

## Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Social Anxiety Disorder in Adolescence: A Manualized Online Approach

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**Abstract :** In recent years, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) has been shown to be effective in the treatment of numerous anxiety disorders, including social anxiety disorder (SAD). However, limited evidence exists on its therapeutic gains for adolescents with SAD. The current work presents a weekly 10-session manualized online ACT approach to adolescent SAD, being the first study to do so in a clinical sample of adolescents. The intervention ACT@TeenSAD addresses the six proposed processes of psychological inflexibility (i.e., experiential avoidance, cognitive fusion, lack of values clarity, unworkable action, dominance of the conceptualized past and future, attachment to the conceptualized self) in social situations relevant to adolescents (e.g., doing a presentation). It is organized into four modules. The first module explores the role of psychological (in)flexibility in SAD (session 1 and 2), addressing psychoeducation (i.e., functioning of the mind) according to ACT, the development of an individualized model, and creative hopelessness. The second module focuses on the foundation of psychological flexibility (session 3, 4, and 5), specifically on the development and practice of strategies to promote clarification of values, contact with the present moment, the observing self, defusion, and acceptance. The third module encompasses psychological flexibility in action (sessions 6, 7, 8, and 9), encouraging committed action based on values in social situations relevant to the adolescents. The fourth modules' focus is the revision of gains and relapse prevention (session 10). This intervention further includes two booster sessions after therapy has ended (3 and 6-month follow-up) that aim to review the continued practice of learned abilities and to plan for their future application to potentially anxious social events. As part of an ongoing clinical trial, the intervention will be assessed on its feasibility with adolescents diagnosed with SAD and on its therapeutic efficacy based on a longitudinal design including pretreatment, posttreatment, 3 and 6-month follow-up. If promising, findings may support the online delivery of ACT interventions for SAD, contributing to increased treatment availability to adolescents. This availability of an effective therapeutic approach will be helpful not only in relation to adolescents who face obstacles (e.g., distance) when attending to face-to-face sessions but also particularly to adolescents with SAD, who are usually more reluctant to look for specialized treatment in public or private health facilities.

**Keywords :** acceptance and commitment therapy, social anxiety disorder, adolescence, manualized online approach

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