

A Perspective on Parenting Attitudes in the Context of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Examination of Two Works from the Field

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Abstract

Since the dawn of the humanity, individuals have endeavored to pursue happy and avoid suffering. Despite exploring various paths to achieve these aims, they often find themselves back where they started. The aim of this study was to investigate parental attitudes based on the book “The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years”, written within the framework of acceptance and commitment. The research employed the document analysis method, a qualitative research technique. It is stated that parental attitudes profoundly influence children and that such attitudes, learned within the family context, mold individuals throughout their lives. Although acceptance-commitment therapy, which is based on many schools of thought, attracts attention among current therapies, there remains a notable dearth of literature on its application to parenting, with limited studies dedicated to this intersection. The study reviewed parenting insights drawn from various sources and theoretical frameworks within the acceptance and commitment paradigm. Findings from literature and the book were synthesized, and subsequent discussions incorporated data from related studies. In the light of the data obtained, it was observed that undesirable parental attitudes were associated with psychological rigidity and desired parental attitudes were associated with psychological flexibility.

Key Words

Acceptance and commitment • Attitude • Parent

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Introduction

Human beings have sought happiness and sought to avoid suffering since their existence (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2003). Experts in the field endeavor to assist individuals in steering clear of pain (Bach & Moran, 2008). Debates persist today regarding which theories are most effective in this endeavor (Yavuz, 2015). This evolution, which originated with Skinner's behaviorism theory (Skinner, 1950), is roughly categorized into three waves by Hayes (2004). Interest in traditional behaviorism, which included many factors such as exposure (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008) when it was first introduced, waned over time (Pinker, 2002). In addition to its decline in popularity due to the lack of adequate explanations for slips of the tongue and internal observations (Pinker, 1994), the fact that people are turning to topics such as reasoning and problem solving marked the onset of the cognitive revolution called the second wave. (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008). Although research has enabled the development of new techniques (Balow, 2002), behavioral therapy methods such as exposure and shaping continued to be used (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008). Cognitive therapies in the second wave assumed that individuals receive certain information from their environment, process it and produce outputs (Osherson & Lasnik, 1990). Over time, third wave therapies have emerged that incorporate new concepts such as mindfulness activities, receiving support from cognitive therapies and behavioral therapies (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008).

Acceptance and commitment therapy, which receives empirical support from cognitive behavioral therapies and is one of the third wave therapies, appears to have perhaps the most advanced theory philosophy (Hayes et al., 2004). The theory, created by Steven Hayes in the mid-1980s, also receives support from language theory and relational framework theory (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Roche, 2001). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and the Relational Turbulence Model, which takes behavioral techniques and processes as a step and blends them with cognitive processes, excel other theories. The Relational Turbulence Model evolved from fundamental learning principles like reinforcement and the cognitive impacts of language, viewed through a behavioral lens (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008). These distinctions are the features that put acceptance and commitment therapy ahead of other theories (Hayes, Barnes Holmes & Roche, 2001). Given the significant role of language in human behavior, distinct from its role in animals, relational turbulence also explores the influence of language use on behavior (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008). The language that helps shape our worlds can be useful but also problematic (Hayes & Strosahl, 2005). Language, which has a tremendous degree of control (Bennet & Oliver, 2019), has a bidirectional structure according to relational turbulence, but it cannot control behavior alone, so the determining factor here is the context (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008).

Acceptance-commitment therapy defines humans as unique in the world in finding something to make them suffer (Flaxman, Blackledge, & Bond, 2011; Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2003) even if they have optimal living conditions and there are no physical dangers around them (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008). The reason for this is the way humans use language (Hayes & Strosahl, 2005) and the fact that their mind has evolved to create suffering (Harris, 2019). Homo sapiens has successfully continued its generation since the day it came to the planet, and today the mind wants to actively fulfill this task of creating suffering, even if there is no problem (Harris, 2018). At this point, acceptance and commitment aims to reduce unnecessary suffering of individuals and help individuals build the life

they value (Batten, 2011). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy acknowledges that pain and suffering are inherent parts of human life, emphasizing that attempting to pursue happiness by avoiding them is ultimately futile (Harris, 2018). For this purpose, acceptance and commitment tries to help individuals determine their values and live with them in a consistent and open way (Jackson & Gillard, 2016; Morris, Johns & Oliver, 2013) and to change the function, not the form, of relational networks (Hayes & Strosahl, 2005). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Flaxman, Blackledge & Bond, 2011), which primarily emphasizes reducing intensity and is presented as an alternative to traditional psychotherapies, has been studied in many areas such as anxiety disorders (Vøllestad, Nielsen, & Nielsen, 2011), psychosis (Bach & Hayes, 2002), chronic pain (Vowles & McCracken, 2008), emotion regulation (Blackledge & Hayes, 2001), values (Wilson & Murrell, 2004), chronic diseases (Prevedini et al., 2011), eating disorders (Manlick, Cochran, & Koon, 2013), post-trauma stress disorder (Walser and Hayes, 2006), and depression (Bohlmeijer et al., 2011; Zettle, 2007).

The theory does not have a goal based on symptom reduction (Bennet & Oliver, 2019). Instead, it focuses on the ability to act carefully in accordance with values, technically known as psychological flexibility (Harris, 2019). Flexibility, defined as a person's sensitivity to changing environmental demands (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008), can also be called hexaflex and consists of six basic headings (Morris, Johns & Oliver, 2013).

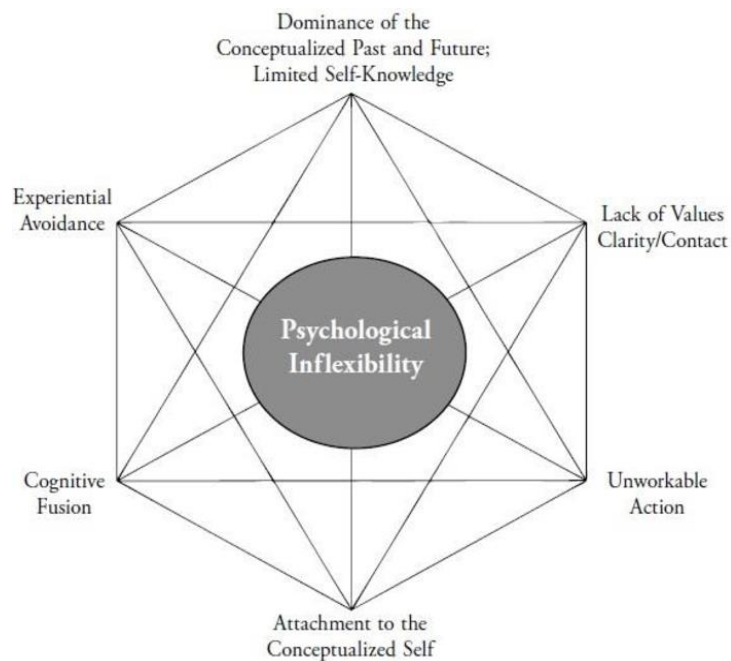


Figure 1. Acceptance and commitment therapy psychological flexibility model (Hayes et al., 2006).

Acceptance: The concept, which etymologically means receiving what is offered, does not include passivity but rather embracing the emotions, thoughts and physical sensations that arise with awareness (Harris, 2019; Hayes & Strosahl, 2005). The concept involves making contact with emotions without attempting to suppress, resist, or avoid them (Morris, Johns, & Oliver, 2013; Stoddard & Afari, 2014). In essence, the theory highlights the importance of accepting things as they are (Harris, 2018). In her book "Any Woman's Blues" (1973), Erica Mann Jong articulates,

"I didn't stop being afraid, but I stopped letting fear control me. I accepted fear as a part of my life and moved forward despite all the noise in my heart," thus sharing her personal approach to acceptance with her readers.

Contextual Spontaneity: It can be defined as the dominance of the observing aspect of the mind, which is divided into thinking and noticing in everyday language. (Harris, 2019). The theory focuses here on whether the individual pays attention to his mind or what he is experiencing at the moment (Coyne & Murrell, 2021). Contextual self, also called pure awareness (Harris, 2019), is defined as people having an ego that observes their emotions just as the sky that witnesses all weather events does not change (Zettle, 2007).

Cognitive Dissociation: It emphasizes that to avoid being affected by challenging events, individuals need to focus on the context surrounding their thoughts when evaluating them (Hayes & Strosahl, 2005), rather than making judgments based on those thoughts (Strosahl et al., 2012). In simpler terms, cognitive dissociation can be understood as "pay attention to your thoughts" (Harris, 2019). This approach allows for understanding how thoughts influence behavior without necessarily altering their content or frequency (Yavuz, 2015).

Being in the Moment/Contacting with the Present Moment: It is defined as establishing a non-judgmental connection with the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) by being effective, open and vulnerable (Hayes & Strosahl, 2005). Although the concept *here and now* is used in many theories, the purpose of acceptance and commitment therapy is to enhance vitality and psychological flexibility (Harris, 2019; Hayes & Strosahl, 2005). In this way, individuals are expected to disengage from autopilot mode, engage in a process oriented towards the present, and respond flexibly in alignment with their values (Stoddard & Afari, 2014).

Value: Values are defined as the actions an individual chooses to express and solidify in pursuit of what they want to achieve in life (Ciarrochi & Bailey, 2008; Hayes & Strosahl, 2005). However, values should not be confused with goals, as goals may be achieved and completed, but values endure throughout one's life (Harris, 2018). With these features, values are motivating and can function as a source of motivation (Harris, 2020). In other words, values act as a compass in creating effective life patterns (Hayes & Strosahl, 2005).

Determination in Value-Oriented Behaviors: It pertains to the actions oriented toward values that individuals take in their lives (Simoes et al., 2022). It represents the active, behavioral, and transformative aspect of the model. (Bennet & Oliver, 2019). The slogan "Do whatever it takes" used here represents a psychological as well as behavioral action (Harris, 2019). It is important that the actions displayed are functional. Because the place of the action in the context increases the individual's quality of life (Robb, 2007).

When individuals detach from the painful and distressing actions in their lives and accept the actions, they can establish contact with the present moment and increase their psychological flexibility (Bolderson, 2013). People may move away from psychological flexibility dimensions for various reasons (Bolonna, 2011). Psychological rigidity, which is called the opposite of psychological flexibility, is also valid for all people (Hayes & Strosahl, 2005). In case of psychological rigidity, problems such as communication, decrease in quality of life, rumination, anxiety, future anxiety, and avoidance can negatively affect the quality of life of people (Dousti, Ghotrati & Elibrahimi, 2019). As factors influencing this, it is stated that various areas such as cyberbullying, family income level, and social media

usage time play a role (Kabakçı & Traş, 2024). Psychological rigidity consists of six headings, similar to psychological flexibility. These are loss of contact with the moment, cognitive unification, experiential avoidance, attachment to the conceptualized self, avoidance/impulsivity, and moving away from values (Bennet & Oliver, 2019).

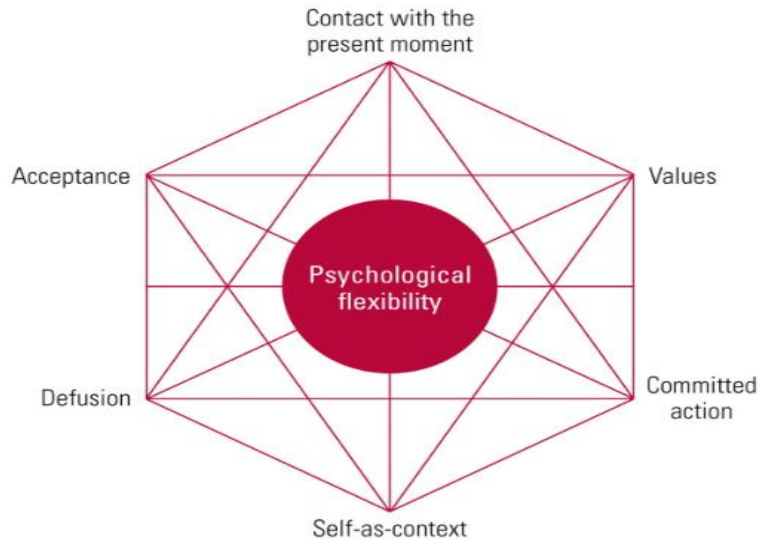


Figure 2. Acceptance and commitment therapy psychological rigidity model (Hayes et al., 2006).

Experiential Avoidance: The concept of experiential avoidance is accepted directly or indirectly in multiple therapy systems (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2003). It represents the escape from emotions, thoughts and behaviors, as the opposite of the concept of acceptance (Harris, 2019). While avoiding traffic is a practical necessity when a vehicle approaches, extending this behavior to every situation can complicate life (Bennet & Oliver, 2019). In essence, relying excessively on experiential avoidance, which is somewhat natural, becomes problematic for individuals in the long run (Harris, 2019). As a matter of fact, avoidance efforts serve as negative reinforcers, causing the individual to resort to the same or different experiential avoidance reactions over and over again (Chawla and Ostafin, 2007).

Cognitive Fusion/Fusion: It is the situation in which thoughts dominate physical actions and awareness (Harris, 2019) and this dominance gradually increases (Yavuz, 2015). In other words, the individual integrates with these thoughts without questioning (Bennett-Levy, 2003). An example of this can be seen in individuals experiencing depression, where they become deeply entangled with their own negative thoughts (Harris, 2019). In this way, the individual can become so intertwined with their thoughts that they can even forget the existence of their own thoughts (Hayes and Smith, 2021).

Loss of Contact with the Moment: This strategy, introduced to protect the individual from an undesirable situation, hinders the individual's functionality over time (Bolderson, 2013). The situation can also be defined as the situation in which the individual moves away from the moment and focuses on the thoughts in his mind (Harris,

2019). Experiential avoidance and fusion may weaken the individual's bond with the tangible, causing him to carry out mental activities in the past and future (Yavuz, 2015).

Attachment to the Conceptualized Self: Individuals can interpret the events and situations they observe in various ways, influencing their self-assessment (Yavuz, 2015). This highlights the tendency to overlook that what remains unchanged is their own essence, while what can change depending on circumstances is simply a part of life (Harris, 2017). As a result, the person may perceive that he is the story itself, rather than an individual present in the story (Bilgen, 2021).

Moving Away from Values: It refers to when individuals cease making choices aligned with their values to avoid feelings such as anxiety, seek social approval, or fear criticism (Hayes, 1989). Adopting a lifestyle distant from one's values leads individuals to disconnect from the present moment and miss its significance (Harris, 2019). This concept should not be conflated with shifts in values that individuals may naturally undergo over time (Coyne & Murrell, 2021).

Escape-Avoidance and Impulsivity: It is the individuals who want to get rid of negative internal experiences exhibiting escape-avoidance behaviors from some environments (Yavuz, 2015). In strict and inflexible parenting strategies, avoiding rather than confronting the problem, inconsistent behavior, and focusing on the mind instead of the child are encountered (Coyne & Murrell, 2021). It is common for individuals who use escape-avoidance and impulsivity strategies to use some relaxative products to divert their attention (Yavuz, 2015) or to think in an all-or-nothing way (Akkaya and Yılmaz, 2022).

Although acceptance and commitment therapy, which has been shown to be effective in a wide range of behavioral and psychiatric areas, is still a new field, it has an intensely increasing literature (Coyne, McHugh & Martinez, 2011). Despite this intense increase, the literature is still young (Ost, 2008). It can even be stated that studies on children, adolescents, and families are only in their infancy (Coyne et al., 2011). Realizing this deficiency in the literature, Coyne and Murrell (2021) conducted studies with young age groups and families. The novelty and limited number of studies in this field indicate a need for further research from diverse perspectives. In this study, the parenting styles in *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life* and the concept of parenting in the book *The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years* will be examined within the framework of acceptance-determination theory. This study will provide an opportunity to look at future studies from a different perspective. From this viewpoint, the main purpose of the research is to reveal the psychological rigidity or flexibility that can be observed in children and families as a result of parental attitudes.

Method

Research Model

This is a descriptive study in which *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life* (Forward & Buck 2015) and *The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years* (Coyne & Murrell, 2021) are analyzed based on acceptance and commitment therapy

(psychological flexibility-psychological rigidity). The document analysis technique used in this study is used in qualitative research methods (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2019). Document analysis technique is a method that allows researchers to scan written texts that provide information about facts and events in detail and aims to create integrity with the information obtained as a result of scanning (Creswell, 2002). The document analysis method can include the analysis of written and visual materials (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Written sources encompass books, articles, edicts, and inscriptions, while visual sources encompass pictures, pennants, and stamps (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2019). Document analysis stages include selecting the appropriate document to be analyzed, creating categories, determining and evaluating the unit of analysis (Bowen, 2009). The key aspect of employing document analysis technique lies in understanding what to use, why, and where to apply it (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2019).

The book “Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life” discusses parents who criticize, view their children as inadequate, seek to control them, and their parenting attitudes. In the book *The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years*, techniques and methods that can be applied in accordance with developmental periods to remain psychologically flexible against the difficulties that may be encountered in parenting are mentioned.

Data Collection Tool and Data Analysis

The works *The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years* (Coyne & Murrel, 2021) and *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life* (Forward & Buck, 2015) were used as data collection tools. The works can be grouped as the expectations of parents from their children, the types of these expectations, the attitudes of parents, what should be included in parenting attitudes, and what can be done to achieve these attitudes. The analysis of the data was tried to be presented with what is included in the book in line with the literature information on acceptance-commitment therapy and parental attitudes. In this context, the extent to which negative parental attitudes represent psychological rigidity and the factors affecting psychological flexibility were examined. The data obtained from the books were grouped according to the identified topics and sample sentences from the work were included in the findings section.

Results

Every family strives to raise their child in its own unique way, believing they are doing their best. However, there are parents who, despite professing love, harm their children through neglect or abuse (Harris, 2017). Some individuals may consider beating their children as a disciplinary measure to be normal and attempt to justify it to their children (Forward & Buck, 2015). Because the family is a child's first world, they often internalize and accept many of the things they witness there as unquestionable truths (Coyne & Murrel, 2021). A study conducted with individuals who experienced abuse in childhood revealed that abuse and behavioral avoidance mediate psychological rigidity (Marx and Sloan, 2002). Parents may also use the attitudes they adopt within the family irregularly or incorrectly (Coyne & Murrel, 2021). It is thought that these attitudes of families towards their children may lead to the formation and reinforcement of psychological rigidity in children.

Forward & Buck (2015) compare parents who progress within the framework of perfection to Greek gods. According to mythology, gods punish people for uncertain reasons and at unspecified times. This inconsistency can potentially increase children's reliance on their parents to avoid divine wrath. Thus, children will not be able to create their own values and will move away from their values. They will live their lives in a constantly alert manner. Because they do not want to be scolded by their parents, they will not be able to stay in the moment, and because they live in their own mind, they will not be able to notice what is happening around them. In such families, even the noise or mischief made by the child can be perceived as a fault (Coyne & Murrel, 2021). In a study conducted with families with inconsistent understanding of discipline, it was found that parents were less involved in interacting with their children. This situation predicted that children in the family would exhibit more problematic behavior (Berlin et al., 2006). Children living with family members with the above mentioned attitudes will constantly try to escape from situations in which they fear or think they will infuriate them. In this way, all stages of psychological rigidity will be represented in the individual, perhaps in different order and over time. Eventually, the child may believe that the problematic life he lives with experiential avoidance is normal and may spend money to maintain this avoidance (alcohol, cigarette, substance, game addiction, etc.). However, even if this situation is uncomfortable for him, unless he takes steps to change it throughout his life, it will relieve him in the short term, but will give him difficult times in the long term (Forward & Buck, 2015). This is valid not only for addictions but also for realistic-consistent limits and reactions that are not set for the child (Coyne & Murrel, 2021). In a study conducted with parents with relatively higher experiential avoidance scores, it was found that they wanted to control their children more, but they had less sense of control, internalized the situations more, and were more prone to depression (Coyne & Thompson, 2009).

Parents, in their desire for the best for their children, may criticize them, leading them to feel inadequate. However, criticism intended for their well-being remains criticism, even when it is motivated by genuine concern (Forward & Buck, 2015). Constant feelings of inadequacy may drive individuals to avoid facing reality by striving for greater success in academics, business, or other endeavors, seeking to escape the harsh judgments of their parents. Living in a culture where failure is unacceptable can exacerbate this dynamic (Coyne & Murrell, 2021). Although there are no inherently right or wrong values (Harris, 2017), individuals who live according to their own values may face criticism and feelings of inadequacy, prompting them to stray from their values and adopt those deemed appropriate by their parents. The individual remains on guard to avoid constant criticism and because they perceive themselves as inadequate. Consequently, they lose connection with the present moment, their mind becomes cognitively fused, and they resort to experiential avoidance by avoiding environments where criticism might occur. Labeling a fearful child with terms like 'baby' increases tension and fosters a negative view of anxiety within a social context. The child then strives to avoid anxiety and environments that provoke worry, thereby restricting their behavior (Coyne et al., 2011). Although short-term relief from unpleasant physiological reactions can be achieved by avoiding anxiety triggers (Borkovec et al., 1998), this approach may hinder long-term emotional processing (Borkovec & Hu, 1990). Research by Armelie, Delahanty, and Boarts (2010) indicates that experiential avoidance is associated with anxiety in children, particularly when children avoid thoughts and feelings in interactions with their parents, leading to psychological vulnerability (Barret et al., 1996). In a different study conducted with mothers in the neonatal unit, it was determined that mothers with experiential avoidance experienced more problems in terms of

stress and adaptation (Greco et al., 2005). Lower empathic awareness scores of mothers may lead to a higher likelihood of depression in mothers and more behavioral problems in children (Coyne et al., 2007). The attitudes adopted by parents towards their children can influence the behaviors they exhibit in school environments (Sarı & Çiftçi, 2023), and can even affect many of the choices they make throughout their lives (Keleş, Ak & Kesici 2023). Based on the research, it can be said that the attitudes of the parents, starting from the birth process of the baby, have an impact on the attitudes that children will choose.

Different studies have been carried out showing that addictions are affected by the impulsivity factor (Nordstrom, et al., 1994). Behaviors such as timidity and fear of making new friends can be observed in children of families with alcohol or any other addiction (Forward & Buck, 2015). The child may show avoidance behavior caused by family members. Considering that impulsivity is also affected by genetic factors (Ak, Gülsün & Nahit Özmenler, 2009), it may be possible for children to develop similar addictions. According to the studies, one fourth of addicted families' children are also addicted, and even take the first step towards addiction together with a family member (Forward & Buck, 2015). Since children first learn about truth within their families, they may struggle to recognize wrong in such circumstances. The child who loses contact with the moment may blame himself and make an effort contrary to his values to save the addicted individual. Studies have also revealed that addicted adults are more likely to experience childhood abuse and experiential avoidance (Simons et al., 2003). Or, to avoid encountering the addicted individual, he may plan his life in a way to spend the least amount of time with him by exhibiting escape and avoidance. However, for psychological flexibility, families need to care about their children, and this is not only necessary for the children, but also parents need to care about each other (Harris, 2018).

According to the literature findings, it can be observed that the psychological rigidity of children growing up in families displaying such attitudes is more dominant than their psychological flexibility. Based on the findings, although there are different factors, individuals tend to maintain the behaviors learned from their families. It is aimed for families to achieve psychological flexibility, as it will affect their children and their future. As a first step towards psychological flexibility, families need to accept that they have made a mistake (Forward & Buck, 2015). Pain, difficulty and distress are already a part of life and it is impossible to escape or ignore them (Harris, 2018). We have a mind that works like a computer to evoke pain more than anything else (Bolonna, 2011; Harris, 2019). In fact, it was previously referred to as a machine that was believed to be able to think due to its continuous operation (Schultz & Schultz, 2020). People who are sure that man is a thinking machine have also created works in the field of literature. Hans Christian Andersen (2020) talks about a mechanical bird in his work *The Nightingale*. Frank Baum (2019) tells a story centered around robot men in his work *The Wizard of Oz*. A different example was written by Mary Shelley (2012) in her book *Frankenstein*, about a mechanical monster that destroys the person who created it. Even though all of the writers grew up in different cultures, similar thoughts occupied their minds.

Acceptance and commitment therapy, which believes that observable behavior compatible with values should be activated, uses many techniques such as metaphors, stories, paradoxes, and exercises (Ciarrochi & Bailey, 2008). All acceptance-commitment interventions have the goal of providing more flexibility and greater sensitivity to the feasibility of actions (Hayes & Strosahl, 2005). Metaphors used for this can be listed as Chinese finger trap, being

aware of the language used, and working with values (Hayes, et al., 2006). Coyne & Murrell (2021), in order for parents to achieve flexibility while parenting their children, recommends planned ignoring to extinguish the undesirable behavior, using concrete and clear sentences appropriate to the developmental period to reinforce the desired behaviors, and reinforcing the desired behaviors with emphatic appreciation. Thus, the way is paved for individuals to be psychologically healthy in line with their values when they enter different areas of life (Adcock, Murrell & Woods, 2007). Blackledge and Hayes (2006), who worked with parents of children with autism with a focus on acceptance and commitment, revealed that experiential avoidance and cognitive fusion symptoms decreased in parents. Otherwise, no matter what situation the children are in, the mind will continue to whisper negative things to individuals (Coyne & Murrell, 2021).

Discussion and Conclusion

Most people think that all people except themselves are living their best lives (Harris, 2018). Parents can do many beneficial things, yet their minds may continue to judge themselves just as others' minds do (Coyne & Murrell, 2021). The theory suggests that what is important for people is to live a life in accordance with our own values, making room for pain in our lives, but without delving into it (Harris, 2018). However, when experiencing unwanted emotions and feelings, the individual's mind focuses only on criticism (Coyne & Murrell, 2021). Being able to fully accept our minds in this way is one of the main goals of therapy. Because there is no such concept as partial acceptance in acceptance and commitment (Hayes, Stroahl & Wilson, 1999). With acceptance in parenting, the doors to the process of learning new things are opened (Coyne & Murrell, 2021). Supporting the statement in the previous sentence, it has been found that parents who do not have the tolerance to accept negative behavior of their children have a lower capacity to produce positive parenting terms (Murrell, Wilson, & LaBorde, 2009). If parents set high standards for their child, the child may feel obligated to meet them without questioning their validity. When unable to fulfill these expectations, the child might attribute fault to themselves, linking it to their self-concept of inadequacy rather than considering developmental appropriateness. However, acknowledging the child's developmental stage when setting expectations and providing genuine appreciation when tasks are completed can foster psychological flexibility and support their growth (Coyne & Murrell, 2021). Vocabulary development and use in children begins to take shape around the age of two and is called the coordination relationship. Coordination development also supports the development of relationship patterns such as discrimination, opposition and comparison (Whelan and Barnes, 2004). In other words, the current developmental period is important for the child's vocabulary and language development. Expressions of appreciation to be chosen during this period should be appropriate to the developmental period.

In child education, within the framework of acceptance and commitment, it is stated that in order to increase psychological flexibility, short and concrete tasks should be given in accordance with the child's developmental period before rewarding (Coyne & Murrell, 2021). Contrary to these techniques, it has been found that parents who prefer more strict and punitive methods in their parenting have lower spontaneity scores and have more difficulty dealing with multiple problems (Shea & Coyne, 2009). In a different study conducted with individuals who preferred similar parental attitudes, it was concluded that they preferred experiential avoidance as a coping style (Shea, Sims &

Coyne, 2007). Studies conducted with individuals who prefer experiential avoidance have revealed that individuals are affected by different challenging factors such as financial difficulties, stress and depression (Shea, Sims & Coyne, 2007; Silvia & Coyne, 2009; Coyne & Thompspon, 2009). It has also been determined that attachment problems are higher in parents who prefer avoidance (Sümer, et al., 2009). In addition to these findings, in the observations made after the acceptance and commitment therapy training was given to the parents, Tümlü (2021) worked with families with autism spectrum disorder and concluded that the psychological adjustment, psychological resilience and marital satisfaction of the parents increased as a result of the training. In their study, Blackledge and Hayes (2006) stated that experiential avoidance and cognitive fusion decreased in parents.

Parenting by trying to suppress unwanted emotions and thoughts is considered ineffective (Coyne & Murrel, 2021). Studies have shown that families' awareness of their emotions, thoughts and feelings about parenting has an important place in raising their children effectively and drawing realistic boundaries (Sinhg et al., 2007). For example, it has been concluded that parents who experience intense emotions such as anger are less in harmony with their children (Dix, et al., 2004). It is stated that as a result of increasing intense emotions, individuals' ability to express their emotions decreases (Harris, 2017). As a result of studies conducted with children with anger problems and their parents, a decrease in children's aggression and disobedience behaviors and an increase in parents' behavior of choosing appropriate methods and performing valuable activities were observed (Coyne et al., 2011). A similar study finding was found with a six-year-old student with anger and aggression problems (Coyne & Wilson, 2004). From a different perspective, due to cultural factors, men are asked to suppress their emotions and be stoic (Harris, 2018). This reinforcement allows us to conclude that men tend to hide their emotions at all stages of their lives. It has been concluded that parenting stress scores are high in individuals who try to suppress or avoid unwanted emotions and thoughts, regardless of gender (Blackledge & Hayes, 2006). On the contrary, a study conducted with parents with empathic awareness revealed that both they and their children were happier and had fewer behavioral problems (Coyne et al., 2006). Similarly, children who exhibited fewer problems were encountered in families that accepted their parenting skills as they were (Oppenheim, Goldsmith & Koren-Karie, 2004). It has been found that children who exhibit fewer problems are more successful in social interactions and their parents' awareness skills are higher (Singh & Sabaawi, 2006).

Acquiring a skill can be likened to learning a new language. No matter how well and quickly a person learns a new language, he does not forget his native language (Harris, 2017). Demonstrating a newly learned skill is of course difficult for all parents, and this difficulty can increase especially during stressful times and transition periods (Coyne & Murrel, 2021). Even though new, the formed relational networks cannot be easily deleted (Bennet & Oliver, 2019). It was concluded that people who have just started to experience the spontaneity technique have lower unconditional acceptance scores than experienced meditators (Baer et al., 2006). Therefore, the development of intervention programs for parents is considered valuable (Söğüt & Köse, 2023). When a person begins to live in an accepting way, his connection with the moment is strengthened (Hayes & Wilson, 2003). In fact, accepting adolescent individuals have lower chronic pain scores than non-accepting adolescents (McCracken, Gauntlett-Gilbert, & Eccleston, 2010). In other words, the individual is expected to take step(s) in line with the values he targets with determined action, no matter how difficult it is. After these steps, individuals are expected to

congratulate themselves for success, just as they do when they criticize themselves when they fail (Coyne & Murrel, 2021). Otherwise, the frequency of observing such behavior will diminish over time, akin to how non-praiseworthy behaviors decrease in a child (Pincus, Eyberg & Choate, 2005). For this reason, it is important for families to provide encouraging reinforcement for their children to develop behavior (Coyne & Murrel, 2021). In addition, indirect reinforcements from the environment are also meaningful for children and parents (Ciarrochi, & Bailey, 2008). This can serve as evidence that parents and children are affected by the social environment.

Recommendations

The book *The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years*, can be cited as an example to similar works as it is one of the first parenting works within the framework of acceptance and commitment introduced into the literature. Similarly, *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life* can be included in as an aid in studies on parental attitudes. As a result, it is thought that the works put forward are important in creating the right messages about mental health and it will be useful to examine different works in this context.

Ethic

Research data does not require ethics committee approval. For this reason, ethical approval was not obtained.

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This article was written with the joint contributions of three authors.

Conflict of Interest

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