

The Application of Acceptance & Commitment Therapy  
and the CREATE! Model of Coaching in the Entertainment Industry

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### Abstract

The main focus of this research paper is how tools from positive psychology and life coaching may be applied to the realm of the entertainment industry, particularly Hollywood's film industry. The researcher himself is an actor and recording artist and is surrounded by the entertainment culture of Hollywood on a daily basis. Alcohol and substance abuse as well as rampant sexual addiction have been well documented to have a wide influence within entertainment. But it does not have to be this way. Research into this issue is well documented in the following pages along with possible solutions to the issue. By implementing Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (from here on referred to as ACT) into the culture through therapy and coaching (the emphasis of this research being coaching), entertainers in any field may turn their most difficult and painful life experiences into present moment inspirations which in turn ignite rather than stifle their creative processes (while providing a healthy alternative to addictive behavior). To further this investigation, the researcher has created a rather useful tool which has been implemented in his own entertainment career and which will be implemented into future coaching sessions with Hollywood-based clients. It is entitled CREATE! and it works off the basic premise of ACT with an emphasis on creative action. CREATE! forms an acronym as follows: C: Conscious Aware Connection, R: Take Responsibility, E: Eliminate Negative Influences, A: Always Take Action, T: Trust & Allow, E: Enjoy the Process & Results and !: Ignite the Entire Process with Enthusiasm. This tool as well as other life coaching processes applicable for helping entertainers to create a healthy, balanced and successful lifestyle and career are discussed further in the following pages.

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For the past decade, drug and alcohol abuse as well as a proliferation of sexual promiscuity has become a widespread global pandemic. The rate of suicide has also been on the rise. Based on the following research, this paper proposes that a main contributing factor to this epidemic of hopelessness is the sensationalization in the media of celebrity drug abuse, free love and suicide (Keyes, Whitley, Fink, Santaella, and Pirkis, 2021). Though there are many prime examples of healthy and productive lifestyles in the industry, there has also been a rampant trend of addiction-fueled egos leading to loss of creativity and even early death by overdose, health issues or suicide (Just, Bleckwenn, Schnakenberg, Rieke, Skatulla and Weckbecker, 2016). For every Robert Downey Jr making it through a difficult recovery from a lifestyle of drugs and alcohol to becoming a poster boy for true reformation, you have a young Heath Ledger who did not make it past the age of 28, dying of drug overdose. For every Matthew McConaughey who wins Academy Awards, writes inspirational memoirs such as *Greenlights* and is a cultural ambassador for the city of Austin, Texas, there is a Charlie Sheen who is in and out of rehab and known for continuously relapsing into a drug and alcohol-fueled, sexually promiscuous lifestyle. These examples, both positive and negative, influence and shape popular opinion and culture.

According to Rowley, Gilman, and Sherman (2019), In branding, “it is expected that consumers’ positive feelings toward a celebrity will transfer automatically to the endorsed brand through a process that has been called ‘affect infusion’” (p. 403). What is known as evaluative conditioning, a key process in celebrity endorsements, can be applied to similar conditioning of the public towards unhealthy lifestyle patterns (Rowley et al., 2019). According to Chen, Tsai,

Chang, Lin, Chi and Chien-Chang Wu (2021) “Intensive media reporting of celebrity suicides can evoke imitative effects and identification with the celebrity who died by suicide may be the key mechanism underlying such suicide modeling. This imitative phenomenon is particularly prominent when celebrity suicides are glamorized, the related news is covered extensively, and the story presentation is sensational and emotional” (p. 1). Also, sensationalization, attributing undue prominence and providing excessive details about suicide increases significantly in news stories after a celebrity suicide (Harshe, Karia, Harshe, Shah, Harshe and Sousa, 2016). One prime example of the negative impact of this phenomenon is how harmful Google search terms such as hanging, commit suicide, etc. increased immediately after the media reported on the suicide case of Robin Williams (Arendt and Scherr, 2017).

Stories like these are nothing new regarding the likes of the Hollywood elite. Just look back to Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix and Kurt Cobain, all who reportedly died from drug overdose at the young age of 27, after years of heavy drug use as entertainers. Think of, above mentioned, beloved Robin Williams and Philip Seymour Hoffman, both Academy Award winners, who also reportedly died of drug overdose, well before their careers were over. Actors and recording artists alike face immense pressure from the industry, their fans and the overall culture to provide consistent value and entertainment. These pressures do not decrease with wealth and fame but tend to increase as they experience new levels of influence and responsibility. These often global players are in a key position to prophetically influence the direction and mentality of the culture and its people.

And some entertainers do. In her article *Message in the Music: Do Lyrics Influence Well-being?* Patricia Fox Ransom states, “There are some positive exemplars in the music industry like Macklemore and Sara Bareilles...Macklemore’s *Same Love* teaches a listener about

positive relationships and marriage equality...And Sara Bareilles' song *Brave* encourages people to have hope and courage to go for their dreams" (Ransom, 2015, pp. 17-18). Lady Gaga is known for combating bullying through her social media presence on Twitter (Resnik, Bellmore, Xu and Zhu, 2016). Many well-known celebrities have become philanthropists and donate large amounts of time, resources and financial aid to private and public humanitarian programs (Jeffreys and Allatson, 2015).

But in order for those in the limelight to take on this level of influence and responsibility and the associated external pressures, there is an even greater source of stress and pressure they must master first. All of the external stimuli are magnified by internal pressures and one must address these in order to effectively face the challenges of the entertainment industry. This is no simple task. The entertainment industry, especially Hollywood, can have treacherous terrain. According to Rockwell and Giles (2009) "Only after accepting that 'it comes with the territory' can the celebrity adaptively navigate fame's choppy waters...Adaptive patterns can include reclusiveness, which gives rise in turn to mistrust and isolation." But this need not be.

For those brave souls ready to navigate and traverse its pitfalls, the entertainment industry rewards untold sums of fame, influence, wealth and power. How does one get there? What kind of person will they become during the journey? Will they use their power for good or ill? Sometimes all that is necessary is a well-seasoned sherpa who can lead the green actress or young, up and coming rockstar along a proven and safe path. This is the place of the well-trained, industry aware, life coach and what led this researcher to discover and implement the CREATE! Model of coaching.

The CREATE! Model of coaching is an entirely new approach to life coaching and is grounded in the principles of ACT, Positive Psychology and other mindfulness-related schools of

thought. What makes this process of coaching so unique is that it is tailored towards the busy and active lives of creatives within the entertainment industry. The CREATE! Model is an adaptable approach that illuminates the creative process that is already a significant part (if not the core) of an entertainment industry professional's life. This does not mean that its use will be exclusively for entertainment industry creatives, for all humans are, at the core, creators and creatives. However, this researcher sensed a need for a coaching application that would specifically address a manic industry riddled with so many stressors, distractions, highs and lows. Because of these unique environmental factors the CREATE! Model is introduced as an acronym addressing a specific flow of life, ultimately grounded in a Conscious Aware Connection.

As mentioned above, The C of CREATE! refers to having a Conscious Aware Connection (being aware of a Power greater than oneself). This concept mirrors ACT's emphasis on *Contacting the Present Moment* which resonates with the core concepts of mindfulness training as presented by positive psychology (Moran, 2015). This Conscious Aware Connection not only grounds the client in the present moment but reminds them that they are completely and intricately connected to an inexhaustible flow of creative energy and resource, whether they know that source as God, the Universe or simply an all-encompassing Collective Intelligence. Many artists, actors and musicians attribute their success to "channeling" a power source that is them but is also beyond them. This concept lays the groundwork in which the following concepts may take root and flourish, allowing the entertainer to build a stabilizing framework around this creative flow.

The R of CREATE! refers to having a sense of Responsibility for oneself (Taking ownership of one's Vision, Purpose, Journey & Life). This concept aligns well with and further

builds upon *Acceptance Skills* emphasized within the ACT model (Moran, 2015). Taking responsibility for oneself, one's environment, experiences, emotions, etc. is at the core of Acceptance and helps to build *Psychological Flexibility*, a much needed trait for those who face the uncertain, changing tides of the entertainment industry. When one takes full responsibility for everything they experience, they may then choose to be the sole cause of all of their life experiences and begin the following step. This is key in an industry known for sexual and financial manipulation where suppressive people seek to take advantage of those who have a victim mentality, those who believe that the only way up is to compromise their values and those who are simply new to the industry. When an entertainer takes full responsibility for themselves, their lifestyle and their career success, they safeguard themselves from suppressive forces within Hollywood.

The E of CREATE! stands for Eliminate Negative Influences (Relationships, addictions, behaviors, substances, traumas). It fits well with the process in ACT known as *Defusion*, the ability to observe one's thoughts without being governed by them as well as *Values Clarification*, the process of exploring the meaningful purpose of one's life and choices (Moran, 2015). However, it takes these concepts one step further, beyond contemplation, into action. Here the individual is to take a complete inventory of the positive and negative influences in their life and create a plan of action to remove the negative influences, while reinforcing the positive influences. This is where a proper sleep schedule, healthy eating, exercising, training, classes and networking events replace drug abuse, alcohol abuse, excessive late-night partying and the convenience of fast food. This researcher has discovered that, beyond the simple support and accountability that coaching can provide around this process, other forms of traditional therapy have proven to be very effective in removing negative charge from an individual's past,

empowering them to have more command over their present life. When a client's needs are beyond the scope of coaching, a coach may refer his or her client to a trained and certified psychologist or therapist.

The A of CREATE! stands for Always Take Action (Intention without action is worthless). This aligns with ACT's concept of *Committed Action* which is defined as measurable behavior in the service of values (Moran, 2015). Here, is where the client is encouraged to set definable goals for his or her career and lifestyle, create and take action steps towards attaining those goals. These goals are to all be in alignment with what Napoleon Hill refers to as an overall *Definite Major Purpose* (Hill, 1945). In lieu of the previous concept of Eliminating Negative Influences, the client is also encouraged here to take measures to reinforce positive influences in their life and surround themselves in an environment and community that facilitates healthy creativity and growth.

The T of CREATE! stands for Trust & Allow (and Don't ask how). This concept aligns well with the *Perspective Taking* aspect of ACT which helps to build *Psychological Flexibility* (Moran, 2015) and encourages the client to reframe every experience of their journey within the context of a bigger, overall picture, which is grounded in their Present Moment, Conscious Aware Connection (circling back to the first concept of CREATE!). The awareness of the bigger picture can simply be the client keeping in mind their long term goals in terms of their *Definite Major Purpose* (Hill, 1945).

The final E of CREATE! stands for Enjoy the Process (and the current/future results). Most entertainers, whether they be actors or recording artists, initially enter the industry because they find great purpose and satisfaction in participating in their craft. This entire journey



becomes meaningless and mechanical unless the client continues to find enjoyable ways to express their creative capabilities in meaningful present moment experiences (Moran, 2015).

The ! of CREATE! encourages the client to follow through with Enthusiasm! At this point in the coaching process, the client has removed negative influences and engaged in positive, proactive action all grounded in present moment awareness that emphasizes trust and enjoyment of the journey. These concepts, all working together, provide a strong foundation for the use of self-efficacy language by the client. Where before positive self-talk may have fallen on deaf ears, it now has the chance to germinate, grow and have explosive results because it is based in a proactive reality rather than a false reality built upon hopeful, wishful thinking. Gessnitzer, Schulte and Kauffeld (2016) suggest that “the positive link found between client-related self-efficacy and client-related coaching success could possibly be transferred to a positive link between client self-efficacy language and clients’ goal attainment” (p. 298). This researcher proposes that self-efficacy language leads to goal attainment but, even more importantly, goal attainment leads to self-efficacy language. This evolves into a very powerful, synergistic dynamic that will energize the client to even greater levels of creativity and success.

In conclusion, Hollywood can be a difficult place for an entertainer to survive and thrive. Yet it need not be. Rather than fall into abusive patterns of sexual promiscuity and drug and alcohol abuse leading often to self-harm and even suicide, musicians and actors alike may live healthy, well-balanced, productive lives. Instead of negatively influencing popular culture they may positively impact it through their creative efforts, social media influence and philanthropic efforts. They may do this even more effectively when they invite coaching into their lifestyle and career decisions. Beyond that, life coaches may more effectively serve their clients within

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the entertainment industry through using the tools provided by Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and the CREATE! Model of coaching.

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