



Cognitive defusion techniques

We tend to ‘fuse’ with our thoughts and take them too seriously. We may get scared or frustrated by them and this tends to make us try hard to get rid of or avoid them. Our system perceives them as a threat and switches on the fight or flight response, which only increases our suffering and distress.

The techniques below will help you to de-fuse from your thoughts and make peace with them. The intention is not to get rid of the thoughts but just to let them be there without fighting them, removing the secondary distress caused by struggling with them.

- **1. I’M HAVING THE THOUGHT THAT...**

When you notice anxious or distressing thoughts, eg. ‘I can’t cope’; ‘I’m going to faint’, ‘I’m so stupid’, ‘everyone’s looking at me’, say to yourself: **I’m having the thought that I can’t cope**, etc. Then you might repeat this with a slightly longer phrase: **‘I’m noticing that I’m having the thought that I can’t cope’**. If you don’t want to repeat the distressing thought, simply say ‘I’m noticing that I’m having an anxious thought/feeling’

- **THANKS MIND!**

More simply, you can say to yourself, Thanks mind!, whenever you notice it coming up with the same old stories. You could say things like: ‘Thanks mind, that’s very interesting!’ or ‘Ah the ‘I’m stupid’ story.. thanks mind!

- **SILLY VOICES**

If you notice recurring self-judgments like ‘You’re hopeless, you’ll never be a success’, or ‘You’re so ugly, no one’s going to like you’, focus on it for a few seconds and notice how it makes you feel. Then choose the voice of a funny cartoon character, like Bugs Bunny or Homer Simpson; or even a TV or film character like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Darth Vader and hear the thought in that voice. Notice what happens.

- **Musical defusion:** You can also try singing your troublesome thoughts to yourself to the tune of ‘Happy Birthday’ or some other lighthearted tune.

