



My Cognitive Defusion Worksheet

Pick one sticky thought and rate it. Try the techniques, re-rate, then note what helped and what did not.

01 The thought, and how much it grips me

Choose an everyday thought that keeps coming back. If the thought is about harming yourself (thoughts like these are serious), or someone is frightening you, stop here and see selfgrowth.org/help.

The thought, in its own words:

For example: 'I'm going to make a fool of myself.'

How much do I believe it right now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Completely

How much does it pull me around or upset me right now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Completely

02 Techniques to try

These are common defusion exercises from the ACT approach. Try two or three. You don't need to believe the thought is wrong for them to work, and they aren't meant to make the thought go away.

1. Add a prefix. Rewrite it as: 'I'm having the thought that...'

Then try: 'I notice I'm having the thought that...'. Say it slowly and notice whether it feels different.

2. Name the story. What would I call this one?

For example 'the I'll-fail story' or 'the not-good-enough story'. Then say: 'Ah, there's the ... story again.'

3. Thank your mind.

Write a short, light reply: 'Thanks, mind, I know you're trying to protect me.' You don't have to agree with it or obey it.

4. Change how the thought sounds or looks. Tick any I tried:

- ☐ Said it in a silly voice, or sang it to a tune I know
- ☐ Said it very slowly, then very quickly
- ☐ Repeated one key word out loud for about 30 seconds until it sounded like a noise
- ☐ Wrote it in a different font, colour or handwriting

- ☐ Pictured it as words on a banner or a screen, and made them smaller
- ☐ Said it as if a news presenter or a cartoon character were reading it

5. Ask: is holding this thought tightly helping me right now?

Not 'is it true?', but 'does acting on it, or fighting it, move me towards what matters to me?'

03 How do I feel now?

Re-rate the same thought. A small change counts.

How much do I believe it now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Completely

How much does it pull me around or upset me now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Completely

Which technique helped most, which did nothing, and which made it worse?

04 When the thought might be right

Defusion is for thoughts that are stuck, not for warnings you need to act on. Check before you use it.

Tick any that apply. If so, take action or get help first, and come back to this later:

- ☐ The thought might be pointing at a real danger or a real problem I need to deal with
- ☐ The thought is about harming myself, or I feel I might not stay safe
- ☐ I'm afraid of someone, or I'm not safe where I am
- ☐ My low mood, worry or racing thoughts have lasted weeks, or are getting in the way of daily life

The person or line I'll turn to first (a friend, my GP, Samaritans 116 123, 988 in the US) is:

05 My defusion log

Note each time you try one, so you can see which ones suit you. Rate how much the thought grips you from 1 to 10, before and after.

The thought	Before	Technique I tried	After
A few words	1 to 10		1 to 10

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- Which of my sticky thoughts show up again and again, and what story do they tell?
- Did any technique make the thought feel more like words and less like a fact?
- When I hold this thought tightly, what does it stop me doing?
- Is there a thought on my list that I should check against the facts or act on, rather than step back from?
- Who could I talk to if these thoughts are heavy, or are not easing?

Free worksheet from selfgrowth.org. Free self-growth worksheets for real life. Fill it in online and it saves as you go: selfgrowth.org/worksheets/cognitive-defusion-worksheet



If things feel heavier than a worksheet can hold

These are self-reflection tools, not therapy. If you're struggling, especially if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to someone now. In the US, call or text **988**. In the UK & Ireland, call **116 123** (Samaritans). Elsewhere, find a free helpline at findahelpline.com. If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.