

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY TO SEXUAL PLEASURE: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

CONTRIBUIÇÕES DA TERAPIA DE ACEITAÇÃO E COMPROMISSO PARA O PRAZER SEXUAL: UMA REVISÃO NARRATIVA

APORTACIONES DE LA TERAPIA DE ACEPTACIÓN Y COMPROMISO AL PLACER SEXUAL: UNA REVISIÓN NARRATIVA

Daniela Baldissera ¹  Lina Wainberg ² 

Abstract: This article is a narrative literature review aimed to analyze the contributions of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to sexual pleasure, an important component of health and well-being. Sexual pleasure involves physical and/or psychological satisfaction derived from erotic experiences. The analysis focused on how ACT, through psychological flexibility, can foster aligned choices with personal values and enhance the experience of pleasurable sexual encounters. The findings highlighted the six core processes of ACT (acceptance, cognitive defusion, mindfulness, personal values, committed action, and self-as-context), which serve as resources for managing challenging thoughts and emotions, thereby strengthening autonomy, awareness, and a more positive sexuality. It was possible to conclude that, despite existing gaps in the scientific literature on sexual pleasure, ACT emerges as a promising approach for future interventions.

Keywords: Sexuality; Sexual behavior; Mental health; Psychotherapy; Well-being.

Resumo: O presente artigo é uma revisão narrativa da literatura com o objetivo de analisar as contribuições da Terapia de Aceitação e Compromisso (ACT) para o prazer sexual, entendido como componente importante da saúde e do bem-estar. O prazer sexual envolve satisfação física e/ou psicológica em experiências eróticas. A análise focou em como a ACT, por meio da flexibilidade psicológica, pode favorecer escolhas alinhadas a valores pessoais e ampliar a vivência de experiências sexuais prazerosas. Os achados envolvem os seis processos centrais da ACT (aceitação, desfusão cognitiva, atenção plena, valores pessoais, ação comprometida e *self* como contexto), que servem como recursos para o manejo de pensamentos e emoções desafiadoras, fortalecendo a autonomia, a consciência e a sexualidade mais positiva. Conclui-se que, apesar das lacunas na produção científica sobre prazer sexual, a ACT se estabelece como uma abordagem promissora para futuras intervenções.

Palavras-chave: Sexualidade; Comportamento Sexual; Saúde Mental; Psicoterapia; Bem-estar.

Resumen: El presente artículo es una revisión narrativa de la literatura con el objetivo de analizar las aportaciones de la Terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso (ACT) al placer sexual, entendido como un componente importante de la salud y el bienestar. El placer sexual implica satisfacción física y/o psicológica en experiencias eróticas. El análisis se centró en cómo la ACT, a través de la flexibilidad psicológica, puede fomentar elecciones alineadas con los valores personales y ampliar la vivencia de experiencias sexuales placenteras. Los hallazgos abarcan los seis procesos centrales de la ACT (aceptación, deterioro cognitivo, atención plena, valores personales, acción comprometida y el yo como contexto), que sirven como recursos para manejar pensamientos y emociones desafiantes, fortaleciendo así la autonomía, la conciencia y una sexualidad más positiva. Se concluye que, a pesar de las lagunas existentes en la literatura científica sobre el placer sexual, la ACT se establece como un enfoque prometedor para futuras intervenciones.

Palabras clave: Sexualidad; Comportamiento sexual; Salud mental; Psicoterapia; Bienestar.



¹ Especialista em Sexologia Clínica. Centro de Estudos da Família e do Indivíduo (CEFI), Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. danielabaldissera@outlook.com

² Doutora em Psicologia. Universidade do Rio Grande Sul, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. linawainberg@hotmail.com

Introduction

Sexual health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2015) as a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality. This concept extends beyond the mere absence of disease or dysfunction and recognizes sexual pleasure as a fundamental component of overall well-being. Within this broader framework, sexuality encompasses positive and safe experiences that are free from coercion, discrimination, and violence. Supporting this perspective, Mitchell *et al.* (2021) propose four key dimensions of sexual health: sexual well-being, sexual health, sexual justice, and sexual pleasure, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach that integrates both individual and societal factors.

Sexual pleasure is defined as the physical and/or psychological satisfaction and enjoyment derived from erotic experiences, grounded in consent, safety, privacy, self-determination, trust, and communication (Global Advisory Council for Sexual Health and Wellbeing [GAB], 2016). The World Association for Sexual Health's Declaration on Sexual Pleasure recognizes pleasure as a significant contributor to well-being and quality of life, although it acknowledges the persistent stigma and resistance surrounding this topic in areas such as public policy and clinical practice (WAS, 2021). Moreover, experiences of sexual pleasure are shaped by cultural, historical, and religious influences, highlighting the absence of a universal standard and the importance of contextual understanding (GAB, 2018).

The integration of sexual pleasure, sexual rights, and sexual health supports a more affirmative, diverse, and inclusive understanding of sexuality (Gruskin *et al.*, 2019). This perspective expands the focus beyond the prevention of risks and dysfunctions, emphasizing the development of healthier relationships with one's body and the promotion of more satisfying sexual experiences. Within this framework, psychological flexibility—a core process of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)—emerges as an important resource for managing internal experiences that may interfere with the experience of sexual pleasure (Ford *et al.*, 2021).

Grounded in Relational Frame Theory, ACT aims to foster acceptance of internal experiences while encouraging engagement in behaviors that are consistent with personal values, thereby promoting a more meaningful and fulfilling life (Saban, 2015). In this regard, ACT has been identified as a promising approach for addressing thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations that may hinder the experience of sexual pleasure (Blonna, 2012). Empirical evidence suggests that greater psychological flexibility is associated with higher levels of sexual satisfaction (Nezhad & Shameli, 2017), highlighting the relevance of this therapeutic model in promoting positive sexual experiences.

Against this backdrop, the present article seeks to examine the contributions of ACT to the promotion of sexual pleasure. Specifically, it explores how psychological flexibility may function as a resource for navigating internal experiences that affect sexuality, facilitating greater awareness, alignment with personal values, and more satisfying sexual experiences (Blonna, 2012).

Method

This is a narrative literature review that aimed to analyze theoretical and empirical contributions regarding the application of ACT in the context of sexual pleasure. The search was conducted in electronic databases (PubMed, PsycNET, SciELO, and Google Scholar) from 2010 to 2025, using the descriptors "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy," "sexual pleasure," "psychological flexibility," and "sexuality."

Theoretical studies, reviews, clinical trials, and empirical research addressing ACT in contexts related to sexuality, sexual pleasure, and psychological flexibility were included, excluding those without a direct relationship to this theme. Classic and contemporary works on ACT (Blonna, 2012; Harris, 2019; Hayes; Strosahl; Wilson, 2021) were also included to provide the theoretical and clinical foundation for the review.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and psychological flexibility

ACT presents itself as a contextual, evidence-based cognitive-behavioral intervention. It integrates the “third wave” of cognitive-behavioral therapies and focuses on helping people move towards their chosen life, without experiential avoidance and based on their personal values (Luoma; Hayes; Walser, 2022). ACT (*Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*) should be pronounced as one word (in English, “act”), reflecting the goal of ACT, which consists of focusing on the present moment, on actions on actions that are consistent with one's values (Hayes; Strosahl; Wilson, 2021).

Based on the article by Gloster *et al.* (2020), ACT proved effective for all conditions examined in the 20 meta-analyses reviewed. Thus, ACT is suggested to be effective for a wide range of interventions, such as mental disorders (anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, and depressive disorders) and physical health conditions (chronic pain). With its transdiagnostic basis, ACT is not limited to interventions for psychiatric disorders but also promotes well-being and the development of psychological flexibility (Gloster *et al.*, 2020).

Unlike more traditional cognitive-behavioral therapies, ACT does not focus on altering dysfunctional thoughts. Instead, based on other theoretical-epistemological and philosophical assumptions, it seeks to develop greater awareness of internal content (thoughts, feelings, and sensations), understanding the context with more curiosity and openness, without trying to control or avoid it (Villatte and Pistorello, 2013). This approach aims to reduce psychological suffering and promote more satisfactory mental health (Fledderus *et al.*, 2012). ACT contributes to improved psychological well-being through its focus on acceptance, mindfulness, and a values-based life (Anusuya and Gayatri Devi, 2025).

According to Villatte and Pistorello (2013), ACT is part of contextual behavioral science and is based on the assumptions of Relational Frame Theory (RFT), which involves giving meaning to experiences by relating events to one another. Thus, the way these events connect depends on the context in which they occur, and this can transform how they are remembered and experienced. In the realm of sexuality, for example, the context of a person's first sexual experience—including the partner, sensations, thoughts, and location—remains associated with memory and can influence present experiences (Blonna, 2012).

ACT seeks to promote psychological flexibility through six core processes. The absence of one or more of these processes risks developing psychological rigidity, which is the cause of maladaptive human suffering, distancing one from a life based on values, conscious and meaningful (Hayes; Strosahl; Wilson, 2021). These processes refer to: flexible attention to the present moment, characterized by awareness of the present, the here and now, in a flexible and conscious way; values, which are life directions for behaviors, not as goals to be achieved, but as guides represented moment by moment; committed action, which is presented as the adoption of value-based behaviors; the *self* as context, which involves taking a perspective of the sense of self, not static and rigid; cognitive defusion, which refers to the process of creating non-literal contexts, observing thoughts with an attitude of curiosity, observation, and impartiality; and finally, acceptance, which refers to the active and conscious engagement with experiencing thoughts and emotions without attempting to change them (Luoma; Hayes; Walzer, 2022).

Psychological flexibility, acquired through the six processes described above, was not designed as a means of escaping pain or suppressing uncomfortable thoughts and emotions. Instead, it focuses on developing the ability to be present, accept internal experiences, and move toward what is meaningful to the individual, in alignment with their personal values (Lantheaume, 2017). In the context of sexuality, this flexibility implies embracing internal experiences such as anxiety, shame, and fear, so that these feelings do not prevent one from moving toward a more meaningful and pleasurable sexuality. ACT understands that experiential avoidance, the attempt to escape painful emotional states, tends to distance one from what is meaningful in one's sexual life; however, it proposes precisely the opposite, seeking openness, connection, and self-awareness to remain connected to one's own needs, desires, and values (Skinta *et al.*, 2016).

Psychological flexibility refers to the ability to act in accordance with desired goals, despite challenges, altering behaviors according to situational contingencies (Doorley *et al.*, 2020). Throughout life, changing circumstances require us to modify how we respond to different situations. In this process, the study by Proctor *et al.* (2024) shows the importance of being flexible in making value-based behavioral choices, even

in the presence of pain and discomfort.

Study conducted with people with cancer, it was observed that, in the face of adverse changes in sexuality, engaging in behaviors guided by personal values—such as the value of connection—promotes greater sexual satisfaction. Furthermore, the willingness to remain open to both positive and negative experiences was associated with greater life satisfaction. In this way, psychological flexibility mediates higher levels of overall well-being. Regarding the example of the value of connection, it strengthens bonds and promotes a more meaningful life, despite the challenges of the lived context (Proctor *et al.*, 2024).

Pleasure and psychological flexibility

Health interventions related to sexual and reproductive rights still rarely integrate a positive perspective that includes the dimension of pleasure (Mills *et al.*, 2023). The study by Mills *et al.* (2023) proposed health interventions centered on the dimension of pleasure as an essential component of well-being and sexual health. Among the recommendations, the importance of including both heterosexual and LGBTQIAPN+ people (an acronym encompassing lesbian, *gay*, bisexual, transgender, *queer*, intersex, asexual, pansexual, non-binary people, and other identities) in safe spaces that encourage open communication with inclusive language stands out. Enabling discussion about consent, safe sex practices, and experiences related to touch, sensation, and pleasure contributes to reducing barriers of shame and fear, promoting greater self-confidence in sexual experiences.

Study suggests that, in heterosexual relationships marked by gender inequality, sexual pleasure is more likely to occur when favorable conditions were present, such as assertive communication, negotiation, and trust between partners (Elmerstig *et al.*, 2012). Thus, sexual pleasure is established with equal conditions, in which the partners involved express their desires and limits for mutual pleasure. From this perspective, McClelland (2014) identifies dimensions related to sexual pleasure, such as the social construction of gender, the experience of orgasm, relational dynamics, and individual aspects of experiencing pleasure. This perspective analyzes pleasure as a phenomenon that is influenced by social, relational, and personal contexts.

Women may experience sexuality differently than men, as they face cultural norms that often minimize the importance of female sexual pleasure, especially with age. However, the pursuit of pleasure involves challenging these social expectations by investing in new contexts and ways of thinking, seeking intimacy, creativity, and expanding the sexual repertoire (Morrissey *et al.*, 2017). For many women, sexual pleasure depends on the intimacy component in affective relationships (Bahrami *et al.*, 2023). Gender issues permeate the sexuality of both men and women due to the sociocultural factors involved, reinforcing the need to find ways to cope with the challenges experienced from social pressures and the many changes that affect the expression of sexuality throughout life.

Given the growing recognition of pleasure as an integral component of sexual health, initiatives that explicitly promote and value sexual pleasure have become increasingly important. Among these efforts are the *Principles of Sexual Pleasure*, developed by *The Pleasure Project* and aligned with the World Association for Sexual Health's (WAS) Declaration on Sexual Pleasure. These principles advocate for a positive, inclusive, and rights-based approach to sexual health, recognizing sexual pleasure as a fundamental human right.

The "Being Flexible" axis, proposed by *The Pleasure Project* (2023), represents the need to adapt to the multiple dimensions of change that affect the experience of sexuality, such as age, identity, sexual experience, family and community values, among other factors. This involves recognizing that pleasure is not something fixed, but an experience that varies greatly according to the uniqueness and sociocultural context of each person. Being flexible means promoting a sexuality that adjusts to life's moments, without imposing strict norms regarding sexual behaviors (*The Pleasure Project*, 2023).

In the ACT approach, sexual pleasure goes beyond purely physical aspects; it also involves the ability to make the thoughts, feelings, and memories that are part of the sexual experience more flexible. Psychological flexibility consists of understanding that it is not necessary to eliminate uncomfortable sensations related to the body, performance, or sexual practices in order to experience satisfying sexuality. It is possible

to live with these internal experiences and, at the same time, align one's actions with one's own values and desires (Blonna, 2012). From this perspective, the "Be Flexible" principle of The Pleasure Project resonates with ACT by understanding that sexual pleasure remains subject to transformation as contextual, circumstantial, and prioritization changes occur in a person's sex life.

These principles are also reflected in empirical findings from scientific research. A study with women of reproductive age found that sexual pleasure, understood from sexual self-efficacy and quality of sexual life, can be developed through psychological flexibility, using ACT-based interventions (Enjezab *et al.*, 2021). Another study, conducted with women diagnosed with female sexual interest/arousal disorder, identified that strategies such as mindfulness of bodily sensations and the present moment, detachment from challenging thoughts through cognitive defusion, and a focus on personal values are techniques that can improve sexual life, reflecting in greater arousal, satisfaction, and quality of sexual relations (Mohagheghian; Kajbaf; Maredpour, 2021). Although these studies have specific populations, they highlight resources for the development of sexual pleasure through psychological flexibility.

Interventions in acceptance and commitment therapy to improve sexual pleasure.

The principles and practices of ACT can be adapted to a range of interventions and clinical contexts, such as stress management and sexual life itself. In the realm of sexuality, by working on psychological flexibility based on the six core processes of ACT, one can learn how to have a better relationship with one's own mind, expanding the experience of pleasure, by making conscious choices that lead towards the desired sexual life, in accordance with sexual values (Blonna, 2012).

Starting from the premise that human suffering stems less from the events themselves and more from the relationship established with them (Hayes; Strosahl; Wilson, 2021), internal experiences such as fear of not meeting expectations, body shame, guilt, or self-critical thoughts can reduce availability for pleasure. Based on this understanding, ACT invites us to observe and embrace these internal experiences, promoting engagement in behaviors consistent with sexual values, even in the presence of discomfort (Skinta *et al.*, 2016).

In the acceptance process, one seeks an open attitude towards internal experiences, whether pleasant or uncomfortable, recognizing them as part of the human condition (Harris, 2019). In sexuality, initial experiences of discomfort do not need to be avoided, but rather integrated, so as not to limit a satisfying sex life. Acceptance is fundamental in allowing space for thoughts and feelings as they are, favoring actions aligned with what is important. Thus, someone with beliefs of shame about masturbation can embrace these internal experiences while learning to experience pleasure in a more conscious and coherent way with their values (Blonna, 2012).

Furthermore, cognitive defusion encourages individuals to relate differently to thoughts that are often treated as literal truths, reducing their behavioral control and allowing actions to be guided more effectively by personal values rather than cognitive content. The focus is not on altering thoughts and emotions, but rather on the context in which they arise, on altering the person's relationship with their internal content. In clinical practice, this process is used when people in psychotherapy are "stuck" with a thought that is preventing them from making flexible moves towards their values. For example, this process is observed when hearing a person say "I am not attractive" or "I will not satisfy my partner." To promote defusion, techniques are employed to treat the thought as an external event, giving it a shape, size, color, or form, or labeling it verbally, such as "I am having a thought that...". This approach distances the person from the content of their mind (Luoma; Hayes; Walser, 2022).

Identifying with thoughts like "I'm not a good sexual partner" and clinging to that thought can directly interfere with sexual behavior. Being fixated on this thought can have a significant impact, such as avoiding any sexual experience. By considering what the mind says in a way similar to observing clouds passing in the sky, it becomes possible to perceive the thought without clinging to it, creating space for valued choices. In this way, the thought doesn't disappear, but the person ceases to be a prisoner of its content. And thus, it becomes easier to move towards what is important, such as cultivating a pleasurable sex life (Stoddard and

Afari, 2025).

The mindfulness process, as understood by Hayes, Wilson, and Smith (2023), can be considered a process of paying attention, intentionally, to the present moment, without judgment. The practice of mindfulness meditation is a central element in most forms of mindfulness training. Learning to be in the "here and now" can be compared to increasing one's range of vision, expanding the scope of awareness and the ability to focus in the chosen direction.

Under this definition, Blonna summarizes this idea by stating that "the only life you have is the one you pay attention to" (2012, p. 9). For example, during a moment of intimacy, attentively observing sensations, colors, sounds, and aromas can deepen the connection with the other person and with one's own experience. Conversely, when excessive attention is paid to reactive thoughts or emotions, such as anger after an argument, the tendency is for these states to intensify and prolong. Thus, *mindfulness* involves consciously choosing where and how to direct attention, promoting a more conscious and intentional presence.

In clinical practice, mindfulness can be used in different ways to reduce focus on challenging thoughts and enhance body awareness and sensations in the context of sexuality. One resource is sensory perception training, in which the person is invited to pay attention to how they touch, hold, and release objects in their environment, consciously exploring stimuli such as texture, weight, and temperature. This simple exercise promotes the development of a more focused attitude in the present moment. Another example is the practice of mindful massage, in which the person is encouraged to focus on the sensations of touch, such as kneading, pressing, and caressing, instead of being distracted by thoughts or worries. Both interventions help reduce distractions, intensify the connection with the body, and promote richer sexual experiences (Blonna, 2012).

Another fundamental process in ACT concerns personal values, considered to be guiding principles for a meaningful and purposeful life, which need to be freely chosen. "What do you want your life to mean?" This question can serve as an example of a starting point for reflection on which directions a person wishes to follow to build their life choices (Hayes; Strosahl; Wilson, 2021). As a possibility for intervention in sexuality, working with values implies identifying sexual values as a fundamental part of identity, encompassing gender identity, gender role, orientation, behaviors, and sexual relationships (Blonna, 2012).

As a clinical exercise regarding sexual values, one can begin by identifying them, followed by an analysis of the discrepancies between what the person professes to hold dear and what they actually do (or avoid doing) in their sex life. To deal with internal barriers, one can resort to defusion techniques, questioning rigid thoughts such as "I cannot change," and acceptance techniques, as a way to deal with internal conflicts. Based on this information, one can propose concrete actions, such as practicing a request for intimacy, experimenting with a new form of physical contact, and training in assertive communication so that negotiations and concessions occur in a way that aligns with their values. In relationships, it is suggested that partners identify and compare their values to map convergences and points of conflict (Blonna, 2012).

Following committed action, this is understood as moving toward values through goals supported by objective and measurable behavioral changes (Melo, 2019). In sexual life, finding purpose becomes a guiding principle for defining realistic goals based on values for sexuality and relationships. For example, if the value consists on having a satisfying relationship with one's partner, achievable goals could include reserving two nights a week for moments of intimacy or starting weekly sex therapy as a way to strengthen the loving bond. It is important to understand that there will be obstacles in this process and that psychological flexibility will be necessary to deal with outdated and dysfunctional personal thoughts and scripts. Changes become necessary in order to create new experiences that are more consistent with current values to adapt to the inevitable transformations of life (Blonna, 2012).

Finally, the *self* as context is understood as a continuous and stable "I," which functions as a container holding thoughts, sensations, emotions, and memories, yet transcends these experiences without merging with them (Luoma; Hayes; Walser, 2022). The difference between the conceptual *self* and the *contextual self* lies in the fact that the latter is anchored in narratives and labels about who one is, such as "I am insufficient"; while the *contextual self* offers the perspective of an observer, allowing one to recognize such narratives without becoming immersed in them (Stoddard and Afari, 2025). This differentiation can be illustrated

through metaphors, which help to embrace thoughts and feelings as transient events, rather than absolute truths.

The classroom metaphor used in the book **The Great Book of Metaphors of ACT** can be adapted to sexuality. Imagine a classroom full of students; some behave well, others disrupt, and others go unnoticed. These are like the different thoughts and feelings that arise about sexuality: "I am desirable," "I will not satisfy my partner," "I have no libido." There is also the teacher, who tries to control which thoughts remain and which should be silenced. However, neither the students nor the teacher represent who the person is. What defines them is the classroom itself—the space that contains all these experiences. Thus, the *self*-as-context allows the person not to be reduced to a single thought or emotion about their sexual life, but to recognize that there is space to embrace all of them and still choose to act in accordance with their values (Stoddard and Afari, 2025).

In this sense, these interventions demonstrate that ACT can help improve a person's ability to experience sexuality in a more pleasurable way. By creating space for experiences previously marked by shame and anxiety, individuals learn to analyze their thoughts and feelings by assessing their relevance to their personal desires and values. Thus, psychological flexibility proves to be an important resource for exploring sexuality, as it supports choices aligned with personal values (Blonna, 2012).

Final considerations

This article explored the contributions of ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) to sexual pleasure, highlighting psychological flexibility as a resource for a more conscious, authentic experience aligned with values. By breaking rigid scripts and internal rules, ACT expands contact with the present moment and fosters a more pleasurable sexuality. This process involves discerning what generates pleasure and developing openness to deal with thoughts, emotions, and judgments without being reduced to them. Thus, the six processes of psychological flexibility help overcome labels, promoting choices more congruent with individual values.

As a narrative review, this study presents methodological limitations, especially due to the lack of systematization in the selection and analysis of studies, which may introduce biases and limit the generalization of the findings. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of research focused on sexual pleasure, with a predominance of studies focused on clinical conditions. Despite this, ACT offers potential for sexual health, offering an affirmative perspective on sexuality. It is recommended that future research include different sociocultural contexts, sexual orientations, and gender identities, expanding the evidence on its applicability. In conclusion, ACT has significant potential in promoting a healthier and more pleasurable sexuality.

References

- ANUSUYA, S. P.; GAYATRIDEVI, S. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Psychological Well-Being: A Narrative Review. *Cureus*, v. 17, n. 1, p. e77705, 2025. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11837766/>. Accessed on: 29 jun. 2025.
- BAHRAMI, N.; HOSSEINI, M.; GRIFFITHS, MD; ALIMORADI, Z. Sexual-related determinants of life satisfaction among married women: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Women's Health*, [S. l.], v. 23, p. 204, 2023. DOI: 10.1186/s12905-023-02365-5.
- BLONNA, R. *Sex ACT: unleash the power of your sexual mind with acceptance & commitment therapy*. Charleston: CreateSpace, 2012. E-book Kindle. ISBN 978-1-62111-506-9. Available from: <https://www.amazon.com.br/dp/B008J6RQ8Q>. Accessed on: 19 jun. 2025.
- DOORLEY, J. D.; GOODMAN, F. R.; KELSO, K. C.; KASHDAN, T. B. Psychological flexibility: What we know, what we do not know, and what we think we know. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, [S.l.], v. 14, n. 11, e12566, 2020. DOI: 10.1111/spc3.12566. Accessed on: 20 jul. 2025.

DUCASSE, D.; FOND, G. [Acceptance and commitment therapy]. *Encephale*, v. 41, n. 1, p. 1–9, fev. 2015. DOI: 10.1016/j.encep.2013.04.017. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24262333/>. Accessed on: 1 maio 2025.

ENJEZAB *et al.* The effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) on sexual self-efficacy and sexual quality of life in reproductive-age women: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, [S.l.], published online 23 jul. 2021. DOI: 10.1080/0092623X.2021.1944938. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34296979/>. Accessed on: 20 jul. 2025.

ELMERSTIG *et al.* “Sexual pleasure on equal terms”: young women's ideal sexual situations. *Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology*, v. 33, n. 3, p. 129–134, set. 2012. DOI: 10.3109/0167482X.2012.706342. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22835065/>. Accessed on: 27 jul. 2025.

FLEDDERUS *et al.* Acceptance and commitment therapy as guided self-help for psychological distress and positive mental health: a randomized controlled trial. *Psychological Medicine*, v. 42, n. 3, p. 485–495, 2012. DOI: 10.1017/S0033291711001206. Available from: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/psychological-medicine/article/abs/acceptance-and-commitment-therapy-as-guided-selfhelp-for-psychological-distress-and-positive-mental-health-a-randomized-controlled-trial/65F3CEC539114401D6326D6F306125AD>. Accessed on: 29 jun. 2025.

FORD, J. V. *et al.* The World Association for Sexual Health's Declaration on Sexual Pleasure: a technical guide. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, v. 33, n. 4, p. 612–642, 2021. DOI: 10.1080/19317611.2021.2023718. Available from: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10903694/>. Accessed on:

GAB. *Working definition of sexual pleasure*. [S. l.]: GAB, 2016. Available from: <https://www.gab-shw.org/our-work/working-definition-of-sexual-pleasure/>. Accessed on: 23 maio 2025.

GAB. *Sexual pleasure: the forgotten link in sexual and reproductive health and rights*. Berkshire: GAB, 2018.

GLOSTER, A. T. *et al.* The empirical status of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: A review of meta-analyses. *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*, [S.l.], v. 15, p. 1-54, 2020. DOI: 10.1016/j.jcbs.2020.09.009. Available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212144720301940>. Accessed on:

GRUSKIN, S. *et al.* Sexual health, sexual rights and sexual pleasure: meaningfully engaging the perfect triangle. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, v. 27, n. 1, p. 29–40, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/26410397.2019.1593787>. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/26410397.2019.1593787>. Accessed on: 25 maio 2025.

HAYES, S. C.; STROSAHL, K. D.; WILSON, K. G. *Terapia de aceitação e compromisso: o processo e a prática da mudança consciente*. 2. ed. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 2021.

HAYES, S. C.; WILSON, K. G.; SMITH, S. *Uma mente livre para amar e direcionar a vida para o que realmente importa*. Rio de Janeiro: Alta Books, 2023. E-book.

HARRIS, R. *Liberte-se: evitando as armadilhas da procura da felicidade*. São Paulo: Agir, 2019.

LANTHEAUME, S. *Thérapie d'acceptation et d'engagement (ACT) et addiction sexuelle*. Encéphale, [S.l.], 2017. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.encep.2017.06.001>. Accessed on: 20 jul. 2025.

LUOMA, J. B.; HAYES, S. C.; WALSER, R. D. *Aprendendo ACT: manual de habilidades da terapia de aceitação e compromisso para terapeutas*. Porto Alegre: Sinopsys, 2022.

MCCLELLAND, S. I. “What do you mean when you say you're sexually satisfied?” A mixed methods study. *Feminism & Psychology*, v. 24, n. 1, p. 74–96, 2013. DOI: 10.1177/0959353513508392. Available from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0959353513508392>. Accessed on: 27 jul. 2025

MELO, W. V. (Org.). *A prática das intervenções psicoterápicas: como tratar pacientes na vida real*. Novo Hamburgo: Sinopsys, 2019.

MILLS, R. *et al.* Opening a portal to pleasure-based sexual and reproductive health around the globe: a qualitative analysis and best practice development study. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, [S. l.], v. 31, n. 1, p. 1–14, 2023. DOI: 10.1080/26410397.2023.2275838. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/26410397.2023.2275838>. Accessed on: 3 ago. 2025.

MITCHELL, K. R. *et al.* What is sexual wellbeing and why does it matter for public health? *Lancet Public Health*, v. 6, p. e608–e613, ago. 2021. Available from: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(21\)00099-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(21)00099-2/fulltext). Accessed on: 21 abr. 2025.

MOHAGHEGHIAN, M.; KAJBAF, M. B.; MAREDPOUR, A. The effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on sexual arousal, intimacy and self-concept of female sexual interest/arousal disorder. *International Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences*, v. 8, n. 1, p. 50-59, 2021.

MORRISSEY S. K. A.; GALE, J.; LEWIS, D. C.; KLEIBER, D. Pathways to pleasure: Older adult women's reflections on being sexual beings. *Journal of Women & Aging*, [S. l.], v. 30, n. 3, p. 1–19, 2017. DOI: 10.1080/08952841.2017.1409305. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08952841.2017.1409305>. Accessed on: 3 ago. 2025.

NEZHAD, M. S.; SHAMELI, L. The effect of acceptance and commitment therapy on sexual satisfaction of couples in Shiraz. *International Journal of Medical Research and Health Sciences*, v. 6, n. 6, p. 1021–1027, 2017. Available from: <https://www.ijmrhs.com/medical-research/the-effect-of-acceptance-and-commitment-therapy-on-sexual-satisfaction-of-couples-in-shiraz.pdf>. Accessed on: 8 maio 2025.

OGASSAVARA, D. *et al.* Concepções e interlocuções das revisões de literatura narrativa: contribuições e aplicabilidade. *Ensino & Pesquisa, União da Vitória*, v. 21, n. 3, p. 8-21, ago./dez. 2023. DOI: 10.33871/23594381.2023.21.3.7646. Available from: <https://periodicos.unespar.edu.br/ensinoepesquisa/article/view/8579/5938>. Accessed on: 8 maio 2025.

PROCTOR, C. J *et al.* Intimacy and sexual functioning after cancer: The intersection with psychological flexibility. *PLOS Mental Health*, [S. l.], v. 1, n. 1, p. 1–17, 12 jun. 2024. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmen.0000001. Available from: <https://journals.plos.org/mentalhealth/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmen.0000001>. Accessed on: 21 jul. 2025.

SABAN, M. T. *Introdução à Terapia de Aceitação e Compromisso*. 2. ed. Belo Horizonte: Artesã, 2015.

SKINTA, M. D.; LEONARD, T.; GROUSD, L. Using ACT interventions to help clients explore the possibilities of gender identity. In: SKINTA, M. D.; DEBENEDETTO, A. (ed.). *Mindfulness and acceptance for gender and sexual minorities*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2016. p. 29–48.

STODDARD, J. A.; AFARI, N. *O grande livro de metáforas da ACT: um guia do clínico para exercícios experienciais e metáforas na terapia de aceitação e compromisso*. Novo Hamburgo: Sinopsys, 2025.

THE PLEASURE PROJECT. *The Pleasure Principles*. 2023. Available from: <https://thepleasureproject.org/the-pleasure-principles/>. Accessed on: 3 ago. 2025.

VILLATTE, J. L.; PISTORELLO, J. Acceptance and commitment therapy and contextual behavioral science: examining the progress of a distinctive model of behavioral and cognitive therapy. *Behavior Therapy*, v. 44, n. 2, p. 180-198, jun. 2013. DOI: 10.1016/j.beth.2009.08.002. Available from: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3635495/>. Accessed on: 29 jun. 2025.

WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR SEXUAL HEALTH (WAS). *Declaration on Sexual Pleasure: a technical guide*. [S. l.]:

WAS, 2021. Available from: <https://www.worldsexology.org/was-declaration-on-sexual-pleasure/>. Accessed on: 20 maio 2025.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. *Sexual health, human rights and the law*. Geneva: WHO, 2015. Available from: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/175556/9789241564984_eng.pdf. Accessed on: 20 maio 2025.

Recebido em: 05/04/2026

Aprovado em: 05/05/2026