

# Cognitive Defusion

*Learning to step back from difficult thoughts and intense emotions*

Cognitive defusion is the ability to notice thoughts and emotions without automatically becoming consumed by them, controlled by them, or defined by them.

Many people struggle not because they have painful thoughts or emotions, but because the mind immediately treats them as absolute truth, danger, or commands that must be obeyed.

Instead of:

*“I’m a failure.”*

*“Nothing will ever change.”*

*“I can’t handle this.”*

*“I need to react right now.”*

Defusion helps create a little space:

*“I’m having the thought that I’m a failure.”*

*“My mind is predicting that nothing will change.”*

*“I notice anger showing up right now.”*

That small shift can reduce the emotional grip of the experience.

## What Cognitive Defusion Is NOT

Defusion is not:

- Positive thinking
- Pretending everything is okay
- Suppressing emotions
- Forcing thoughts away
- Avoiding difficult experiences

The goal is not to eliminate painful thoughts or emotions.

The goal is to respond to them differently.

## Common Signs of Being “Fused”

- Treating thoughts as facts
- Getting trapped in overthinking
- Believing emotions must control behavior
- Feeling swept away by anxiety, anger, shame, or sadness
- Reacting impulsively during emotional moments
- Constantly trying to mentally “solve” emotional discomfort

## Simple Defusion Techniques

### 1. Name What Is Happening

“I notice anxiety showing up.”

“My mind is getting loud right now.”

“I notice anger in my body.”

Naming creates space between you and the experience.

### 2. Add: “I’m Having the Thought That...”

Instead of:

*“Nobody cares about me.”*

Try:

*“I’m having the thought that nobody cares about me.”*

### 3. Slow Down Before Reacting

Strong emotions often create urgency.

Before reacting, ask:

*“What action would actually help me right now?”*

#### **4. Allow the Feeling Without Feeding It**

Emotions often intensify when we argue with them, panic about them, avoid them, or overanalyze them.

Sometimes the most helpful response is noticing, breathing, allowing, and not escalating the spiral.

#### **A Helpful Reminder**

Thoughts are not facts.

Emotions are not commands.

You can experience anxiety, sadness, anger, shame, or uncertainty — and still choose actions that align with your values and the kind of person you want to be.

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