

Treatment Rationale

Below is the general rationale for ABM and ACT that could be provided to patients. It is based on our own experience and protocol of working with child and adult patients.

What is attention bias modification treatment (ABMT)/attention control treatment (ACT)?

* Use the rationale that matches your treatment selection.

ABMT: Research in recent years has shown that ABMT may be highly effective in alleviating anxiety and PTSD symptoms. ABMT is a computerized attention training program that is different from most other treatments for anxiety and PTSD. It's not medication or talk therapy. It is a computer-based training schedule designed to modify a very basic, automatic stage in information processing - the way we direct our attention to mild threats in our surroundings.

ACT: Research in recent years has shown that ACT may be highly effective in alleviating PTSD symptoms. ACT is a computerized attention training program that is different from most other treatments for PTSD. It's not medication or talk therapy. It is a computer-based training schedule designed to modify a very basic, automatic stage in information processing - the way we direct our attention to mild threats in our surroundings.

What is attention bias?

People are different in the way they focus their attention (where they look, what they notice). What we focus our attention on plays an important role in how safe or unsafe we feel in certain situations. If you tend to overly focus your attention on negative, unpleasant, or threatening aspects of the environment, you are more likely to become excessively anxious and alert. Indeed, many studies have shown that people with high levels of anxiety or PTSD tend to focus their attention on negative information in their surroundings.

Why practice?

Maladaptive attention patterns are automatic and hard to consciously change. However, just as with every skill, like riding a bike or writing, attentional habits can be adjusted through practice and training. The purpose of ABMT/ACT is to set in place attention patterns that do not lead to excessive anxiety and symptoms.

The ABMT program is very simple and seems like a repetitive computer game. At first, most people think the task is weird and do not understand the purpose of it. That is perfectly normal! Gaining control over automatic mental processes such as attention is much like strengthening a muscle in your body – it takes practice and regular training. The more you practice and repeat the task, the easier it gets, and performance and accuracy improves.