

# Cognitive-Defusion Skills

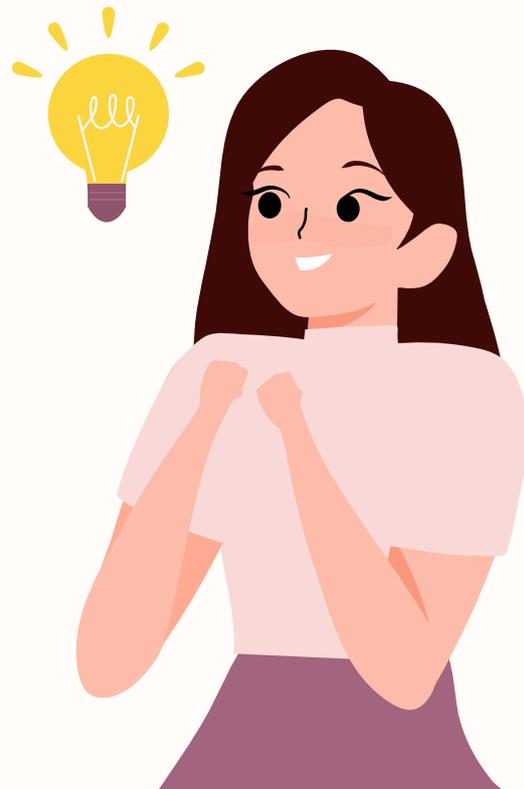
Adapted from Alsana's Body Embrace Program

## OBJECTIVES

As part of creating more body acceptance, it can be helpful to learn to de-fuse or un-merge with thoughts. When you learn that your thoughts are not commands, unquestionable truths, or part of your identity, you are able to separate from these thoughts and create a new lens through which to see the world, which allows for new behaviors.

## INSTRUCTIONS

You can utilize Cognitive De-fusion techniques that work best for you. Below is a list of commonly used Cognitive De-fusion Skills.



# SIDE BY SIDE

NUTRITION

## The mind

Treat “the mind” as an external event, almost as a separate person. (e.g., “Well there goes my mind again” or “My mind is worrying again”).

## Just Noticing

Use the language of observation (e.g., noticing) when talking about private experiences. For example, “So, I’m just noticing that I’m judging myself right now.”

## Buying thoughts

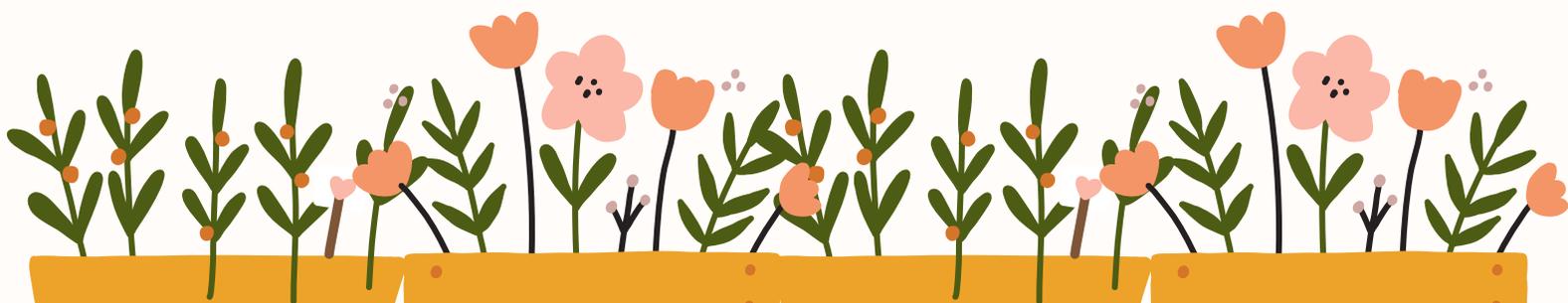
Use active language to distinguish between thoughts that just occur and the thoughts that are believed (e.g., “I guess I’m buying the thought that I’m bad.”)

## Mental appreciation

Thank your mind when you notice it butting in with worries and opinions; show aesthetic appreciation for its products (e.g., “You are doing a great job worrying today! Thanks for the input!”) This is not sarcasm. After all, the word machine is doing exactly what it was designed to do all of those thousands of years ago; “problem solve” and avoid danger.

## Commitment to openness

If you notice you start to fight with your insides when negative content shows up, ask yourself if such negativity is acceptable, and try getting to yes.



# SIDE BY SIDE

NUTRITION

## Experiential seeking

Openly seek out more material, especially if it is difficult. If your mind tells you not to do something that is scary but worthwhile, thank your mind for the great hint and do the difficult thing with gusto.

## Thoughts are not causes

If a thought seems to be a barrier to an action, ask yourself, "Is it possible to think that thought, as a thought, AND do x?" Try it out by deliberately thinking the thought while doing what it has been stopping.

## Pop-up mind

Imagine that your negative chatter is like Internet pop-up ads, or a cell phone you can't turn off

## Think the opposite

If your mind is taking action, practice deliberately engaging in a behavior while trying to command the opposite. For example, get up and walk around while saying, "I can't move while I'm reading this sentence!"

## Monsters on the bus

Treat scary private events as monsters on a bus you are driving. See if it is okay just to keep on driving rather than doing what they say or trying to get them to leave.



# SIDE BY SIDE

NUTRITION

## Who is in charge here?

Treat your thoughts as bullies; use colorful language. Who's life is this anyway? Your mind's or yours?

## And what is that in the service of?

When you are buying a thought, back up for a moment and ask yourself, "What is buying this thought in the service of?" If it is not in the service of your interests, stop buying the thought.

## Get off your butt

Replace virtually all self-referential uses of "but" with "and."

## How old is this? Is this like you?

When you are buying a thought, back up for a moment and ask yourself, "How old is this pattern?" or "Is this like me?"

## Why, why?

If you find that your reasons why are entangling, ask yourself repeatedly why the event exists and why it functions the way it does, until you have a hard time answering. It may help to show how shallow the story really is and how experiential avoidance creates the pain of absence. For example, "I can't do it." Why? "I feel anxious." And why does that mean you can't do it? "Ahh...I don't know."



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## Create a new story

If you find yourself entangled in a logical but sad story about your life, and why things have to be the way they are, write down the normal story, then take all the descriptive facts and write the same exact facts into a different story. Repeat until you feel more open to new possibilities with your history.

## Find something that can't be evaluated

If you find yourself entangled in negative evaluations, look around the room and notice that every single thing can be evaluated negatively if you choose to. So why should you be any different? This is just what the mind has evolved to do!

## Which would you rather be?

If you are fighting to be right, even if it doesn't help move you forward, ask yourself, "Which would I rather be, right or alive and vital?"

## And how has that worked for me?

When you are buying a thought, back up for a moment and ask yourself, "How has that worked for me?" and if it hasn't worked ask, "Which should I be guided by, my mind or my experience?"

