

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy For Chronic Pain in Chiari Malformation

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Overview

- 1. Importance of Chronic Pain**
- 2. Biopsychosocial model of Pain**
- 3. Transition from Acute Pain to Chronic Pain**
- 4. The Cycle of Chronic Pain**
- 5. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Chronic Pain**
- 6. Why this is important in Chiari Malformation**
- 7. Future Research**



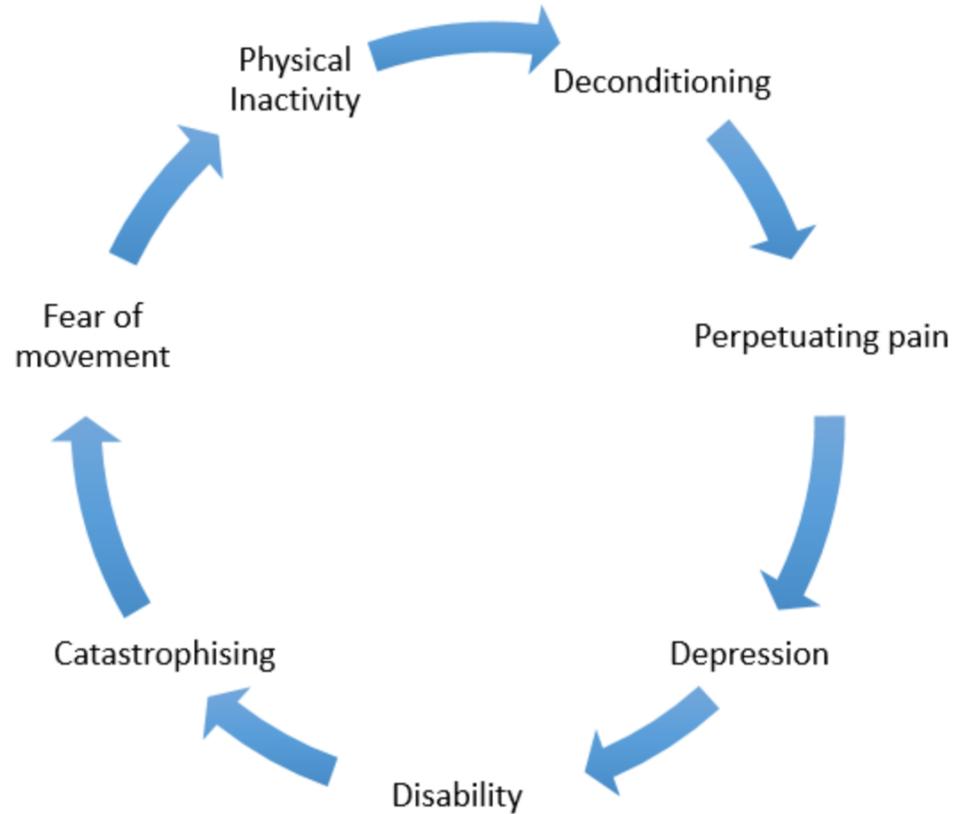
Why Pain Matters?

- **Chronic pain has a significant impact on both society and individuals**
- **costs society approximately \$635 billion a year in the US alone**
 - Societal costs = Lost productivity, health care costs
 - Individual costs = Decrease quality of life, impacts psychological functioning, and leads to poor health behaviors.



Biopsychosocial Model of Pain





NHS. 2016. Almost half of all UK adults may be living with chronic pain.

Available at:<http://www.nhs.uk/news/2016/06June/Pages/Almost-half-of-all-UK-adults-may-be-living-with-chronic-pain.aspx>.



Treatments for Chronic Pain

- **Opioids for chronic pain**

- Approximately 3-4% of the US population is on a long-term opioid therapy regimen despite there being a lack of support for the efficacy of long-term opioid treatment in chronic pain.
- Patients with chronic pain have been found to respond better to behavior-based interventions when compared to interventions focusing on physical sensation of pain.

- **Psychological interventions**

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Mindfulness
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
 - Utilizes mindfulness
 - Provides meaning and motivation to help clients develop a willingness to change
 - Focused on living a vital life not pain management
 - Unlike CBT the client is encouraged to take change of their own rehabilitation

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Chronic Pain

- **25 Randomized Controlled Trials**
- **Results indicated:**
 - Moderate effect sizes for pain interference and anxiety
 - Robust findings
 - Consistent across studies

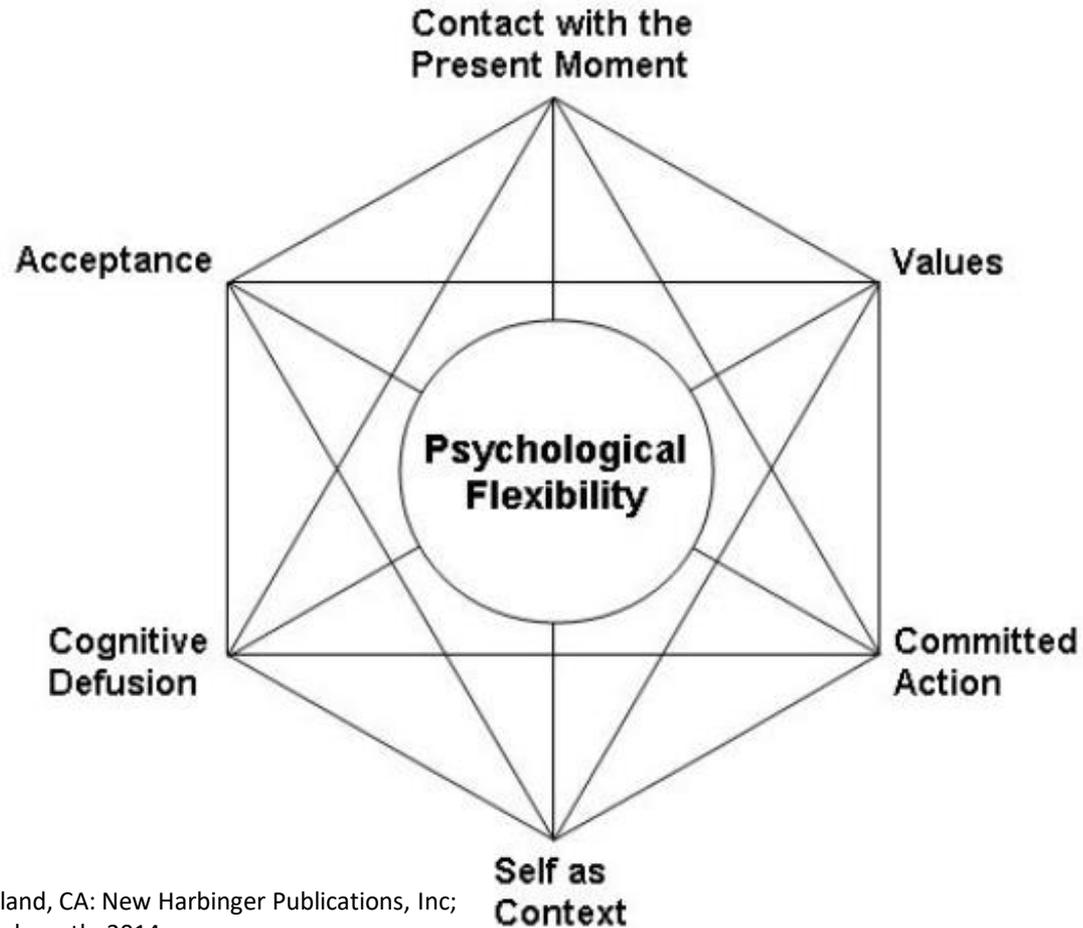
What is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy?

- **The acronym ACT helps explain this!**
 - Accept your thoughts and feelings and be present
 - Chose a valued direction
 - Take action
- **What does ACT do?**
 - Decrease emotional distress and helps clients live more fulfilled lives based on values



Understanding Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

- **Human lives inevitably involve pain**
 - Painful thoughts, feelings, and sensations
- **Psychological Flexibility**
 - Being present in the current moment and aware and open to our experience and to take actions based on our values
 - Includes the following components:
 - Values orientation, acceptance, diffusion, moment-to-moment awareness, self as context, committed action



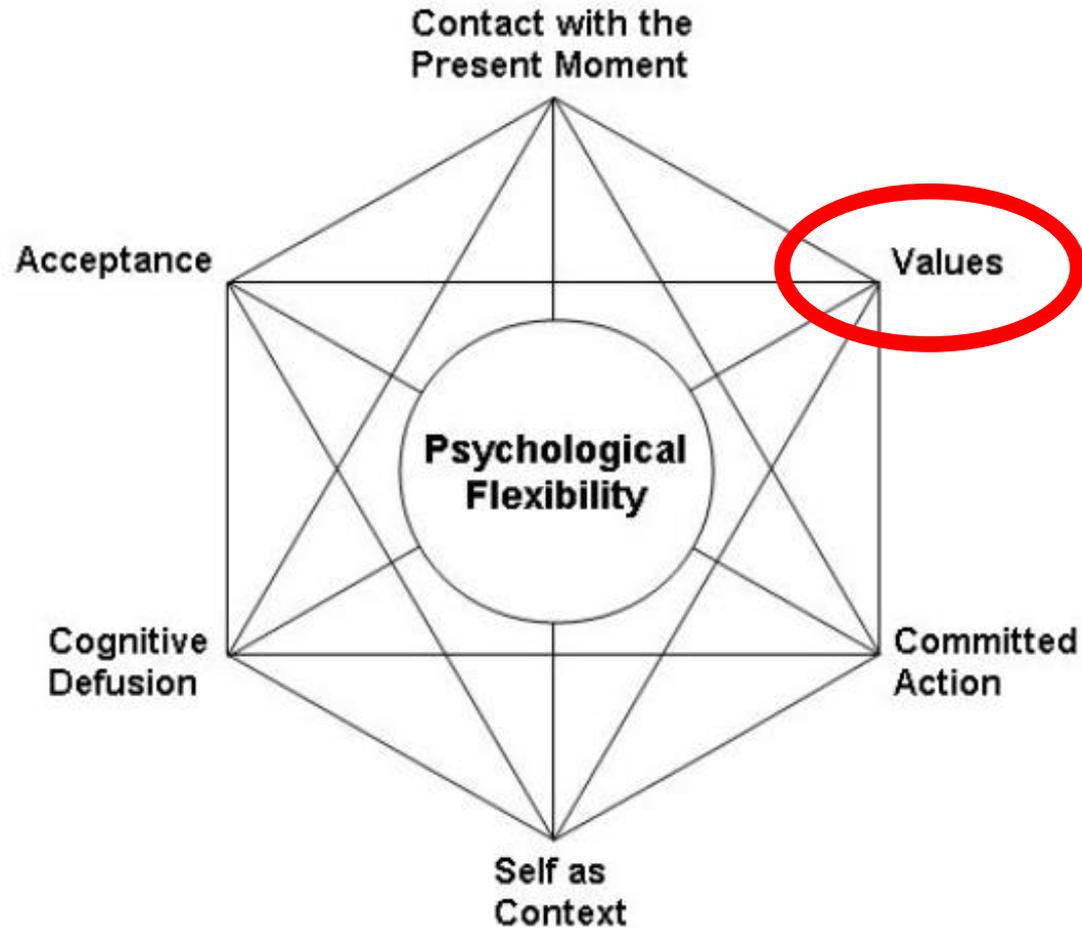
Harris, R. (2009). ACT made simple. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc;
Hayes et al., 2012; Vowels, Sowden & Ashworth, 2014.



Example

- **Jane, in her 30s starts a new job in a new city**
- **Ongoing symptoms**
 - Anxiety in social settings
 - Isolation leading to depression
- **Thought and emotions in current situation**
 - Headache and exhausted





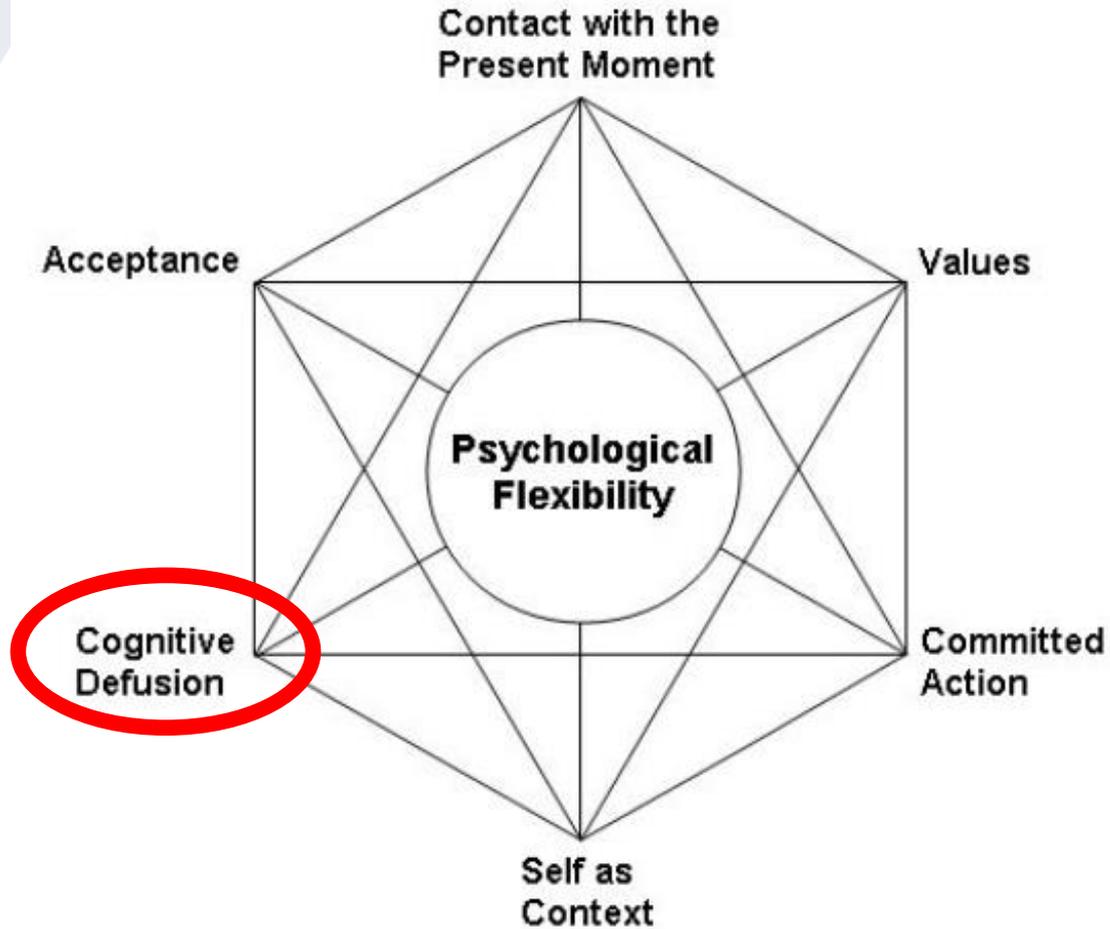
1. Values

- **Serve as a guide to give life meaning and purpose**
 - To initiate and maintain behavior even when confronted by unwanted internal experiences (i.e. pain)
- **Value domains**
 - Career, family, relationships, health, education and spirituality
- **Ongoing process that is not completed**

Jane's Values

- **Value in regards to friendship**
 - “I value being a good friend”
 - “Showing care and love to other”





2. Cognitive Defusion

- **Definition**
 - Separating from our thoughts, not getting caught in them
- **People often become attached or “fused” to their thoughts**
 - Thoughts are just thoughts
 - Thoughts do not have to dictate behavior
- **Employed when thoughts are acting as a barrier to living in accordance with our values**



Jane's Cognitive Defusion

- **Thoughts**
 - “I have a headache and I am exhausted”
- **Are Jane's thoughts acting as a barrier to her values?**
 - Reminder of Jane's values:
 - “I value being a good friend by being caring and loving, sharing and contributing to others”
- **Yes, Jane is about to let her thoughts impact her actions in a way that is not inline with her values**
- **It would be a good time to use cognitive defusion**
 - Jan can notice that her thoughts are just thoughts





3. Present Moment Awareness

- **Focus on the “now”**

- Instead of ruminating about the past (depression) or worrying about the future (anxiety)
- Engaged in the present
 - Flexible attention between both the physical and psychological world within us

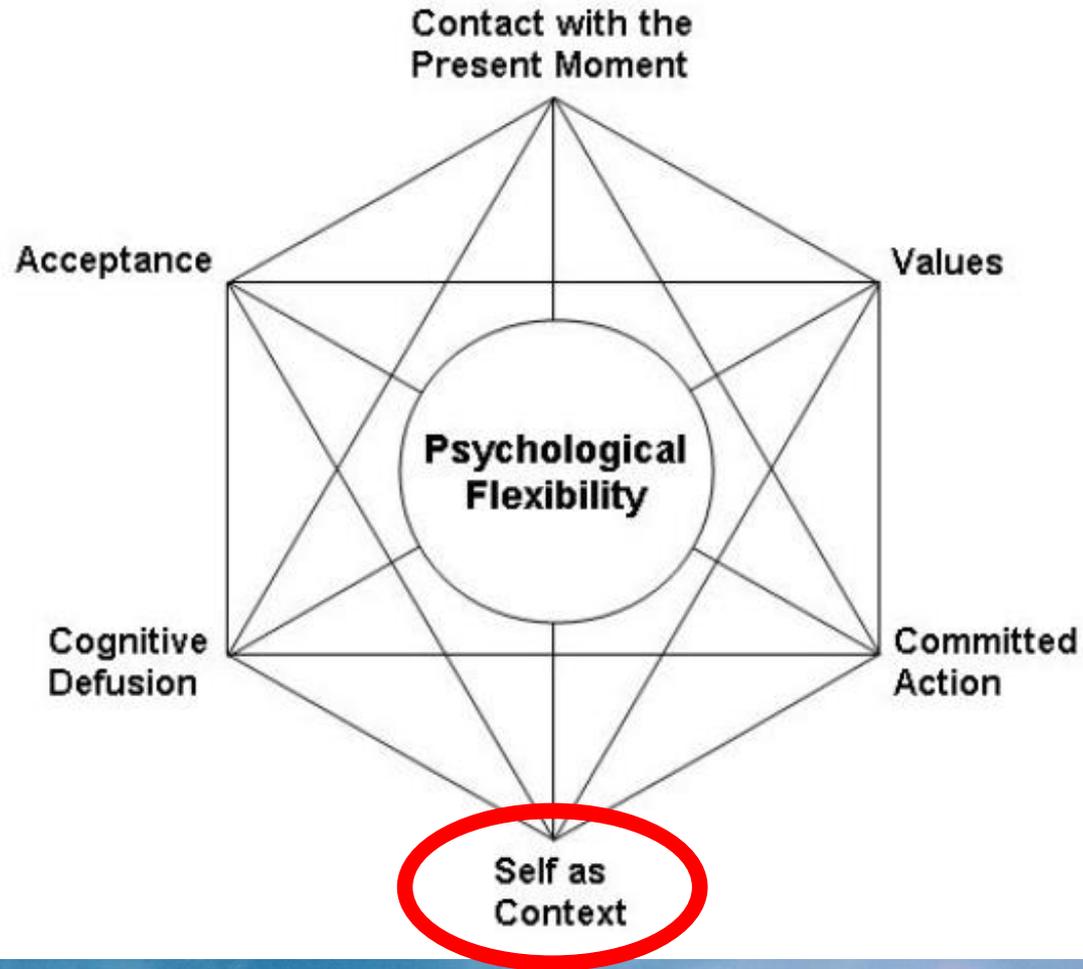
- **Very challenging**

- People often are “going through the motions” absorbed in thoughts about the past or future

Jane in the Present Moment

- **Jane is ruminating on the past and trying to problem solve she is not appreciating the here and now**
- **Being mindful can be as simple as naming items that you currently identify with your 5 senses**





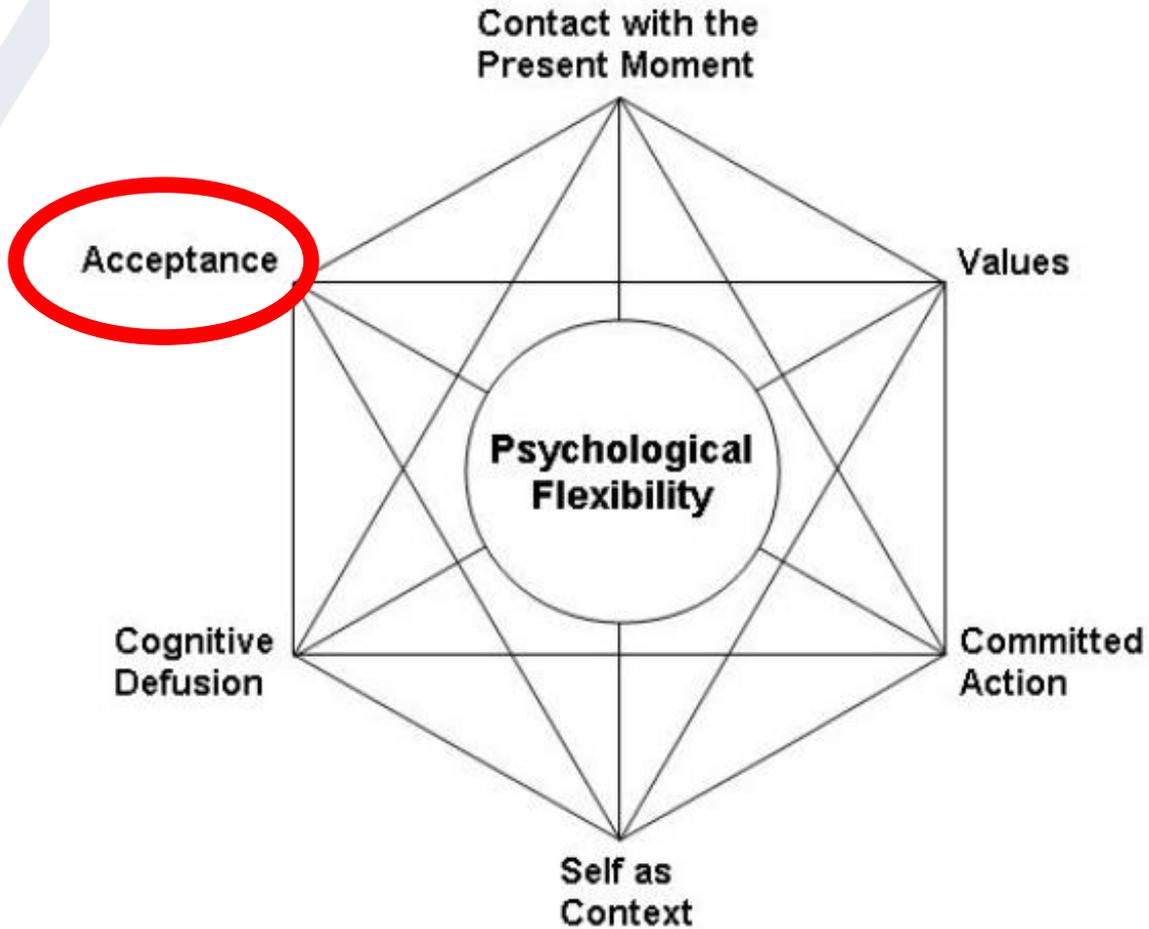
4. Self as Context

- **Being conscious of our own consciousness**
- **Thinking self & observing self**
- **Thoughts do not have to control actions**

Jane self-as-context

- **Jane writes down her thoughts on notecards**
 - “I have a headache”
 - “I am exhausted”
 - “I am a bad friend”
- **Jane asks herself if this is her or something she is noticing**
 - Just like a chair in the corner of the room is not a part of Jane but something she is noticing





2. Acceptance

- **Willingness to experience pain/discomfort if it allows us to act in line with our values**
 - Pain and discomfort be inevitable, stop resisting or getting overwhelmed by it
 - Approach rather than avoid
- **Continue to be active participants in life**





6. Committed Action

- **Definition**
 - Persisting with or altering behavior to do what is necessary to live by our values
- **Effective action informed by values**
 - Goal of living a meaningful, fulfilling life



Jane's experiences with acceptance and committed action

- Jane alters her behavior (goes to meet up with her friend),
- Though she may experience some discomfort due to her headache and fatigue, she is acting based on her values of friendship

What does this have to do with Chiari Malformation?

- **Chiari 1000 data**
- **~50% Moderate to severe depression in the past week (US 12 month prevalence rates are approx. 10%)**
- **40% Moderate to severe anxiety**
- **80% Moderate to severe disability**
- **Psychological distress, pain, and disability levels are high, regardless of surgery status**

Proposed Study

- **Online intervention using components of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy**
- **Design**
 - Recruit two groups with 40 participants per group
 - Intervention will take 7 sessions
- **Aim**
 - We are interested in determining if different components of Acceptance and Commitment therapy are equally as efficacious in a sample of people with Chiari Malformation

Proposed Study...continued

- **Advantages of computer based intervention**
 - More experimental control
 - Able to reach more people anywhere including out of state
 - More cost effective

Looking for Volunteers

- Please sign up if you are interested in participating in the study!
- Signing up does not require you to participate
- **CONTACT INFORMATION:**
 - Please email use at: chiaristudy@gmail.com

Thank you

