

Hayes, Steven C. *A Liberated Mind* (p. 162). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

DEFUSION

Cognitive fusion is when you engage and join with the content of a thought.

The goal is to take the “energy of our counterproductive yearning and pivot it toward learning to be gently guided by our experience. We become able to prize function over form. As we experience the benefits of focusing on helpful thoughts, we become increasingly motivated to defuse from the Dictator’s voice, creating a positive feedback loop.”

Being attached to mental form over mental function. We want mental function.

“If we learn to think of our internal voice as that of an advisor rather than a dictator, it can become enormously helpful to us.”

You will need to continue developing the skill of defusion for the rest of your life; just as meditators must keep working on their meditation skills, lifetime practice of defusion is needed to keep the pull of the yearning for coherence from tempting us into trying to make all of our thoughts consistent or else. That kind of coherence—let’s call it *literal coherence*—is ultimately impossible. But learning to take what is useful and leaving the rest—*functional coherence*—is both helpful and possible.

THE METHODS – 4 Core

1. Disobey on purpose.

Stand up and carry a book around with you while slowly walking around the room. At the same time say, "I cannot walk around this room." 6 or 7 times. It's disobeying the rule.

2. Give your mind a name and listen to it politely.

If your mind has a name, then it is different from you. If your mind has a name, then it is different from "you." When you listen to someone else, you can choose to agree with what they say or not, and if you don't want to cause conflict, it's best not to try to argue the person into agreement with you. That is the posture you want to take with your internal voice.

3. Appreciate what your mind is trying to do.

I really get that you are trying to be of use, so thank you for that. But I've got this covered. Say it out loud. Works best when you've given your mind a name.

4. Sing it.

Turn the thought into a sentence and sing it to any tune you like. Try different tunes. Sing fast and slow.

OTHER METHODS

5. Backward.

Take a negative word that's at the heart of a recurrent thought and spell it backwards. "I guess I'm stupid . . . Say, did you know that stupid spelled backward is diputs?" Odd interruptions like that remind you that you are just thinking.

6. Look at it as an object.

Put the thoughts out in front of you and ask: how big, what shape, what color, how does it move, how fast, how much power, what's the surface texture, what would it feel like to touch?

If that doesn't work, focus on your reaction to the thought and do the same exercise with that.

7. Different voices.

Say your difficult thought out loud in another voice. You can pick your least favorite politician, or a cartoon character, or the voice of a movie star. Try out different voices. Keep in mind, though, never, ever to ridicule yourself. The voices are to help you look at the thoughts, not to make fun of them, or you.

8. The hand exercise.

Write the thought on the palm of your hand (or imagine it). Now bring your hand close to your face. This is a metaphor for fusion: thought dominating over your awareness. Now move it back out, a little to the side and over to the other side. You can see the thought but other things also. Now put your hand down. You can move the thought around or out of sight.

9. Carry it with you.

Write it on a small piece of paper and hold it up. It looks small and fragile. Carry it everywhere – pocket, purse, wherever. It's with you and allowed to come along.

10. The little kid.

This exercise will help you develop self-compassion. It's vital to be aware that defusing from our thoughts should not involve self-ridicule or being hard on ourselves for having such thoughts. You are not ridiculous.

Take a difficult thought that goes along way back in your history, and picture yourself as young as you can while having that thought or others like it. Now say those words or imagine them out of your little girl voice. Then focus on what you might do if you were there for that little girl to help her. Give her a hug. Ask how you can do that for yourself now.