

# Draft ACT & Buddhism Course Outline (Oct 2022)

## Course Description

This course seeks to provide an introduction to the intersections and parallels between Buddhism and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and discusses the similarities and differences between them. The course will explore how the two may be integrated in providing Buddhist counselling and spiritual care. Participants in the course can expect to engage in experiential learning, reflection (self and group), meditations, case discussions/vignettes, and didactic coursework.

## Course Facilitators

Kenneth Fung, Psychiatrist, MD FRCPC MSc FAPA DFCPA  
Bhante Kusala, Buddhist monk, MA (Pali Studies), MDiv (Spiritual Care)  
Michael Dougan, RP, MEd (Counselling Psychology), MA (Applied Psychology)  
Glen Choi, MA (Zen Studies), PhD (Buddhism & Culture)

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## Course Learning Outcomes

- Gain deeper insight and knowledge on Buddhism and ACT
- Apply skills and knowledge of the course in helping oneself, friends, and family
- Apply skills based on the integrated knowledge of Buddhism and ACT in Buddhist counselling, spiritual care, and community work

## Course Structure

There are 7 modules in this course taking place on Saturdays, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Modules 1-6 are four hours in length (two 2-hour classes) and module 7 is 2 hours. The course will be facilitated entirely through Zoom.

## Weekly Class Breakdown

### Module 1: ACT & Buddhism, an Overview (Kenneth Fung-Oct 8 & 15)

#### Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this introductory module, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the underlying philosophy and theory of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
2. Define and describe the 6 core ACT processes
3. Discuss the relationship between mindfulness and ACT
4. Discuss the influence of Buddhism on ACT
5. Reflect on a few similar and dissimilar aspects between ACT and Buddhist philosophy

#### Recommended Reading(s)

- Chapter 1 (The Human Challenge) in ACT Made Simple, 2nd Ed.
- Fung, K. P.-L., & Wong, J. P.-H. (2017). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Zen Buddhism. In A. Masuda & W. T. O'Donohue (Eds.), *Mindfulness in Behavioral Health* (pp. 271-288). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1006/reli.2000.0292>

#### Assignments/Homework

- Experiential and reflective exercise will be assigned during class

### Module 2: Defusion & the Noble Eightfold Path (Michael Dougan - Oct 22 & 29)

#### Intended Learning Outcomes

These two classes will focus on providing participants with an understanding of defusion from an ACT perspective and being able to apply and engage in defusion practices. Buddhist concepts and teaching will also be incorporated to illustrate defusion from a Buddhist lens.

#### Recommended Reading(s)

What reading(s) would be helpful for learners for this class?

- VitakkasanthānaSutta MN20 (The Techniques of Calming Thoughts)
  - The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering by Bhikkhu Bodhi
- <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/waytoend.html>

#### Assignments/Homework

Experiential and reflective exercises will be assigned during class

### Module 3: ACT & Buddha Nature; Self-as-Context and Emptiness of Self (Glen Choi - Nov 5 and 12)

#### Intended Learning Outcomes

1. To gain a broad understanding of the history of the central Mahayana concept of Buddha nature
2. To discern the similarities and differences between Master Daehaeng's style of Seon (Zen) practice and ACT
3. To develop the ability to apply a syncretic approach involving Master Daehaeng's style of Seon and ACT to the therapeutic setting
4. To comprehend the similarities and differences between the Buddhist concept of "emptiness of self" and ACT's "psychologically flexible self" or "self-as-context"

#### Relevant Buddhist Teaching(s) (including sutras) and/or Practices

Master Daehaeng's teachings Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings

#### Recommended Reading(s)

1. ACT Made Simple ("Chapter 1: ACT in a Nutshell")
2. Master Daehaeng's Dharma Talks in English translation (excerpts, explanations and videos): <https://wakeupandlaugh.com/>
3. Excerpt from Awakening of the Heart: Essential Buddhist Sutras and Commentaries, by Thich Nhat Hanh: <https://www.lionsroar.com/the-fullness-of-emptiness/>

#### Assignments/Homework

"Self as Tree with Deep Roots" experiential exercise "Clipboard" experiential exercise

### Module 4: Acceptance & the Noble Eightfold Path (Michael Dougan - Nov 19 & 26)

#### Intended Learning Outcomes

These two classes will focus on providing participants with an understanding of acceptance from an ACT perspective and being able to apply and engage in acceptance-related practices. Buddhist concepts and teaching will also be incorporated to illustrate acceptance from a Buddhist lens.

### Required Reading(s)

Same readings as from the module about defusion

### Assignments/Homework

Experiential and reflective exercises will be assigned during class

## Module 5: Committed Actions, Values & Buddhist Ethics (Glen Choi - Dec 3 & 10)

### Intended Learning Outcomes

To be able to identify and clarify the values we have adopted from our family, community and culture, as well as our own personal values and to see them through the lens of Buddhist ethics and practices. Based on the values that are most important, we examine how to live these values through our committed actions.

### Relevant Buddhist Teaching(s) (including sutras) and/or Practices

#### ● Five Mindfulness Trainings

<https://www.learnreligions.com/thich-nhat-hanhs-five-mindfulness-trainings-449601>

#### ● The 10 Paramitas [https://encyclopediaofbuddhism.org/wiki/Paramita#Ten\\_paramitas](https://encyclopediaofbuddhism.org/wiki/Paramita#Ten_paramitas)

#### ● Noble Eight-Fold Path - Morality, Meditation & Wisdom

#### ● Master Daehaeng's practice method of juingong or Buddha nature

### Recommended Reading(s)

Shakespeare in the Bush (Laura Bohannon)

Buddhist Ethics/Bioethics

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down (Anne Fadiman) - a couple of chapters only

A Case Study in Cross-Cultural Health Care and Ethics: Who Decides What is in the Child's "Best Interest"? (Goloff, Chrastek, Moore)

Beginning, Middle & Zen (Choi) - selected chapters

### Assignments/Homework

Read a memoir or examine your own life to understand one's guiding living values and influences from family, culture and society and how identity is formed and imagine what letting go of attachments may look like.

## Module 6: Presence & the Four Sublime States of Mind (Bhante Kusala - Jan 14 & 21)

### Intended Learning Outcomes

To be able to practice and apply the Four Brahmaviharas in care-giving roles in clinical settings.

### Recommended Reading(s)

What reading(s) would be helpful for learners for this class?

#### ● Piya Tan: Brahmavihāras: The divine abodes :

<https://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/38.5-Brahmavihara-piya.pdf>

#### ● Analayo: Compassion and Emptiness in Early Buddhist Meditation:

<https://www.niwrc.org/sites/default/files/images/resource/compassion-and-emptiness-ven.-analayo.pdf>

#### ● Middle Length Discourses 21: Kakaccūpama sutta: The simile of the Saw <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.021x.than.html>

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.021x.than.html>

#### ● Saṃyutta Nikāya: Mettāsahagata Sutta: Accompanied by Loving Kindness <https://suttacentral.net/sn46.54/en/bodhi?reference=none&highlight=false>

#### ● Bhante Kusala- Booklet on Brahmaviharas based on a weekend retreat at Great Lakes Buddhist Vihara

### Assignments/Homework

2-page reflection on applying Brahmaviharas in a challenging interpersonal interaction or a caregiving context

## Module 7: Integration (Jan 28 - everyone - facilitate in break-out rooms)

### Ideas:

Group project of sorts (small groups) and then present

How do you see ACT & Buddhism being integrated in providing care? (group insights) Application of the Triflex or Hexaflex as foci for each group and dig deeper into it Report back after application

### Panel discussion/Canada's Got Talent

- Gain deeper insight and knowledge on Buddhism and ACT
- Apply skills and knowledge of the course in helping oneself, friends, and family
- Apply skills based on the integrated knowledge of Buddhism and ACT in Buddhist counselling, spiritual care, and community work

## Course References

- ACT Made Simple by Russ Harris
- Chapter 7: ACT & Buddhism in ACT for Clergy & Pastoral Counsellors
- Fung, K. P.-L., & Wong, J. P.-H. (2017). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Zen Buddhism. In A. Masuda & W. T. O'Donohue (Eds.), *Mindfulness in Behavioral Health* (pp. 271-288). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1006/reli.2000.0292>
- Dvedhāvitakka Sutta MN19 (Two Kinds of Thoughts);
- Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta MN20 (The Techniques of Calming Thoughts)
- Ānāpānasati Sutta MN118 (Mindfulness of Breathing);
- Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta MN10 (Four Foundations of Mindfulness)
- Five Mindfulness Trainings  
<https://www.learnreligions.com/thich-nhat-hanh-five-mindfulness-trainings-449601>
- The 10 Paramitas [https://encyclopediaofbuddhism.org/wiki/Paramita#Ten\\_paramitas](https://encyclopediaofbuddhism.org/wiki/Paramita#Ten_paramitas)
- Brahmavihāras: The divine abodes :  
<https://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/38.5-Brahmavihara-piya.pdf>
- Compassion and Emptiness in Early Buddhist Meditation:  
<https://www.niwrc.org/sites/default/files/images/resource/compassion-and-emptiness-ven.-analayo.pdf>
- Middle Length Discourses 21: Kakaccūpama sutta: The simile of the Saw <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.021x.than.html>

- Saṃyutta Nikāya: Mettāsahagata Sutta: Accompanied by Loving Kindness <https://suttacentral.net/sn46.54/en/bodhi?reference=none&highlight=false>
- Beginning, Middle & Zen: Tales from Canada to Korea and Back Again by Glen Shakwon Choi <https://www.amazon.com/Beginning-Middle-Zen-Tales-Canada/dp/1896559379>
- Letting Go of 'Self': Lessons in Buddhist Psychology by Madawela Punnaji <https://www.amazon.com/Letting-Go-Self-Buddhist-Psychology-ebook/dp/B09883BHGL>
- The True Origins of Psychology and the Influence of Euro-American Ethnocentrism -Revised & Updated by Robert Espiau [https://www.academia.edu/7367838/The\\_True\\_Origins\\_of\\_Psychology\\_and\\_the\\_Influence\\_of\\_Euro\\_American\\_Ethnocentrism\\_Revised\\_and\\_Updated?email\\_work\\_card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/7367838/The_True_Origins_of_Psychology_and_the_Influence_of_Euro_American_Ethnocentrism_Revised_and_Updated?email_work_card=view-paper)