A defining feature of ACT is the use of present moment/mindfulness based interventions to counteract the corrosive effects of emotional avoidance and cognitive fusion. Despite the central role of present moment interventions in ACT, the defining features of such interventions are elusive and poorly understood by most clinicians.

This workshop will demonstrate a neuro-clinical model of present moment intervention, which is used in the Focused Acceptance and Commitment Therapy approach, and is strongly supported by both mindfulness and neuroscience research. This approach holds that learning to pay attention to painful private experience in a focused, non-reactive way is a skill that must be cultivated through practice. Therapy is the forum in which this practice takes place. The ability to maintain the integrity of attention in the presence of unwanted, distressing thoughts, feelings memories or physical sensations is central to the process of radical change. To this end, attendees will learn the three defining attributes of flexible attention and how to recognize failures of attention during therapy. Experiential exercises and self-assessments will be used to help attendees appreciate their own strengths and weaknesses with regard to paying attention and staying in the moment. The ability to notice one's own escape tendencies and to curb them during crucial moments in therapy is a pre-requisite for promoting transformation in clients.

We will spend considerable time describing and demonstrating the five sequential phases of present moment awareness interventions: noticing what has showed up (Observe), naming what is in awareness (Describe), letting go of over-identification (Detach), releasing oneself from self-loathing narratives (Soften) and reframing life purpose to transform the meaning of personal pain and set back (Expand). For each component, we will present a live or video taped example to show what the skill looks like in the clinical moment. Then, each attendee will get an opportunity to practice that particular skill following a case vignette lead in.