

# ACT THERAPY

THE WORLD OF COGNITIVE DISTANCING

# Thought Defusion

Want the psychological benefits of meditating without having to sit full lotus for hundreds of hours? Enter stage left to wild applause: ACT defusion.

This is the ability to observe your thoughts and feelings and experience them, without automatically identifying with them or getting hooked. Have you ever been so consumed by a thought that you felt trapped inside it? Perhaps the emotional intensity kept you 'fused' to a single belief as if no alternate perception of the world was feasible. The following exercises will enable you to de-fuse or un-hook and stabilize. This is possibly one of the most essential tools to master in your sobriety.

## WHEN YOU SHOULD USE DEFUSION

### Intensity

If your thoughts produce negative and "intense" emotions

### Preoccupation

If you're fixed on one thought or series of thoughts and continue to ruminate over the past or anxiously anticipate the future

### Short-Sidedness

If you discover you have an inability to see any solutions, only various angles of the same problem



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## ACT DEFUSION TECHNIQUES

### LEAVES ON A STREAM

Sit quietly with your eyes closed. Imagine a stream burbling along in front of you. Each time a thought arises in your mind, place the thought in a leaf, put it on the stream, and watch it sail gently away.

### THE BULLY

Visualize the cravings as a separate entity from yourself, personify it, even give it a name if you want. When you picture your addictive thoughts in this manner they immediately lose their power, they shrink when you no longer identify with them. Boldly declare, "I'm not going to let those old addictive thoughts bully me anymore!"

### THE THEATER

Notice different aspects of you arising, different patterns of thought and feeling, different selves. Greet them as different guests in the guest house or as different characters on a stage, or as different guests on a cruise ship. There's self-pitying you, there's bouncy you, there's dirty you, there's yuppie you. Greet them all. They're all part of life's divine comedy. This practice helps you not identify so strongly with the things that arise within you, but to see them as temporary aspects of you rather than the whole of you. That allows you to like, laugh at, and care for the assorted cast as they appear and depart.



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## ACT DEFUSION TECHNIQUES

### COVER YOUR FACE

Cover your face with your hands, so you can't see anything. Now gently move the hands back. Your thoughts are like that.

### SILLY VOICE

Next time you notice a very negative belief you are saying to yourself, write it down, and then read it out in a silly voice, like Donald Duck, say, or. Elmer Fudd. Read it out over and over. It's just words, not reality. When you hear the old negative belief come back, always hear it in the same ridiculous voice.

### VIEW FROM ABOVE

This is an exercise from ancient Greek philosophy. Think of your self and your situation, then zoom out and see it from the sky – see your house and the street you live on. Then zoom out further and see the city and the country underneath the clouds. Then zoom out further and see Europe, and the Earth spinning round. Then zoom out further and see the solar system, and then the whole galaxy of the Milky Way, and then thousands and thousands of galaxies, containing billions and billions of stars and planets. Look around you, at the limitless expanse of the universe, glittering with light and energy. What were you getting so worked up about?



# ACT WORKSHEET

BREAK THE THOUGHT CHAINS

# Thought Defusion

## SECTION 1: IDENTIFY THE INTRUSIVE THOUGHT

Think about a recurring negative thought that has been bothering you lately. Don't judge or analyze why you're having this thought. Just recognize and accept its presence. Write it down here:

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## SECTION 2: THE THOUGHT DISSECTION

Try to understand the layers of this thought. What is its root? What are the situations or emotions that make it stronger? Is it based on an event, a belief, an assumption, or a memory? Write them down:

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## SECTION 3: PERSONIFY YOUR THOUGHT

Now, let's take this disquieting thought and imagine it as a character. It could be a person, an animal, or any figure that symbolizes your thought. Describe how it looks, sounds, and behaves. Does it influence your emotion or affect your actions?

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Personality of the thought:

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Appearance of the thought:

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Influence of the thought:

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## SECTION 4: THE METAPHORICAL SCENARIO

Now envisage a situation or scene where you experience your thought. The situation can be a metaphorical representation of how your thought affects your daily life. Write out the whole narrative here:

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## SECTION 5: DISTANCE YOURSELF

In this step, try to create a space between yourself and your thought. Acknowledge that you and your thought are not the same. You are the observer and it's an external object. Does this change your reaction to the thought?

Your observations:

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## SECTION 6: EVALUATE AND REORIENT

In the final step, recount your experience. Reflect on how ACT defusion has helped perceive the thought differently. How can you apply these insights in real life, the next time this thought creeps in?

Your reflections:

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Remember, defusion is not about judging or suppressing the thought but observing it in a detached way. The more you practice ACT defusion, the better you get at managing intrusive thoughts.

Congratulations on completing the Breaking **The Thought Chain ACT Defusion** worksheet! Remember, just like in comedy, the first rule of ACT is, "Yes, and...". So, here's to looking at thoughts through comically-tinted glasses! Have fun and identify the absurdity of your attachments. The absurdity-insight will break those thought chains! Be sure to keep maintain confidentiality with your responses and only share them with a qualified professional if you need advice or assistance.