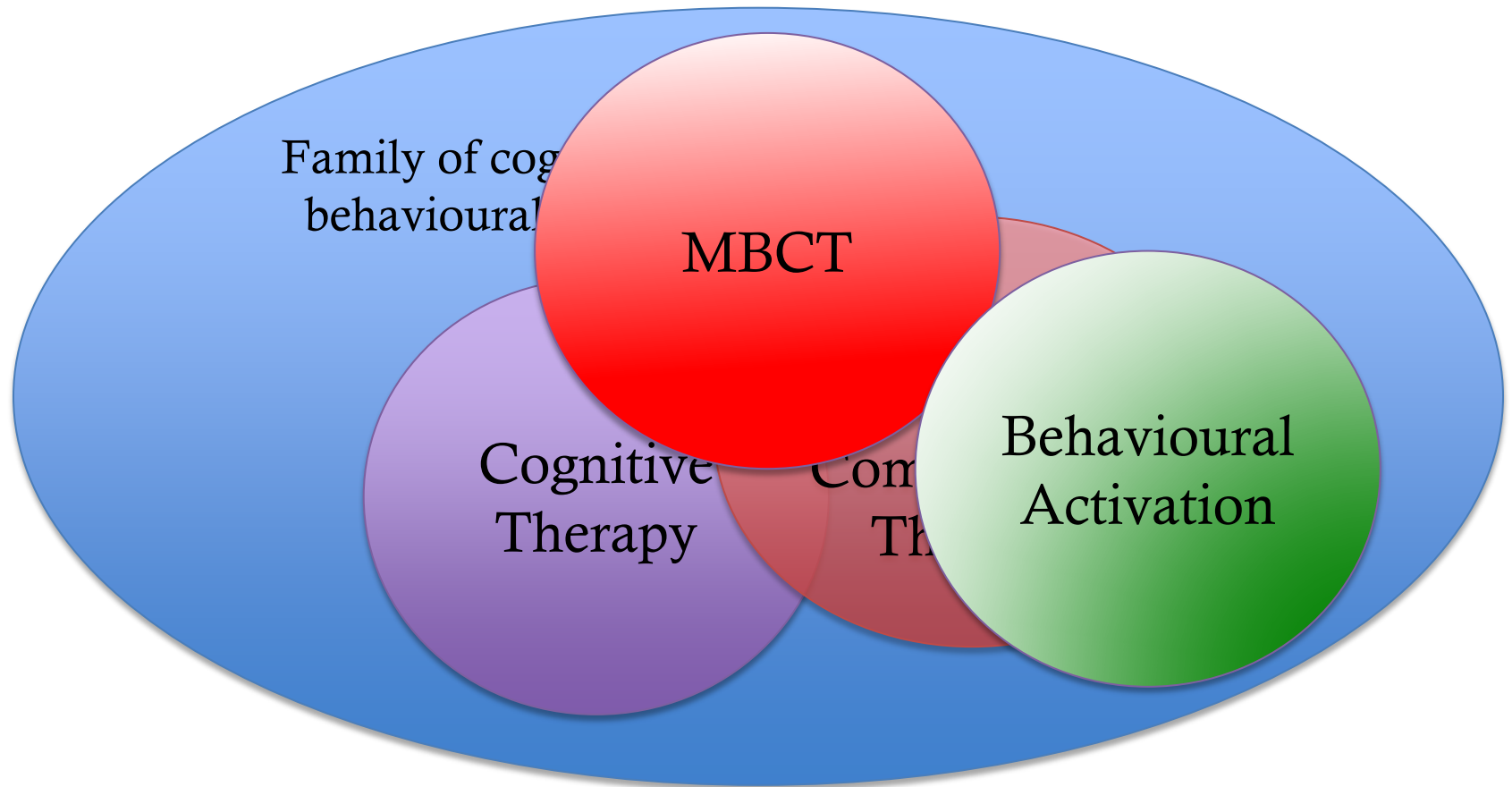
Cognitive Therapy

Mindfulness & Commitment Therapy



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ACT & CBT



Family of cognitive behavioural therapies

MBCT

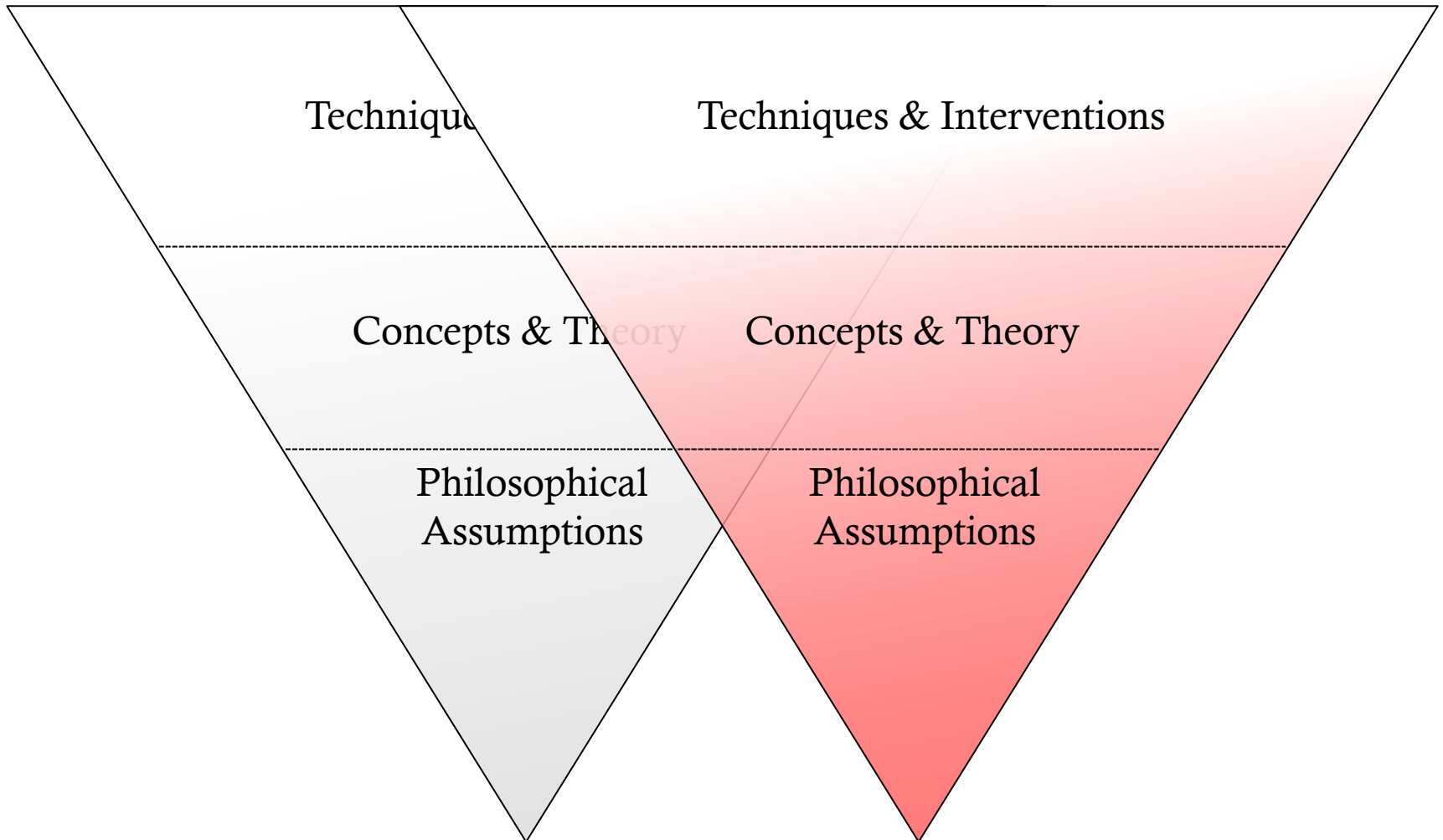
Cognitive Therapy

Cognitive Therapy

Behavioural Activation



ACT & Other Therapies





Further reading



Dr Russ Harris, (2007), Constable Robinson, available on Amazon

Also:

Behavior Therapy

Special Series, Edited by David M. Fresco:

Theories and Directions in Behavior Therapy:

ACT and Contemporary CBT, Vol. 44, Issue 2, pp 177 – 338 [June 2013]



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