

DEALING WITH INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

"If you have scary, intrusive thoughts, and they tend to recur with a predictable "theme," you may be experiencing obsessive thoughts."

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Definition of Cognitive Defusion

Cognitive defusion is the process of untangling from our thoughts, and regarding thoughts simply as thoughts. Defusion results in the decrease in the power of thought's over us as we loosen our attachment to the thought. The goal of practicing defusion is to become more flexible around our thought's, and to have more distance from them.



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Purpose of Cognitive Defusion

- ❖ To notice the nature of thoughts using words or images in your mind
- ❖ To take action based on what “works” rather than what is “true”
- ❖ To recognise that thoughts do not dictate behaviours
- ❖ To identify when thoughts are acting as a barrier to living in accordance with your true values



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Defusion Techniques for when Obsessive Thoughts Occur

1. Come up with a “replacement” image – something neutral, like a red Volkswagen, a pink balloon, and always replace your thought with that same image each time the thought occurs. Don’t switch around to different images, make the image always the same.



Defusion Techniques for when Obsessive Thoughts Occur

2. Visualize the thought appearing in your inbox on the computer. Notice the subject line, read the message once, but don't delete it – just let it hang out in your inbox as a “read” message. Here you are deliberately agreeing not to suppress the thought.



Defusion Techniques for when Obsessive Thoughts Occur

3. See the thought appearing as a new message on your cell phone. Picture listening to the message once but not deleting it, allowing it to remain forever in your imaginary voicemail. Accept the discomfort around it. Just say, "Yep, it's still there."



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Defusion Techniques for when Obsessive Thoughts Occur

4. Picture your thought, feeling or image as an unwelcome guest, something you would rather turn away if it actually appeared at your door. Open the door and let it in. Let it be unpleasant, noisy, or scary. Imagine "making room" or "creating space" for it by letting it sit next to you or take up space in the room. It sounds hard but it's an effective strategy.



Defusion Techniques for when Obsessive Thoughts Occur

5. Imagine you have a “willingness dial,” where you allow yourself to be 100% willing to be with the thought or image. Turn the imaginary dial up all the way to 100 while you also turn your “resistance dial” close to zero. Say, “I want this feeling.” Or, “I want this thought.” You can also say, “Bring it on,” or “I’m willing to be uncomfortable.”



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