

Thought Defusion

cognitive distancing techniques

Thoughts have a way of consuming our attention, especially if they are upsetting. When this happens, you may feel stuck inside a thought, unable to focus on anything else. This is called being *fused* with thoughts.

Thought defusion techniques help you break free from this trap. These skills work by shifting attention from the *content* of thoughts to the *process* of thinking, loosening the hold thoughts have over you.

Use Thought Defusion When...

- **You feel triggered.**
A thought spikes your anxiety or worsens your mood.
- **Your thoughts are one-sided.**
You lose perspective or are fixated on a thought.
- **You're lost in thought.**
You're preoccupied and not present to what's happening.

Defusion Techniques

 Put Your Thoughts on Clouds	 Use a Silly Voice
Imagine placing your thoughts on clouds high in the sky. Watch as the clouds slowly drift away. Remind yourself that thoughts—just like clouds—have no actual substance as they come and go.	Write down your upsetting thought, then read it out loud 10 times in a silly voice. Try impersonating a cartoon character or a favorite actor. The more ridiculous, the better!
 File Your Thoughts Away	 Name the Story
Visualize folders with labels for types of thinking, such as <i>predicting</i> , <i>regretting</i> , <i>comparing</i> , <i>doubting</i> , and so on. Bring attention to your thoughts and file them into the corresponding folders.	Think of repetitive thoughts as familiar stories. Pay attention to how often they recur. You might spot the <i>I'm-a-failure</i> story, the <i>no-one-likes-me</i> story, or the <i>my-life-is-horrible</i> story. You get the idea!
 Click the "X" Button	 Screen Your Thoughts
Thoughts can crowd your mind like dozens of browser windows on your computer. Imagine closing the windows by clicking the "X" on each of them. Watch as thoughts disappear, one by one!	Imagine your thoughts projected onto a large movie screen. Sit in the back row and watch the scenes unfold. Can you just observe the movie without getting lost in it?
 Say "I'm Having the Thought That..."	 Zoom Out
When you have an upsetting thought, put the phrase "I'm having the thought that..." in front of it. This creates distance between you and the thought, loosening its grip on you.	When you're fused with a thought, picture yourself rising high above the earth. Notice how tiny your worries look from space. Does your triggering thought feel as significant from this distance?