

Practical skills sharing session

# Thinking Clearly: Metathinking & Hexaflex

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COMPETENCY	KEY POINTS		
<b>1. Extensive Business Experience</b>	1.1 Ability to empathise with their mentee due to their experience and enables the mentor to gain the trust of the mentee, as well as get under the surface of an issue quickly.	1.2 Acts as a sounding board and builds confidence, basing answers not just what seems right, but on someone who has walked a similar path before.	1.3 Create learning in the mentees, tells stories and can provide examples of both successes and mistakes, as well as using their experience to inform their intuition and ask incisive questions.
<b>2. Strong Coaching and Mentoring skills</b>			
<b>2.1 Awareness of Self, Mentee and Environments</b>	2.1.1 Creating a safe environment to establish trust, respecting cultural nuances and neurodiversity, and tailoring support to the unique challenges of each mentee.	2.1.2 Recognising the importance of confidentiality and discretion, and understanding their place within the mentoring relationship boundaries, with a high awareness of any breach	2.1.3 Committing to reflection and/or supervision practice, along with continuous self-development, working within a structure that invites frequent feedback.
<b>2.2. Contracting, Relationship Building &amp; Expectations</b>	2.2.1 Understanding the appropriate reasons to mentor a mentee, including the contracting points and process.	2.2.2 Recognising the importance of a healthy rapport, what this means, and how it may differ and progress as the relationship matures within clearly articulated boundaries	2.2.3 Managing expectations with achievable goal setting to meet the individual needs of the mentee and their business or position.
<b>2.3 Curious Questioning Enabling Insight</b>	2.3.1 Asking the right questions at the right time. The mentor should be able to craft curious questions for an exploratory journey.	2.3.2 Reading between the lines where necessary, demonstrating a high level of emotional intelligence.	2.3.3 Understanding of the topic boundaries and gaining permission to explore.
<b>2.4 Heightened Listening Enabling Learning</b>	2.4.1 Understanding the different levels of listening.	2.4.2 Recognising the attention and intention within listening, which brings clarity, connection and rapport.	2.4.3 Acknowledging a mentee's ability to listen and how they process what they have heard.
<b>2.5 Concluding and Evaluating a Relationship</b>	2.5.1 Mapping progress to goals and objectives.	2.5.2 Knowing when a relationship is of no further value to the mentee.	2.5.3 Understanding what to cover in a concluding session and determining next steps.
<b>3. Practical knowledge of business theory and tools</b>	3.1 Familiar with various tools and exercises with proven experience and insight into their use within a business.	3.2 A strong understanding of business theory in their field of expertise and constantly developing their industry knowledge.	3.3 Support the development of mentees by adding in the right theory and tools where appropriate to support them and allow them to be self-sufficient.

**In this session, we will:**

- **Recognise what pulls you off course as a mentor - and why it happens to even experienced, well-intentioned mentors**
- **Understand metathinking and the ACT Hexaflex - two practical tools and how they work together**
- **Apply these tools to yourself as a mentor to stay clear-headed in live conversations**
- **Use these models to support your mentee - sharper questioning, deeper listening, and moving from circular thinking to committed next steps**

You can be experienced, well-intentioned, and genuinely skilled - and still drift during a session.

When has this happened for you?  
What gets in the way?

## What it looks like

- Rescuing: The discomfort of watching someone struggle becomes harder to hold than the urge to fix it
- Over advising: Giving the answer before the mentee has found their own
- Subtle Steering: Asking questions, but with an answer already in mind. The session is about you, not them
- Zoning out: Not being fully present with and for the person in front of you

## Why it might show up

- We want to help too much
- We have had a similar experience and want to ease the path to the answer
- Frustration at the pace of recognition or change
- We want to prove ourselves and the value we are bringing
- Being tired, too busy or overwhelmed ourselves

# Telltale signs your thinking has shifted |

## Your questions

Getting shorter and more directive - you're steering, not exploring

## Your attention

Already composing your next question while they're still talking

## A feeling

Impatience, protectiveness, or recognition - and you move past it rather than through it

## Your inner voice

"I've already decided what they should do" or "This reminds me of my own situation"

**In-session reset question: "Whose agenda is active right now?"**

Knowing your tendencies can help to avoid the drift. e.g.

## Extroverts

**Risk: Thinking out loud, 'labrador puppy' energy**

Lean into conversation, fill silence, boomerang back more than the mentee needs. High energy can crowd the thinking space.

*Learn to hold back. Silence is a question.*

## Introverts

**Risk: Processing before speaking**

Need time to think, which can read as distance. The next, deeper question sometimes doesn't get asked.

*Notice the pull to step back. Lean gently in.*

## People & values driven

**Risk: Fixing from care**

Most likely to rescue - the emotional pull to help can override the discipline to hold space and let the mentee find their own way.

*Care is the motive. Space is the method.*

## Analytical thinkers

**Risk: Solution mode**

Quick to identify the answer and move toward it. May leap to solutions before the mentee has fully explored the problem.

*The right question beats the right answer.*

**The drift is predictable. It's a human response to pressure, emotion, or a mentee who's stuck.**

Thinking about your thinking, while the conversation is still happening.

**Metathinking (or metacognition) is thinking about your own thinking.**

Often described as "*knowing about knowing*," it involves three things:

**Metacognitive knowledge:** understanding your own strengths, tendencies, and blind spots as a mentor

**Metacognitive regulation:** actively monitoring and adjusting your thinking in the moment — noticing when a strategy isn't working and shifting

**Purpose:** to notice and set aside your own mental noise. e.g. car-parking unhelpful thoughts so you can stay fully present for your mentee

## Before the session

What am I bringing into this conversation today? What do I need to set aside?

## During the session

Whose agenda is active right now, mine or theirs?

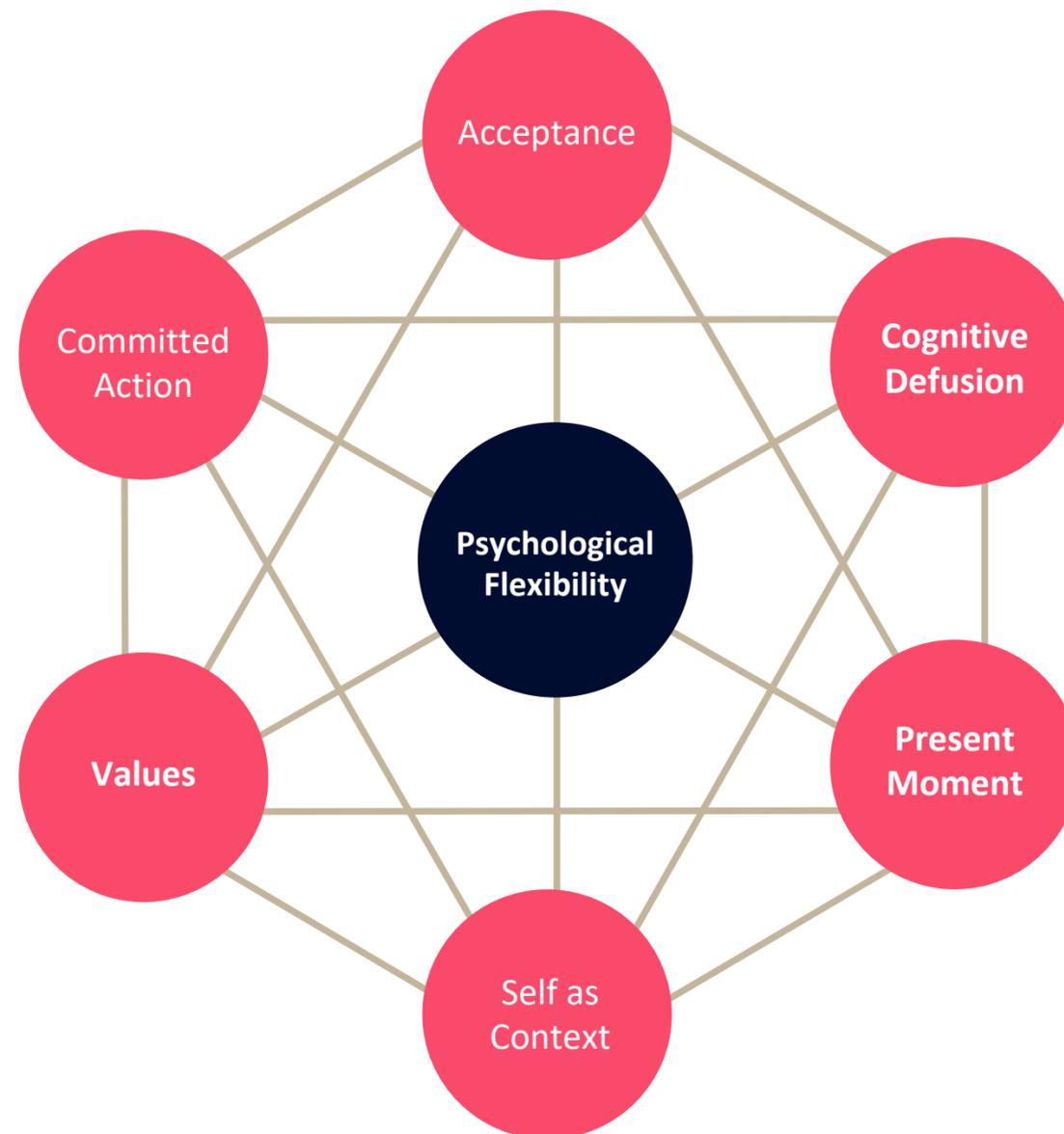
## After the session

When did my listening shift, and what triggered it?

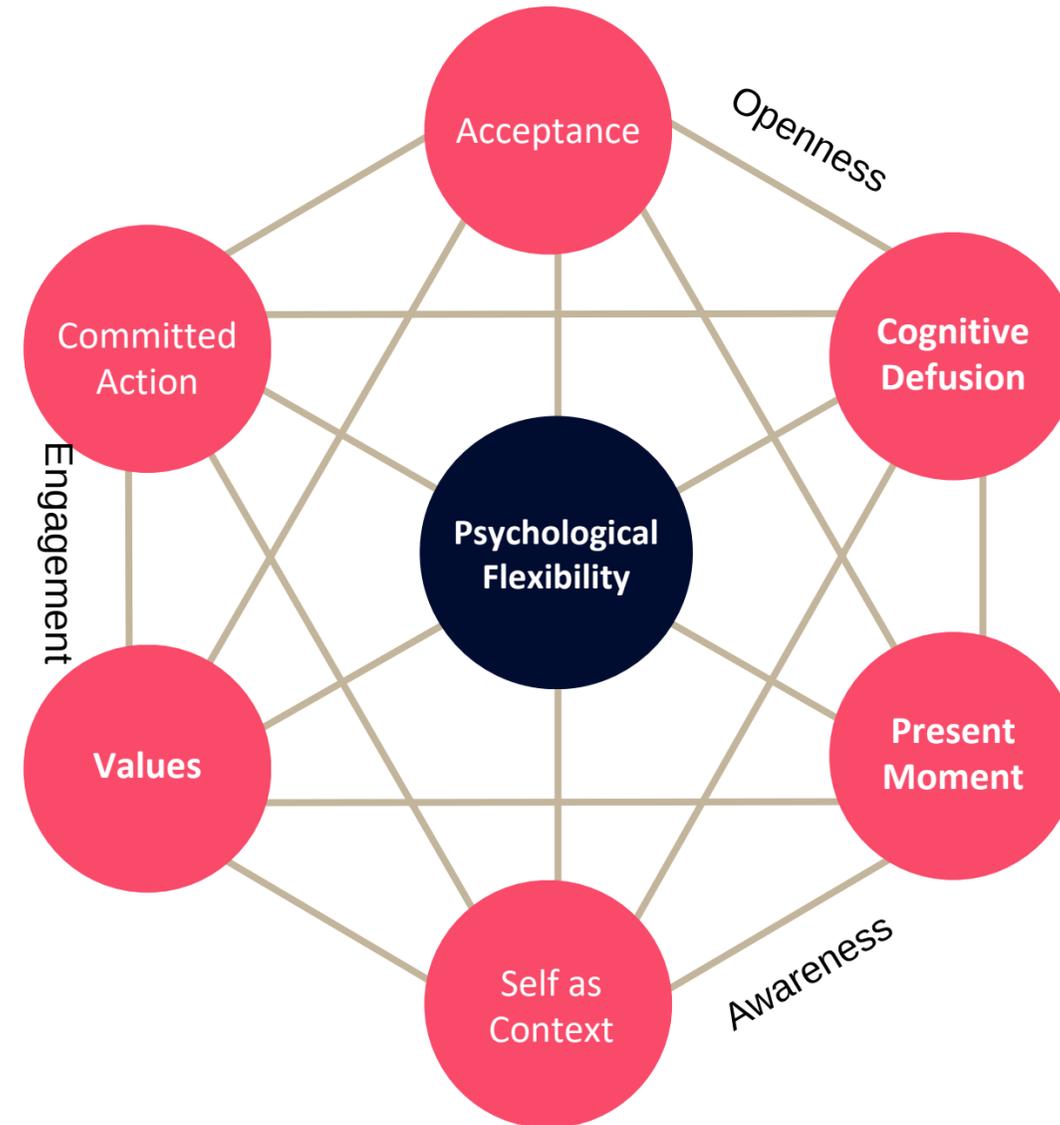
## Own It

Admitting it in session can sometimes help your mentee to own their own thinking too.

Six interconnected processes that build psychological flexibility, the ability to stay present and choose your response even under pressure.



Making room for discomfort rather than fighting it  
Sitting with difficulty without needing to resolve it before  
you can move forward



Choosing behaviours that are consistent with your  
values, even when it's hard  
Small, deliberate steps in the right direction.  
Not waiting until conditions feel perfect

Clarifying what truly matters to you.  
Not goals, but ongoing qualities of living.  
A compass, not a destination.

Noticing your thoughts without being ruled by them  
Creating distance between the thought and the action.  
You have the thought, it doesn't have you

Being here, not in your head  
Paying attention to what is actually happening in this  
conversation, not what you expected or feared

You are not your thoughts, feelings, or stories about yourself.  
You are the observer of those experiences.  
A stable perspective that remains constant even as your inner experience shifts.

## Three Processes to use in the mentoring room

### Defusion

*Noticing your thoughts without being driven by them*

Stepping back from your own mental commentary so it doesn't colour how you see the mentee.

### Present Moment

*Being here, not in your head preparing, or running ahead*

Flexible, deliberate attention to what is actually happening in this session: what's being said, what isn't, what's shifted.

### Values Based Action

*Your compass to how you want to show up*

Knowing what kind of mentor you want to be gives you somewhere to return to. Your values are the compass that guides your next move when the pull to fix or advise is strongest.

**Ask yourself:**

*"What story am I telling myself about this mentee right now?"*

**Ask yourself:**

*"Am I listening to them, or to my idea of them?"*

**Ask yourself:**

*"Am I doing this for them, or to manage my own discomfort?"*

### Metathinking

When you use metathinking regularly, you become more aware of what is actually happening inside you during a session.

You notice when you've moved from curiosity to agenda, from listening to waiting, from their story to yours.

Over time, the lag between drifting and catching yourself closes. It becomes part of how you work.

It also helps with overthinking spirals in 'real life'!

### ACT Hexaflex

Gives you somewhere to go once you've noticed.

**Defusion** stops your own stories about the mentee from colouring how you see them.

**Present moment** means you're actually hearing what's in front of you.

**Values** remind you why you're in the room when it gets hard.

Together: less reactive, more curious, better at holding space.

## Metathinking

“What are you noticing about your own thinking as you talk through this?”

*If they keep circling the same issue but can't move forward*

“What if that feeling didn't need to go away before you took the next step?”

**Acceptance**

*They are stating something that may be a story*

“Is that something you know, or something you've come to believe?”

**Defusion**

*They know what to do, but aren't doing it*

“What would the person you want to be do right now?”

**Values Based  
Action**

Metathinking is the noticing mechanism. The Hexaflex is the response mechanism.

**1**

## Notice

**Metathinking**

Something has shifted - your questions, your listening, your body.

A signal that you've moved.

**2**

## Name It

**Acceptance & Defusion**

Internally label it. "I'm having the thought that they need fixing."

Name the gap between noticing and acting.

**3**

## Choose

**Values based Action**

What would the mentor you want to be do right now?

Not what reduces the tension fastest but what's consistent with why you're in the room.

**4**

## Own it

**Committed action**

Take one deliberate move back to centre.  
A pause. An open question.

Handing it back to them. Agency, not just awareness.

**In this session,  
we have covered**

- **Drift happens to good mentors. Recognising it is the skill, not preventing it.**
- **Metathinking gives you a way to notice when you've moved, before the session suffers.**
- **The ACT Hexaflex gives you somewhere to go once you've noticed. Defusion, present moment, and values are your three tools in the room.**
- **Notice. Name it. Choose. Own it. One reset you can use in any session, from today.**
- **Your clarity is the gift. A mentee met with genuine curiosity goes deeper, thinks more honestly, and takes more ownership.**

**On metathinking and metacognition:**

*Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman (great foundation)

*Metacognition and Cognitive Monitoring* by John Flavell (the go-to on metacognition)

**On ACT and the Hexaflex:**

*The Happiness Trap* by Russ Harris (most accessible starting point)

*ACT Made Simple* by Russ Harris (more indepth)

*Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life* by Steven Hayes (more clinical but very thorough)

*Acceptance and Commitment Coaching* by Jon Hill & Joe Oliver

# abm

Supporting the *people*  
who power *success*

## Thank You.

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