

# Cognitive Defusion — Getting Unhooked From Unhelpful Thoughts

InsightTimer

Created in collaboration with licensed clinical psychologist, Dr. Diana Hill

We all have thoughts. Some are helpful, some... not so much. Your mind can be like a 24/7 YouTube video, and sometimes it gets stuck on the “self-criticism” or “what-if” channel. But here's the good news: just because your mind says something doesn't mean it's true—or that you have to obey it.

Cognitive defusion is the process of noticing your thoughts as thoughts—not facts, not commands, and definitely not your identity. It's about creating space between you and the things your mind says, so you can choose how to respond instead of reacting automatically.

**ACT Definition:** Cognitive defusion is the skill of stepping back from your thoughts and seeing them as mental events, rather than truths you must believe or follow. It helps you get “unstuck” from unhelpful self-talk so you can act with more freedom and flexibility.

## Examples Of Cognitive Defusion In Practice:



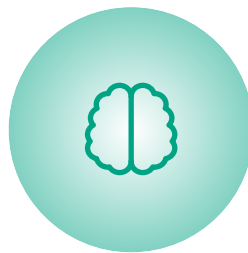
### Naming your thoughts

“There's the ‘I'm not good enough’ thought again.”



### How old is this thought?

“I have had this thought since 6th grade.”



### Thanking your mind

“Thanks, Mind! Very creative today.”



### Visualizing it floating away

like a leaf on a stream or billboard you are

## Journal Practice:

Use your Insight Timer Journal to reflect on the following questions:

1. What's one thought that tends to hook you or bring you down? (e.g., "I'm behind," "People won't like me," "I'm failing at this.")
2. How do you usually respond when that thought shows up?
3. Write this thought with your non-dominant hand 10 times. Notice what happens as you write it. These are just words on the page, words in your mind.
4. What would happen if this thought didn't run the show? What would you do differently that you aren't doing now?

## Insight Timer Practice:



[ACT Cognitive Defusion For Overwhelming Thoughts](#)



[You Are Not Your Thoughts](#)

## ACT Daily Practice:

Pick one recurring unhelpful thought. Write it on a sticky note (yes, literally!). Carry it with you or place it somewhere visible.

1. When you notice the thought arise, try one of the following:
  - a. Say: "I'm noticing I'm having the thought that..."
  - b. So something opposite to the thought
  - c. Say: Thank you mind and go about your day
2. Reflect at the end of the day: How did it feel to unhook from this thought? Did it give you more freedom or ease?

Remember: I am not my thoughts. I can hold them lightly, with humor and curiosity."