

# Breast Augmentation, Reconstruction, & Explant Patients: The Overlooked Psychosocial Needs



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Society that sexually objectifies breasts

Partners, kids, family, friends, coworkers, in-laws

private inner experience

“...the emotional and mental side after explant is so important. I felt it unearthed some deep deep issues that went way back to childhood that I had to accept and work through once I didn't have the “perfect body” anymore...”

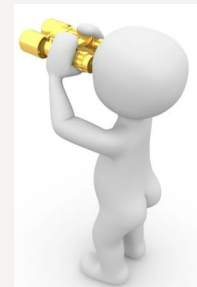
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## My implant journey\_\_\_\_\_



Scan and click link  
to access blog article

...and my eye-opening  
explant journey



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## Breast Implants\_\_\_\_\_



- Introduced 1960s
- Unknown numbers of women have them
  - Previously marketed as lifetime devices
  - Problematic tracking
  - Limited registries

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**How many people live with these devices today?**


**Breast Augmentation**

In 2021:

- Ranked 2nd globally
- 1.7 million procedures
- 0.5% change since 2017

In 2010:

- Ranked 2nd globally
- 1.3 million procedures



MANY MULTIPLE MILLIONS  
(20 Million is conservative estimate)

Source: International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery


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**For perspective...**

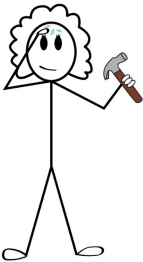
Global prevalence  
Eating Disorders: 16 million  
Schizophrenia: 20 million

Source: Saloni Dattani, Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser (2021) - "Mental Health".  
Published online at OurWorldInData.org.  
Retrieved from: '<https://ourworldindata.org/mental-health>' [Online Resource]

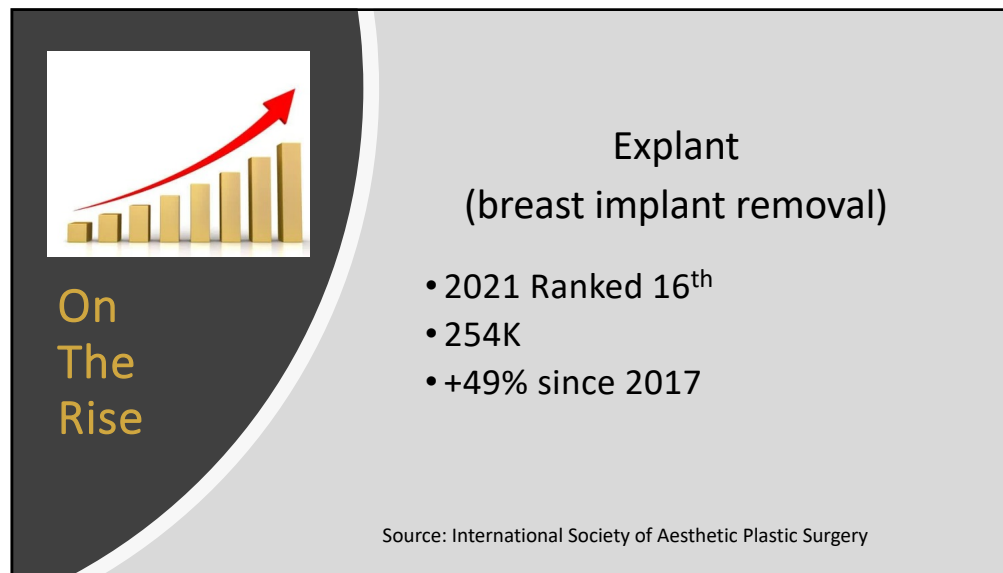
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Why Breast Implants?	Socialized Symbolism
 <p><b>The Breast Rulebook</b> Source: Chapter 1, <i>Busting Free</i></p>	<p><b>When breasts are sexualized, your mind forms:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vast network of beliefs</li> <li>• Without your awareness or permission</li> <li>• Starts when you're young</li> </ul> <p><b>Because your mind uses language and cognition to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-directionally</li> <li>• Combine</li> <li>• Derive</li> </ul> <p><b>Can never fully unlearn its content</b></p>

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Why Breast Implants?	Humans Yearn for Belonging
 <p><b>Your Inner Fixer</b> Source: Chapter 2, <i>Busting Free</i></p>	<p>Augment Restore Reconstruct Gender Alignment</p> <p><b>Humanity, not vanity</b></p>

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## FDA & Breast Implants

2019: Breast implant-associated lymphoma (BIA-ALCL)


2020: Breast implant-associated systemic symptoms (i.e., breast implant illness (BII))

2021: Boxed Warning on all breast implants

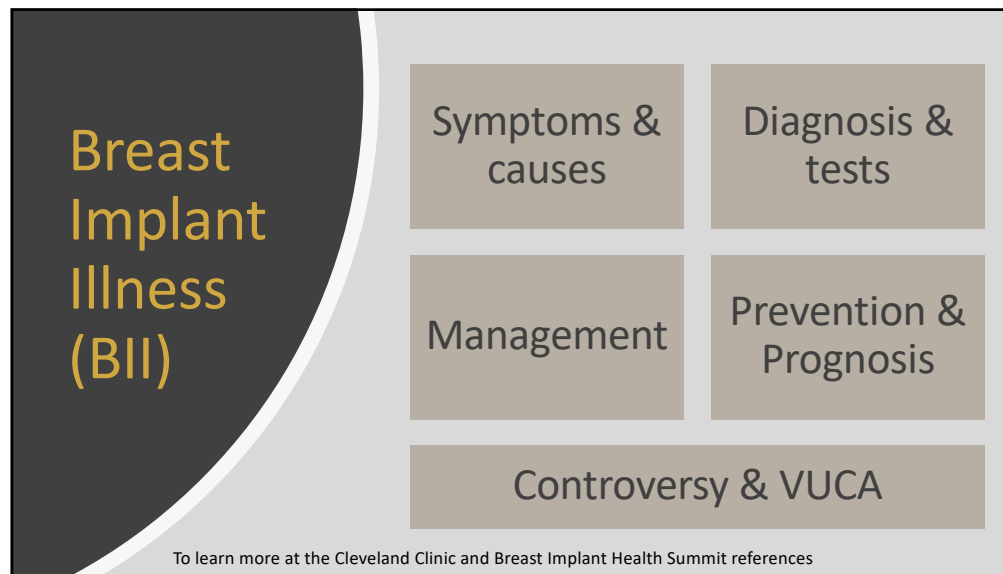
2022: Breast implant-associated squamous cell carcinoma (BIA-SCC)

**Summary Guidance:**

- *What to Know About Breast Implants*
- *Things to Consider Before Getting Breast Implants*



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### Breast Implant Illness & Mental Well-Being

Misdiagnosis	Gaslighting
Misattribution	Financial stress
Medical trauma	Partner abandonment
Misinformed Physicians	Social distress
	Unique self-doubt




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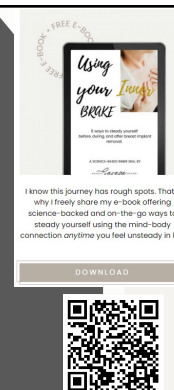
— “ —————  
 ...My husband has not been supportive since surgery and has refused to even look at my breasts. I physically feel so much better the emotional side of sheer rejection by my husband simply pisses me off... — ”

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## Impending Surgeries

Problematic for Anyone:

- Who endured rigorous breast cancer treatments
- With **anesthesia anxiety**
- Struggling with **systemic health effects**
- Who have not disclosed prior breast augmentation



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— “ —

...No one prepares you for this. It's like living through breast cancer twice; you lose your natural breasts, then you lose your implanted ones...

— ” —

— “ —


...I was pushed into a double mastectomy with implant reconstruction. Looking back, I was sick almost immediately and routinely told that I was just getting older or having aftereffects of chemo. I paid to remove the implants and I am so much better. No one in the healthcare field listened to me for 6 years. I felt like I was dying during the last year with them...

— ” —

— “ —

...there is real fear of explanting. I'm a double mastectomy patient so I take them out, I'm left with nothing. That makes me fearful...

— ” —



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### Breast Implant's Temporal Nature Problematic for Anyone:

- Whose breast-related self-concept and/or gender affirmation feels dependent upon these devices
- With unresolved body image struggles
- Whose partners grip the breast rulebook
- Who are unpartnered
- With financial constraints



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— “ —

...I can't do the surgery because although I have health insurance, it doesn't cover explant. I'm in despair. I was told I could keep these for life with no problems...

— ” —

— “ —

...I would get them removed but I am already buried under medical bills that I can't pay. My deductible is very high. I wish I knew more about Bill before I had surgery. I never understood suicide... until now...

— ” —

— “ —

...at one time I had 20K in hospital and specialist bills. Add on all the Rx fills, and in comes the mental and emotional toll b/c *I am causing all of this for my family.* Then the money for an explant, which was -10K. The toll it takes on one and their family is heavy...

— ” —

— “ —

...we were not warned of the terrible side effects. Most insurance won't cover removal. Those of us without money just have to suffer...

— ” —

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## Breast Implant-Associated Cancer & Mental Well-Being

Anger

Betrayal

Regret

Grief

Fear

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— “ —

...It is vastly documented that the capsules or remains left behind cause cancer. But, we women are faced with enormous push back from physicians disregarding the advice of their colleagues and peers for the sake of money, greed, and sloth to do the correct job. So we women continue to suffer and even die from man made diseases and irresponsible physicians...

— ” —

— “ —

...No one says "Keep smoking until you start to cough up blood or have shortness of breath, then notify your doctor immediately."

This is the current stance the FDA holds regarding breast implant-associated cancer: women shouldn't worry until they are symptomatic. Symptomatic of CANCER. Lethal cancers at that. It is another slap in my face and so ridiculous that it is almost comical...

— ” —

— “ —

...We friend and love our diagnosed sisters and then watch the ones that cannot be cured suffer horrifically before they finally take their last breath and can rest in peace. We only have their families left to talk to and comfort...

— ” —


— “ —

...You have no idea the stress and the toll this cancer puts on our body when we lose one of our sisters. The anxiety is at an all-time high. Your mind is racing—will I die like this? Am I next? Should I get a scan just to make sure? How is my family going to react?

I am downright angry that I'm stage 4 and not one person is being held accountable or taking responsibility for this man-made cancer...

— ” —

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## High Psychosocial Stakes

- Downplay, deny, or tolerate problematic breast implants or implant age-related risks
- Until (and unless) an urgent change catalyst presents (i.e., rupture, recall, severe BII, BIA-cancer)
- Breast implant-related morbidity and mortality

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## Breast implant surgery patients & mental health practitioners

### Patients considering breast implant surgery

- Inform yourself
- Advocate that clients receive informed consent

### Patients living with implants or considering their removal

- Assess history of breast implant surgery in biopsychosocial assessment
- Watch for misattribution of systemic symptoms

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— “ —  
...please be aware of all the issues implants can cause so the gaslighting stops...  
— ” —

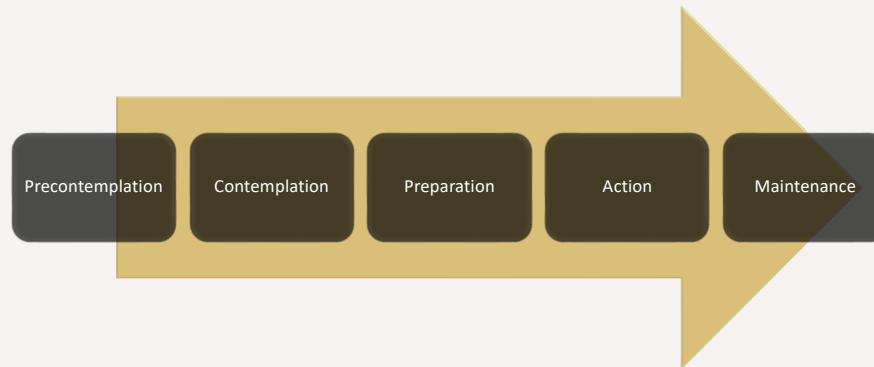
— “ —  
...Men have silicone poisoning too. I had a silicone testicle implant at age 15 and kept it for 41 years. I explanted with absolutely debilitating symptoms like BII...  
— ” —

— “ —  
My symptoms started ~year 7 with implants. I sought medical attention and was told “nothing is wrong, it’s all in your head.” I was sent to mental health, diagnosed with anxiety, and put on Ativan. I developed heart palpitations, but they just focused on anxiety and stress. I want all MH providers to be informed and aware of BII and put DO YOU HAVE BREAST IMPLANTS on their intakes.  
— ” —

— “ —  
...stop tip-toeing around and ask your clients if they have implants...  
— ” —

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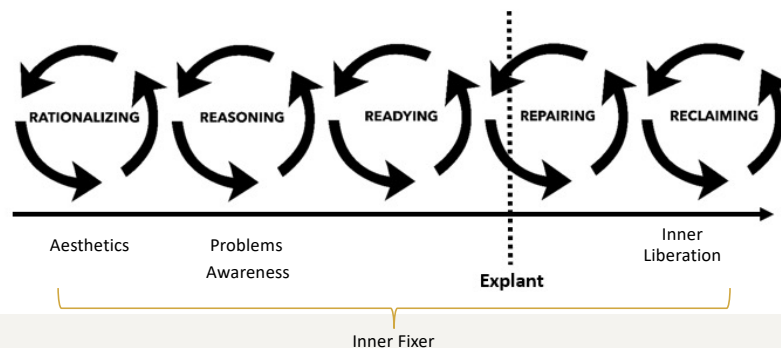
## Remember the Transtheoretical Model of Change?



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## The Five **BRITE** Roundabouts

**BRITE** = Breast Implant Through Explant journey

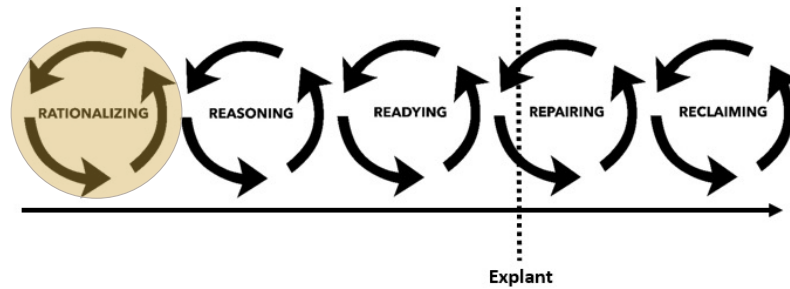


Source: Chapter 4, *Busting Free*

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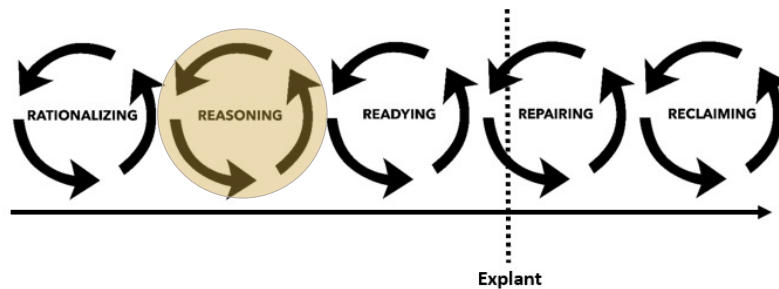


Source: Chapter 4, *Busting Free*

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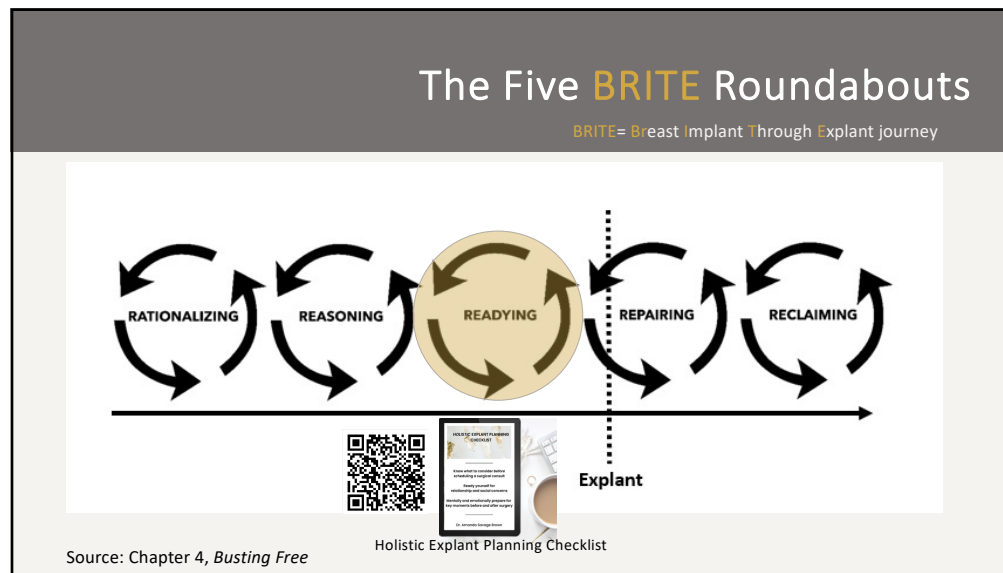
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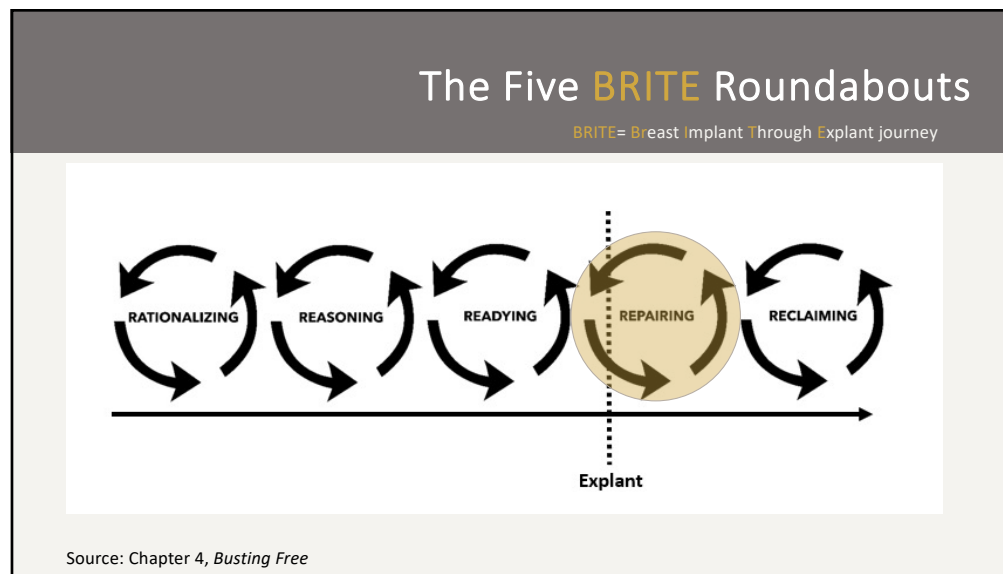


Source: Chapter 4, *Busting Free*

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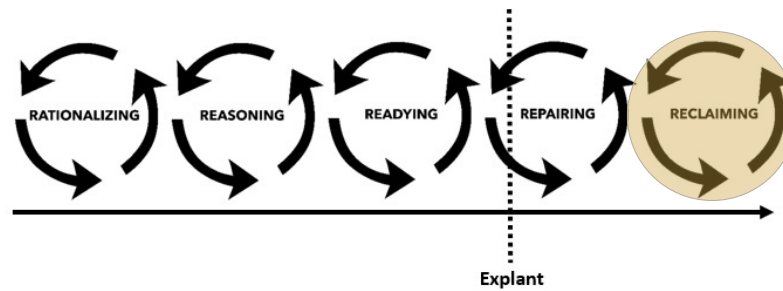
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## The Five BRITE Roundabouts

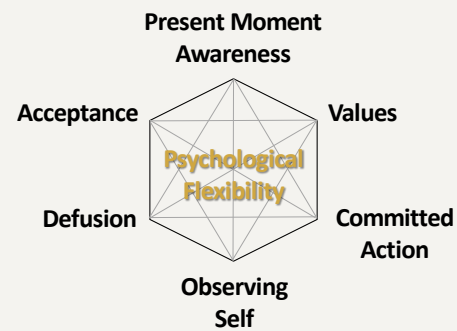
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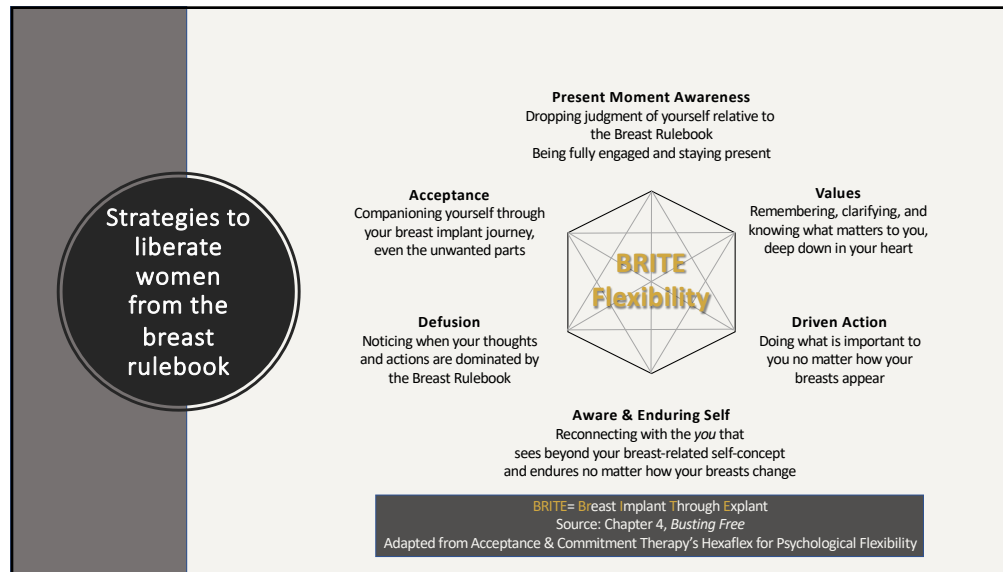
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ACT's  
strategies to  
mentally  
liberate  
humans



Source: ACT Hexaflex originally founded by Steven Hayes, PhD

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**Help for you or your clients:**

- Counseling
- Coaching
- Consultation
- Classes

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— “ —

...The mental side of self-acceptance is the biggest thing I still deal with. I think that's where people who care about women's health really need to focus. If women's mental health was more important, we wouldn't feel the need to alter ourselves to be loved or wanted...

— ” —

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