

Defusing Exercises

Defusion involves seeing thoughts and feelings for what they are (streams of words, passing sensations), not what they say they are (dangers or facts).

- Notice what's happening – your thoughts, physical sensations, emotions, images, memories. Notice the way you're interpreting what they mean, and how that's affecting you.
- Notice the unhelpful thoughts. It can help to say them differently, in a non-threatening way: slowly, in a squeaky or comic voice or write them down.
- Identify the emotion you're feeling, and label the unhelpful thoughts
 - an evaluation
 - a prediction
 - a feeling
 - a sensation
 - a justification
 - a memory
 - a thinking error (mind-reading, negative filter, catastrophising, personalising etc)
- Learn more and practice mindfulness so that you can be aware of when you are in the present moment rather than being 'in your head' - perhaps the past or future. Notice what you don't normally notice – sights, sounds, sensations, thoughts, textures etc.
- Use metaphors try to see things differently. E.g.
 - Passengers on the Bus
 - You in the driving seat, all passengers (thoughts) chattering, being critical or shouting out direction. You can allow them to shout, but can keep focused on the road ahead.
 - Playground Bully
 - Victim 1 – believes the bully, distressed, reactive (bully carries on)
 - Victim 2 – challenges the bully (bully eventually gives up)
 - Victim 3 – acknowledges then ignores the bully, changing focus of attention.
 - The River
 - Items floating down the river – perhaps leaves or bits of mucky debris (thoughts, feelings, images) – instead of struggling to stay afloat, we can stand on the bank watching it all go by
 - The Beach Ball
 - We try to hold the ball under water, but it keeps popping up (thoughts). We can allow the ball to float around us, not intruding.
 - Thought train
 - Either watching the scenery go by, or standing on platform watching the thought train pass by – we don't have to jump on it.
 - The Tunnel
 - When we get anxious driving through a tunnel, the best option is to keep going rather than try to escape.
 - The Mountain
 - Whatever the weather, or whatever happens on the surface of the mountain, and even within it – the mountain stands firm, mostly unaffected. Strong, grounded, permanent.
- STOP, STEP BACK, OBSERVE (the thoughts and feelings, what's happening to/for the other person).