



WorkLifePsych



First steps in
Psychological **Flexibility**

Part one:
Psychological
Inflexibility

First Steps in Psychological Flexibility

Part one: Psychological inflexibility

Episode summary

In this first episode of the series, Richard and Ross introduce the concept of psychological flexibility. They make the distinction between the skills that comprise the ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy/Theory) model and their impact: increased psychological flexibility. They provide an overview of what to expect from the remainder of the series and discuss what for many people is a starting point on this developmental journey: psychological inflexibility.

What is psychological flexibility?

Here's a very popular academic definition of the concept:

“... the ability to fully contact the present moment and the thoughts and feelings it contains without needless defense and, depending upon the situation, persist in or change behavior in the pursuit of values and values-based goals.”

(Flaxman, Bond & Livheim, 2013)

This might sound like a lot, so the way Richard introduces it to clients may be easier to remember:

- Show up - be present in the here and now
- Let go - stop struggling with your thoughts and emotions
- Get moving - use your values to do more of the stuff that matters

What's in it for me?

By developing these skills, you'll be able to better deal with the challenges life sends you, be able to persist through challenges and reach your goals. Research has consistently shown how these skills result in increased wellbeing, increased goal attainment and increased job satisfaction.

That's quite a lot of bang for your buck!

And it doesn't require personal reinvention or a 'new year, new me' approach. Quite the contrary, in fact. By cultivating small habits, you can feel the benefits of these skills relatively quickly.

So what do I need to do?

In summary, the skills to develop - which we'll cover in greater detail in the coming episodes - are:

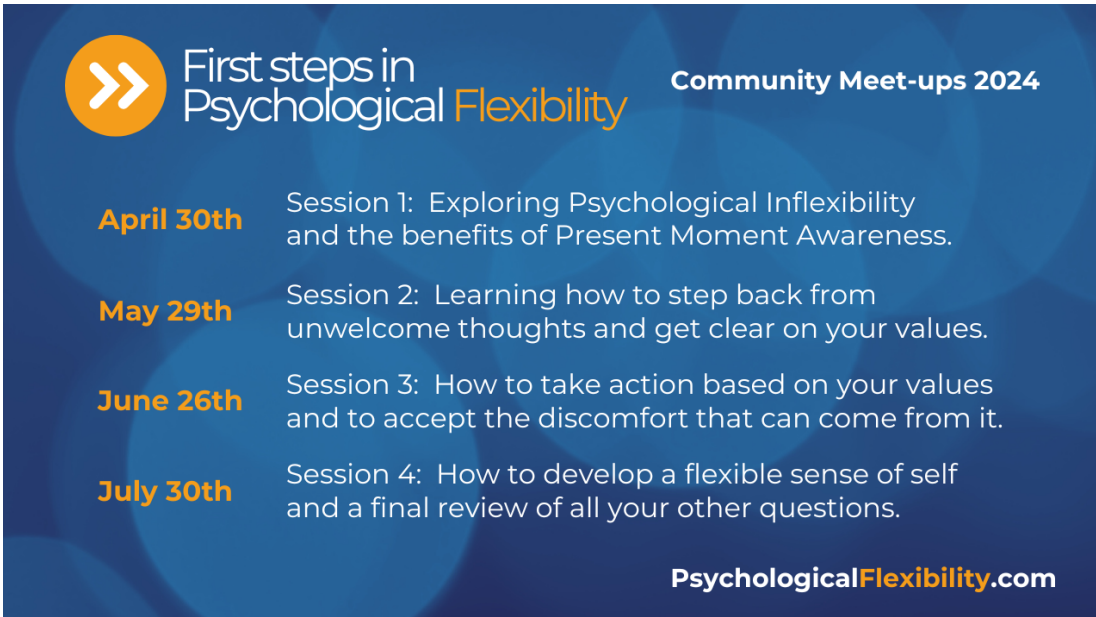
- The ability to be present in the moment. To bring your attention to the here and now and be aware of how and where your focus moves around.
- The ability to see your thoughts for what they are, not what they say they are. In other words, to see thoughts as simply thoughts, not instructions, demands or ultimatums.
- To be clear on what really matters to us in life. In ACT terms, this is to be clear on our values, the flexible principles we want to bring to life in our everyday experiences.
- To be able to take action in an intention, not automatic, way using our values as a guide.
- To accept and persist through the psychological discomfort (thoughts and feelings we don't want to experience) in order to do meaningful and important things.
- To ensure we view ourselves flexibly and not over-identify with or over-emphasise any aspect of our identity.

In our next episode we'll be looking at the first of these skills, the capacity to be aware and focused in the present moment - as opposed to go time-travelling in your own mind and miss out on what's happening around you.

Join us online to find out more

From April onwards, we'll be hosting live online Q&A sessions to answer all your questions about psychological flexibility and your learning journey. The sessions are completely free to join, you just need to be a member of the WorkLifePsych Community to attend. Don't worry - that's free too! You can sign up today at [WorkLifePsych.club](https://worklifepsych.club).

The dates of these sessions are outlined below and you can find all the details of how to join via the 'Events' menu once you're logged in to worklifepsych.club.



>> First steps in Psychological Flexibility **Community Meet-ups 2024**

April 30th	Session 1: Exploring Psychological Inflexibility and the benefits of Present Moment Awareness.
May 29th	Session 2: Learning how to step back from unwelcome thoughts and get clear on your values.
June 26th	Session 3: How to take action based on your values and to accept the discomfort that can come from it.
July 30th	Session 4: How to develop a flexible sense of self and a final review of all your other questions.

PsychologicalFlexibility.com

Get in touch with your questions

If you can't join us for the live Q&A session feel free to get in touch with questions and comments about the series. We'll cover them off in the Q&A and publish the recording afterwards so you can stay involved - no matter what timezone you're in!

Email your thoughts to podcast@worklifepsych.com

Find out more about your hosts

Who is Dr. Richard MacKinnon?

Richard is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist and Chartered Coaching Psychologist with over twenty years of experience as a practitioner psychologist. Originally from Dublin, Richard has made London his home.

He founded WorkLifePsych in 2014 to bring evidence-based people development solutions to his clients. He provides coaching, training and development programmes to support clients' wellbeing, productivity and interpersonal effectiveness at work. Find out more about him on [his website](#). He publishes 'My Pocket Psych' every two weeks.

Who is Ross McIntosh?

After a career of over 20 years in central government in senior HR roles Ross left the Civil Service and returned to study, pursuing an MSc in Organisational Psychology at City, University of London. On the course he discovered a branch of behavioural science that resonated with him in such a profound way that he decided to find ways to share the skills with people in organisations in every sector, from the NHS and Teachers to Hedge Fund Managers, Global Tech and Professional Ballet Dancers.

He's now a researcher and honorary visiting lecturer in organisational psychology at City, as well as the presenter of the '[People Soup](#)' podcast.