



Cognitive defusion

We have begun to explore the unhelpful roles that thoughts can play in our pain experience. *Cognitive defusion* is a thinking and doing skill that involves noticing 'sticky' thoughts without getting 'stuck', 'hooked', 'snared by', or 'caught up' in them. It does not mean 'getting rid' of thoughts, nor does it mean arguing with them. And it is not 'not thinking'! Rather, defusion allows us to 'drop the struggle' with our thoughts. This can help us to shift our attention to things in the present moment that are important to us, so we can get on with 'DOing' the things that are helpful!

Below are just a few examples of how to practise defusion, with examples of common pain-related thoughts. Some may work better for you, so have a go, and see which ones are helpful!

I'm having the thought



This is a simple way of getting started with defusion. It draws attention to thoughts as suggestions, or predictions your mind makes – rather than assuming this is the way it is.

- For instance, rather than saying to yourself "I can't cope with this pain anymore." Try saying, "*I'm having the thought* that I can't cope with this pain anymore"

Workability

Your mind is trying to problem solve, which is what it is designed to do. But ask yourself how this thought works for you in the long run. Is it a useful thought? Is it 'the right tool for the job'? Does it help you towards leading a valued life? Notice that it is usually not helpful to get caught up in whether the thought is 'right' or 'wrong'.



For example, in the long run, how 'workable' is the thought: "There's no point in exercising"?

Name the story

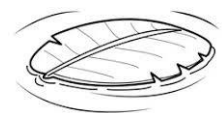


- Have you ever watched a movie, or read a book so many times that it got boring? Our minds also tell stories. These are often unhelpful, misleading, and boring if we've 'seen the movie' a thousand times before!
It can be helpful to notice, and give a title to the stories the mind tells over and over again about pain
- For example, "*here's the 'I can't do anything with pain' story*", or "*'pain is ruining my life' story*"
- Noticing and naming can draw attention to the fact there might be other stories to be experienced

Just watch

A common, 'meditative' practice involves just watching your thoughts come and go.

You might visualise the flow of thoughts as 'leaves upon a stream' or clouds in the sky, or baggage on a baggage conveyor belt, or sushi on a sushi train – or so many other things! Practise doing this with *all* thoughts; and remember, it is not about 'getting rid' of thoughts!



That's an interesting thought!

Practise saying 'that's an interesting thought' with difficult or unhelpful thoughts. It can draw attention to the thought itself, and take some of the 'sting' out of it.



Imagine the thought as words printed on a computer screen. Now change the font style. Now change the colour. Now change the font size. Have a play!

