



## DEFUSION

### Getting unhooked from your thoughts

ACT says that we have a tendency to get fused with thoughts, trying to make them part of ourselves rather than recognizing that they're just thoughts passing by. Cognitive defusion is about getting unhooked from your thoughts and understanding that they don't define you.

## WILLINGNESS AND COMMITMENT



### Acceptance

Willingness is another word for acceptance. Being willing means opening up to all thoughts and feelings, whether painful or pleasant, when doing so takes you in the direction of building a meaningful life.

## COMMITTED ACTION

### Alignment with one's values



Create a life of integrity, true to one's deepest wishes and longings.

Commitment involves both persistence and change— whichever is called for to live in alignment with one's values in specific contexts.

## VALUES

### Choices & direction

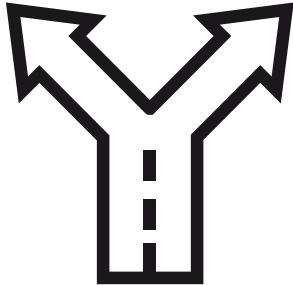


Values are activities that give our lives meaning. Values are not goals in that we never “accomplish” a value.

Instead, values are like a compass— they help us make choices based on the directions in which we want our lives to go.

## CREATIVE HOPELESSNESS

Finding a different way



Identifying the strategies that has been used and did not work in order revert ones energy to find alternative ways of dealing with difficult thoughts, feelings, and other private events.

## CONTROL IS THE PROBLEM, NOT THE SOLUTION

Letting go of control

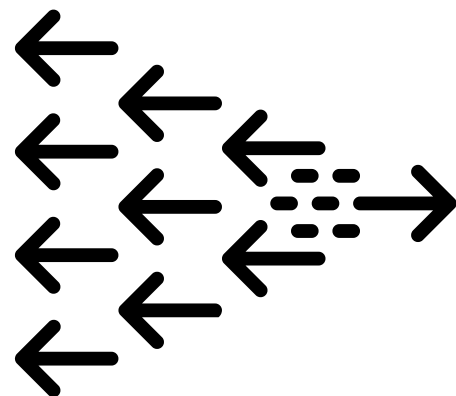


Increasing awareness that emotional control strategies are largely responsible for ones problems; that as long as you are fixated on trying to control how you feel, you are trapped in a vicious cycle of increasing suffering.

## ACT METAPHORS

The use of metaphors helps conjure images of unhealthy ways of thinking and this visualization helps become more empowered. Instead of fighting inevitable pain, acceptance strategies can help make peace with it and detach from the intensity of the pain Visualization helps to heal and move closer towards our life goals.

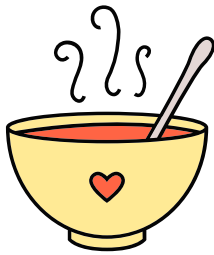
## ACCEPTANCE VS. RESISTANCE METAPHORS



ACT identifies resistance as the main source of suffering in our lives, and acceptance is the way to alleviate that suffering.

# ALPHABET SOUP

Defusion, Willingness, Values



Visualize what it might feel like to be served a big bowl of alphabet soup. Describe the feeling of warmth that comes with the soup, not only of physical warmth but also of emotional warmth, a sense of being cared for. Imagine that every letter of the alphabet in that wonderful, warm soup signifies a positive quality that you have and write or say these out loud.

# BAD CUP

## Defusion



There are things in our language that draw us into needless psychological battles, and it is good to get a sense of how this happens so that we can learn to avoid them. One of the worst tricks language plays on us is in the area of evaluations. Things have to be what we say they are when we're engaging in the kind of talk that is naming and describing.

# BECOMING A LAWYER FOR YOUR FAMILY TRADITIONS

## Defusion



Reflect on this role in relation to your values. How has your mind tricked you into taking on the role of a defense lawyer for your family traditions?"

# BOX FULL OF STUFF

Control is the Problem,  
not the Solution



Visualize the content of your life— some are good and some are bad. Write a list. What is in your control? What can you let go of to make room for better things?

## BATTLEFIELD

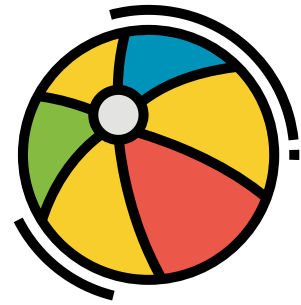
### Willingness



You have been trying to win the war with your mind, with your anxiety, with your urges. List these battles or say them out loud. Reflect on what you have learnt with ACT. ACT is about letting the war roll on while you leave the battlefield.

## BEACHBALL

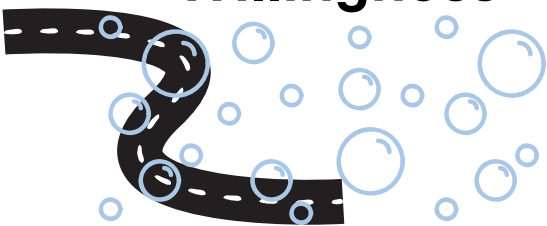
### Willingness



We try to stop thoughts, but that is impossible. It is like trying to constantly hold an enormous inflatable beach ball under the water, but it keeps popping up in front of our faces. We can allow the ball to float around us, just letting it be. So rather than stop the thoughts, we can stop fighting them, and let them be, without reacting to them.

## BUBBLE IN THE ROAD

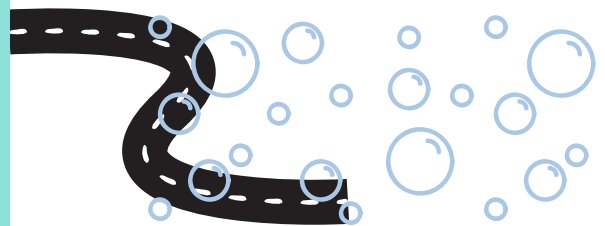
### Willingness



Imagine that you are a soap bubble. Have you ever seen how a big soap bubble can touch smaller ones and the little ones are simply absorbed into the bigger ones? Well, imagine that you are a soap bubble like that and you are moving along a path you have chosen. Suddenly, another bubble appears before you and says, "Stop!" You float there for a few moments. When you move to get around, over, or under that bubble, it moves just as quickly to block your path. Now you have only two choices.

## BUBBLE IN THE ROAD

### Willingness

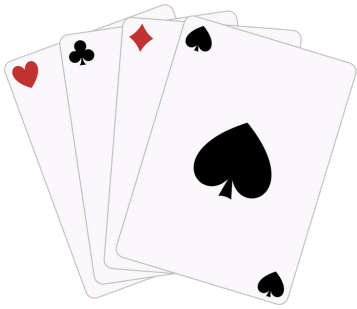


You can stop moving in your valued direction, or you can touch the other soap bubble and continue on with it inside you.

This second move is what we mean by "willingness". Your barriers are largely feelings, thoughts, memories, and the like. They are really inside you, but they seem to be outside. Willingness is not a feeling or a thought -- it is an action that answers the question the barrier asks: "Will you have me inside you by choice, or will you not? In order for you to take a valued direction and stick to it, you must answer yes, but only you can choose that answer.

## DECK OF CARDS

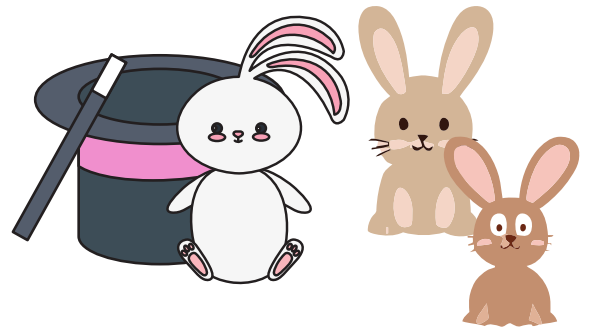
### Acceptance vs. resistance



If you're playing a card game, you get dealt a given hand. You may not like the hand you've got, but what's going to give you the highest odds of success, playing the hand that's in front of you or trying to play the hand you wish you had?

## THE MAGICIANS HAT

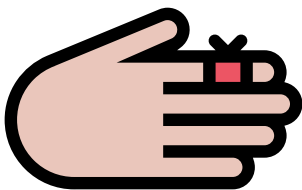
### Defusion



Imagine your thoughts and feelings are being pulled from the magician's hat. The rabbit may be cute, scary, funny. Remember you are the magician and you can decide which rabbit you pull out of the hat.

## CHINESE FINGER WRAP

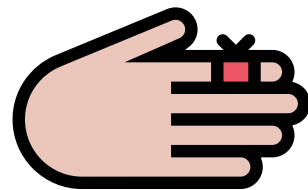
### Creative hopelessness



The harder you pull, the smaller the tube gets and the tighter it holds your fingers. You have to pull your fingers out of their sockets to get them out by pulling them once they have been caught. Maybe this situation is something like that. Maybe these tubes are like life itself. There is no healthy way to get out of life, and any attempt to do so just restricts the room you have to move. Maybe you need to come at this situation from a whole different angle than what your mind tells you to do with your psychological experiences.

## CHINESE FINGER WRAP

### Creative hopelessness



"If you've ever played with a Chinese finger trap, you know that the game is a woven straw tube about the width of your finger. When you put one finger in each end and pull, the straw stretches out and gets narrower. The harder you pull, the narrower the tube gets and it becomes impossible to get your fingers out. If you simply push your two fingers together, however, your fingers will be free.

Now, think about how life is like a Chinese finger trap. The more you fight against it, the more limits you have. If you stop fighting, you keep your freedom to make your own choices."

## **BULLSEYE**

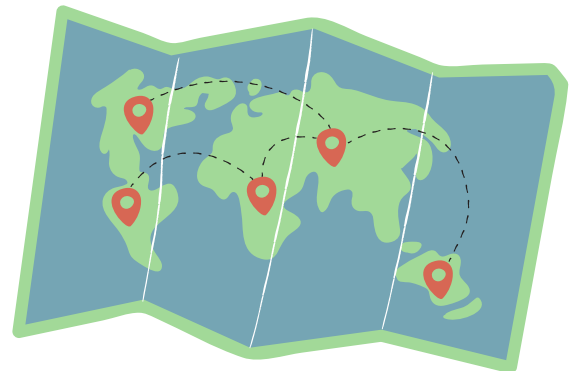
### **Committed Action**



Living according to your values is like hitting the bullseye in a game of darts. The closer you land to the bullseye the closer you are living fully by your values in that area of life.

## **CREATING A ROAD MAP**

### **Creative hopelessness**



If your value is the compass point by which you want to guide your life's journey, your goals are the road map that can lead you there.

## **DEAD MAN'S GOALS**

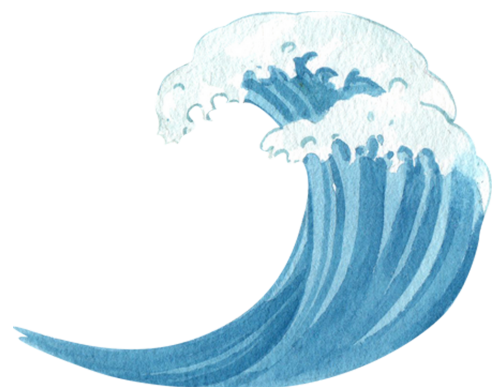
### **Committed Action**



Goals that involve getting rid of something or stopping something are called "dead man goals". The only person capable of achieving such goals is a dead man. What do you need to let go of? What new SMART goals can you set with committed action?

## **THE OCEAN**

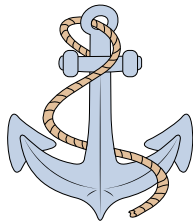
### **Defusion, Self-as-Context**



Our mind is like the waves of the ocean. Our thoughts and feelings come and go – ebb and flow. They may be big or small. They will always pass.

## **DROPPING ANCHOR**

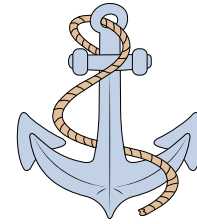
**Willingness, Committed Action**



Think of a bad habit you have—compare it to getting into boating. At first, you are given free rides and you like it. Then you get your own boat and you enjoy your trips. But soon you find yourself adrift at sea attacked by pirates. You have to seek shelter in a shark-infested archipelago, full of reefs, sandbanks, rocks, and dangerous currents and things get really unpleasant and very scary.

## **DROPPING ANCHOR**

**Willingness, Committed Action**



The sensible thing to do now is to throw in your anchor. You are still in the same sea but steady. You are not making any progress by setting yourself adrift again in those dangerous waters. In this situation the anchor is not your problem, it is your salvation. Over time you will want to move on. So, you think about where to go from here, looking for a safe direction and a worthwhile goal. You will need to let go of your anchor and steer in the direction of your values.

## **THE JELLY FISH** **Committed Action**



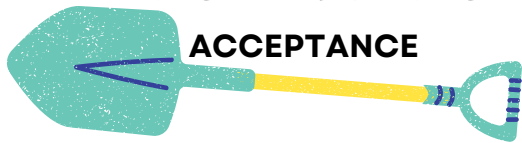
"Like the jellyfish, I know it's time for me to finally come out of the depths and push my way to the surface. I'm bringing all of those bits of trauma with me, and I'm going to release them into the ocean — little by little, my empowerment will radiate to those around me. Because, as we let go of things that keep us in the depths, we're one push closer to being able to see the light at the surface, and we're more able to point others toward that light, too."

## **THE BACKACK** **Committed Action**



You are carrying a heavy backpack filled with stones. These can be your worries, fears anxiety — any emotions you are carrying. Remember you can choose to put the bag down.

## HOLE IN A SHOVEL

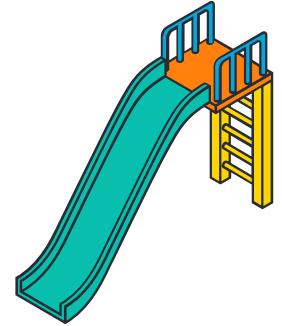


### ACCEPTANCE

“Imagine you fall into a fairly deep hole and the only thing you have to help you get out is a shovel. Since you don’t know what to do and you feel desperate, you start to shovel away. Little by little, you get deeper into the hole. As you remove dirt, the hole gets deeper and it’s harder to get out. Wouldn’t it have been better to use the shovel in some other way? Couldn’t you have waited to see if someone came by to help you out?” This is exactly what happens with experiential avoidance. The anxiety you feel about getting out of the difficult situation makes you bury yourself even more in that difficulty. However, acceptance can help you find new alternatives. Maybe you have to suffer at the beginning, but the long-term solution will be more beneficial.

## THE PLAYGROUND SLIDE

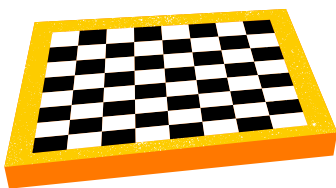
### Defusion, Self-as-Context



Think of your worries like going down a slide. It may be scary in the beginning as you look down – as you go down it gets less scary. Every time you go down the slide it gets easier and you are able to go down bigger slides in the future.

## THE CHESS BOARD

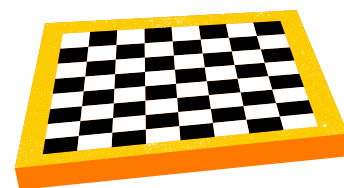
### Defusion, Self-as-Context



Imagine a chessboard that goes out infinitely in all directions. It is covered with black pieces and white pieces. They work together in teams, as in chess -- the white pieces fight against the black pieces. You can think of your thoughts and feelings and beliefs as these pieces; they sort of hang out together in teams too. For example “bad” feelings (like anxiety, depression, resentment) hang out with “bad” thoughts and “bad” memories. Same thing with the “good”

## THE CHESS BOARD

### Defusion, Self-as-Context



So it seems that the way the game is played is that we select the side we want to win. We put the “good” pieces (Like thoughts that are self-confident, feelings of being in control, etc) on one side, and the “bad” pieces on the other. Then we get up on the back of the black horse and ride to battle, fighting to win the war against anxiety, depression, thoughts about using drugs, whatever. It is a war game.

## THE SKY & THE WEATHER

### Defusion, Self-as-Context



While the weather can range from warm sunny days to cold blizzardy ones, the sky is still the same sky. No particular weather feature lasts forever; storms, no matter how bad they are, come and go. While your thoughts and emotions may get stormy at times, you are the sky, not the storms, and those storms will pass on their own.

## BALL IN A POOL

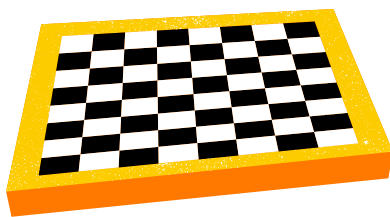
### Acceptance vs. resistance



Say you're in a pool with a blown-up ball that you don't like. You can try to submerge it underwater, but it's going to keep popping up. You can keep trying to keep it underwater, but it's not going to stay there, and you'll just tire yourself out. If you just let it be, it's still there and you may not like it, but instead of wasting your energy on it, you can use that energy to do your own thing and go for a swim.

## THE CHESS BOARD

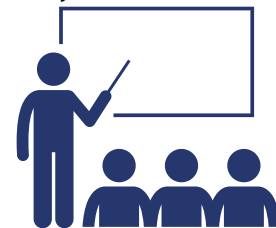
### Defusion, Self-as-Context



A core message of ACT is that our self is the context for what happens inside our heads, not the content of it. One metaphor for this is the chessboard. The pieces are our thoughts and emotions, and the players are our meta-cognitions and meta-emotions that respond to (and try to control) what's happening on the board. Our self is the chessboard. The players and the pieces may come and go, but the board is still there, witnessing it all without being changed by it.

## THE CLASSROOM

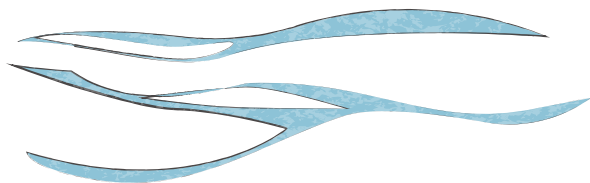
### Defusion, Self-as-Context



Another version of this is the classroom. The students (aka thoughts) may be well-behaved, poorly behaved, or somewhere in the middle. The teacher's role includes evaluating those students and trying to keep them in line; this is where metacognition (thinking about thinking) comes in. Then there's the classroom. It's not judging; it's just there, holding the whole class. You're neither the students nor the teacher; you're the classroom in your mind.

## RIPTIDE

### Acceptance vs. resistance



If you get caught in a rip tide and try frantically to swim to shore, it won't accomplish anything other than exhausting you, and you may drown as a result. On the other hand, if you stop resisting and just let it carry you for a while, it will release you, and you'll be able to swim to shore. You don't want to be in that rip tide, and you're definitely not celebrating being in the rip tide, but accepting it is the fastest way out. Very similar to this is the quicksand metaphor. If you try to fight it, you're likely to get sucked in, whereas if you relax, you'll float to the surface, and from there you can escape.

## JUMPING OFF A CLIFF

### Willingness



Let's imagine this piece of paper on the floor is a cliff. Would you be willing to stand on it with your toes right up to the edge? You can keep your eyes open or closed. Go ahead and imagine all the things you would think, see, and feel if you truly were standing on the edge of a cliff. Now describe to me, what action would be necessary for you to literally jump off this cliff. What would your legs, arms, feet, etc, be required to do? If you are willing, would you go ahead and jump?

## TUG OF WAR

### Acceptance vs. resistance



If you're in a tug of war and your team pretty closely matches the other team, you could be stuck forever pulling back and forth. There's another option, though; you could quit fighting, drop the rope, and go do something that you actually want to do with your time.

## PASSENGERS ON A BUS

### Acceptance vs. resistance



As you're driving your bus along the road called life, you'll pick up passengers along the way. Some will be well-behaved, others will be noisy, and there may even be a creepy dude masturbating in the back. You could try to oust the rowdies, but chances are the bus will crash while you're at it. On the other hand, you could crank up the tunes and drive the bus however and wherever you want, while that handy plexiglass divider keeps the riff-raff at a distance.

## EMPEROR MOTH

### Willingness



A man found a cocoon of an emperor moth. He took it home so that he could watch the moth come out of the cocoon. On the day a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the moth for several hours, just watching as the moth struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared to have gotten as far as it could. It just seemed stuck. Then the man, in his kindness, decided to help the moth. So he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The moth emerged easily, but it had a swollen body and small shrivelled wings.

## EMPEROR MOTH

### Willingness

The man continued to watch. He expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and open out to be able to support the body. Neither happened! The little moth spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shrivelled wings. It never was able to fly. What the man in his kindness and haste didn't understand was this; in order for the moth to fly, it needed to experience the restricting cocoon and the painful struggle as it emerged through the tiny opening. This was a necessary part of a process to force fluid from the body and into the wings so that the moth would be ready for flight once it achieved freedom from the cocoon. Freedom and flight would only come after allowing painful struggle. By depriving the moth of a struggle, the man deprived the moth of health.

## THE FISHHOOK

### Willingness, Forgiveness



Your feelings about this person/situation is like having a fish on a hook. As long as the person/situation is there in front of you, you can see that he/she/it is wriggling and in pain. But the only way to make sure that he/she/it stays on that fishhook is to have yourself on that fishhook too, between the fishhook and the person who is hooked. The question is, Is it worth it?

## FISH IN THE WATER

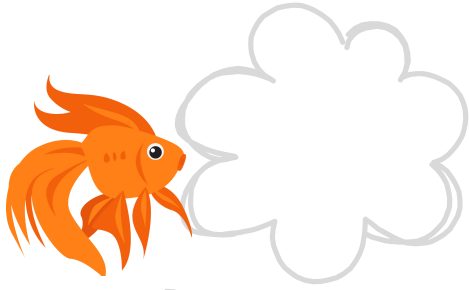
### Defusion



We are the fish, and language is the water. How would a fish know if they were wet if they had never been out of the water? Jumping out of the water helps you to notice the water, but we all still must swim in it.

## FISH SWIMMING IN OUR THOUGHTS

### Defusion



Fish swim in water naturally. They don't "know" they are under water, they just swim. Thinking is like this for human beings

Thoughts are our water. We are so immersed in them that we are hardly aware they are there. Swimming in our thoughts is our natural state. You can't take a fish out of the water and expect it to live as a fish. But what would happen if the fish became aware of the water?

## FLYFISHING

### Defusion



Our minds can be like really skilled fly fishers. Our thoughts and feeling are like really specific flies in our mind designs and are just the ones we will bite on. Our mind casts them out on the stream in front of us – they seem so real to us and so we 'buy' them, bite and get hooked. Once we are hooked, the more we struggle the more we get hooked., but if we stop struggling so hard, we get off the hook.

## GARDENING

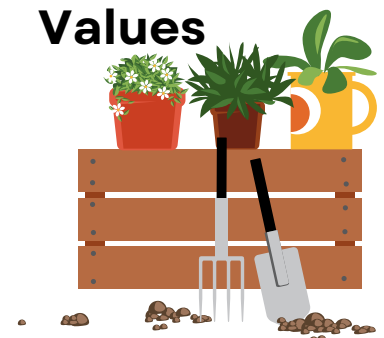
### Values



Imagine that you selected a spot to plant a garden. You worked the soil, planted the seeds, and waited for them to sprout. Meanwhile, you started noticing a spot just across the road, which also looked like a good spot -- maybe even a better spot. So you pulled up your vegetables and went across the street and planted another gardener there. Then you noticed another spot that looked even better. Values are like the spot where you plant a garden. You can grow some things very quickly, but others require time and dedication.

## GARDENING

### Values



Some things you plant may seem to take forever to come up. It is at times like this that your mind will tell you, "You should have planted elsewhere." "This will probably never work." "It was stupid of you to think you could grow anything here" and so on. The choice to garden here allows you to water and weed and hoe, even when these thoughts and feelings show up.

## HELICOPTER VIEW

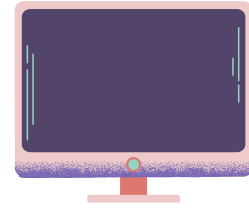
### Defusion



Sometimes it's useful to see the bigger picture. When something is distressing us, we're so close to it, involved with it, part of it – it's really hard to stand back from what's happening. It's a bit like Google Earth – we see the close up view but everything else is hidden from us.

## MESSAGE ON A COMPUTER SCREEN

### Defusion



Imagine there are two computers, side by side, that are identical in all details -- same software, same data, same machine. Imagine that what is on the screen of both is a frightening image: say a picture of the walls of the room melting. In one case the operator of the computer is sitting close and has forgotten that what he/she is seeing is even on a computer screen. In the second case, the operator of the computer is sitting back quite clearly that this is just something on the screen. Which operator do you think will be more frightened by that image -- which one will work harder to change it?

## HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEART

### Willingness and Commitment



Recall a time when you were in high school and were in love with someone who rejected you. Can you remember how terrible the pain seemed to be at the time? For some people, this pain leads to lifelong scars, to a pattern of not trusting other people and avoiding opportunities for real intimacy. Look at the pain from your first rejection and ask yourself:

## HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEART

### Willingness and Commitment



How would it have worked if it really was OK just to hurt when you lose something? You have little control over the pain in your life – people will reject you, people will die, and bad things will happen. Pain is a part of living that none of us can avoid. But what you do have control over is whether the pain turns into trauma. If you are unwilling to hurt, you have to avoid pain. If you don't open up, the damage continues and continues.

## HUNGRY TIGER

**Control is the problem, not the solution**



Imagine you wake up one morning and just outside your front door you find an adorable tiger kitten meowing. You bring the cuddly little guy inside to keep as a pet. After playing with him for a while, you notice he is still meowing, nonstop, and you realize he must be hungry. You feed him a bit of bloody, red ground beef knowing that is what tigers like to eat. You do this every day, and every day your pet tiger grows a little bigger. Soon your little pet no longer meows when hungry. Instead, he growls ferociously at you whenever he thinks it's mealtime.

## HUNGRY TIGER

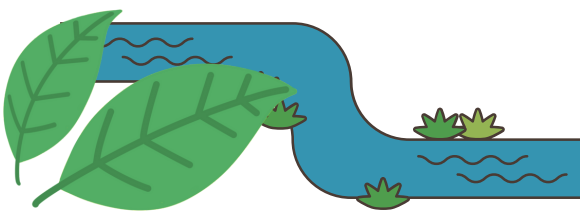
**Control is the problem, not the solution**

Your cute little pet has turned into an uncontrollable, savage beast that will tear you apart if he doesn't get what he wants. Your struggle with pain can be compared to this imaginary pet tiger. Every time you empower your pain by feeding it the red meat of experiential avoidance, you help your pain-tiger grow a little bit larger and a little bit larger and a little bit stronger. The pain-tiger growls ferociously telling you to feed it whatever it wants or it will eat you. Yet, every time you feed it, you help the pain to become stronger, more intimidating, and more controlling of your life.

The more value you place on your thoughts, the bigger they become. If you feed your thoughts, they'll end up controlling a big part of your life.

## LEAVES ON A STREAM

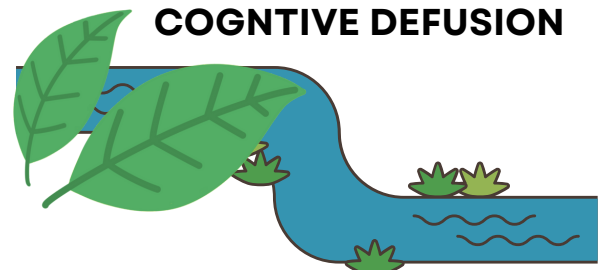
**COGNITIVE DEFUSION**



Imagine thoughts as leaves on a stream. They come, they do their dance, and then they'll be carried off. They don't change the nature of the stream itself; they just float on top of it. Sometimes, our minds are overly eager beavers; instead of letting the leaves float by, they start making a dam to try to manage them or keep them away. The thoughts then get caught up in the dam rather than being able to float by.

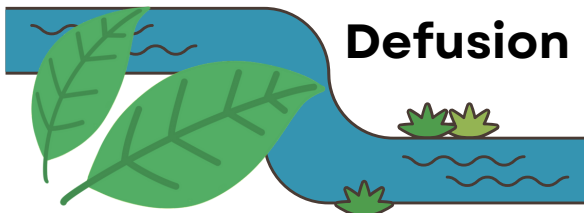
## LEAVES ON A STREAM

**COGNITIVE DEFUSION**



When we try to fight the thoughts, our beaver mind thinks it's going to be helpful and strengthen the dam, but that just makes the situation worse by getting those thoughts even more entangled. This can mean that thoughts related to transient, minor safety threats get caught up in your head and stick around far longer than they should. On the other hand, if you just let the thoughts be, they would eventually flow on along.

## LEAVES ON A STREAM



### Defusion

Sometimes it feels like we are being carried away downstream struggling to stay afloat amongst all the mud, filth, and debris.

That muck and debris are thoughts, sensations, events, feelings, and that river/stream is our distress as we drift helplessly downstream. But we can stand on the riverbank, watching as those thoughts, events, sensations, and feelings go by. You might watch individual items as they pass – perhaps a thought floating on a leaf. We can stand and watch. We can get out of that stream. We do this by creating distance from our thoughts to reduce the power they have over us.

## BUTTERFLY

### Acceptance vs. resistance



Think of how a butterfly comes out of a cocoon. A butterfly never stays in one place for long as it flutters about. Our feelings and thoughts never remain the same—they can be transformative. Embrace these changes.

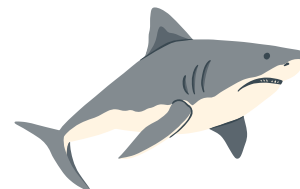
## MAIL BOX



### COGNITIVE DEFUSION

Chances are you get junk mail, both in your postal mailbox and your email inbox. When you see these, how do you react? Do you track down each of the senders and spazz at them in an attempt to stop the flow of junk mail? If you were to do that, how effective would it be? Chances are, the junk mail is going to keep on coming, and the easiest thing to do is to recognize that a given piece of mail is junk and then not pay it any further attention. Defusing from junk thoughts is similar—you can notice them, recognize them for what they are, and carry right on along with your life.

## THE SHARK TANK AND THE POLYGRAPH TEST

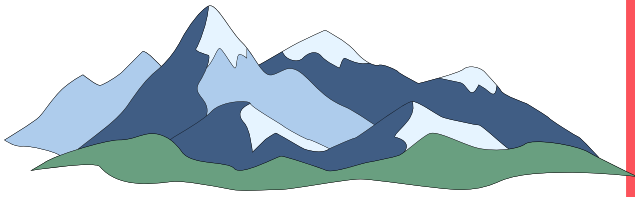


“Imagine that you’re sitting at the edge of a tank surrounded by sharks and that you’re connected to an extremely senior task is to avoid feeling any anxiety whatsoever. If you feel anxious, your seat will tilt and you’ll go directly into the shark tank. What do you think will happen? As you can imagine, you’ll very likely experience anxiety.

A positive polygraph machine. This metaphor is perfect for people who suffer panic attacks. You start to feel a little bit anxious, but you want to avoid anxiety. However, you can’t stand it, and you think “This is horrible, I can’t feel anxious!” and that makes you even more anxious. When you realize what’s happening, you’re already inside the shark tank.

## **MOUNTAINS**

### **Willingness**



Whatever the weather, or whatever happens on the surface of the mountain – the mountain stands firm, strong, grounded, and permanent. We can be like that mountain, observing thoughts, feelings, and sensations, and knowing inner stillness.

## **MUD IN THE GLASS**

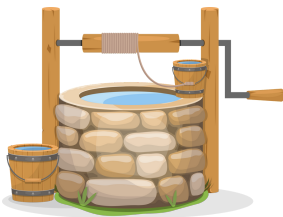
**Willingness, Creative Hopelessness**



Our work here is going to be hard. It will stir some things up. Your life is kind of like this glass filled with mud that has settled to the bottom, and our work is to get this glass clean. How do you suppose that we could get the mud out of the glass? What if scooping the mud out could make an extraordinary difference -- what if getting the water messy was worth it? It will feel more painful initially, just the water will appear muddier....

## **MULE IN THE WELL**

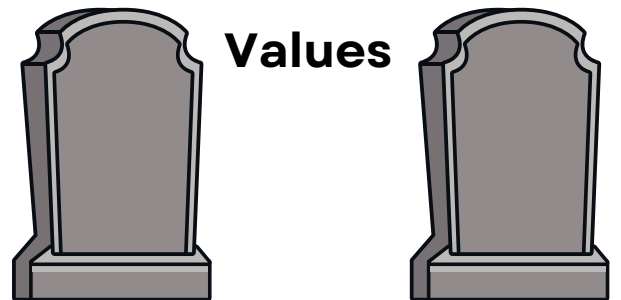
**Control is the Problem**



A farmer has an old, useless mule that falls into a dry, abandoned well. Upon realizing that he is stuck, the mule becomes afraid and begins to bray. The farmer, who hears the mule crying, decides that instead of pulling him out, he will just bury the creature in the well. As the farmer shovels dirt into the well, the mule realizes that he is being buried alive. He shivers and shudders, shaking the dirt from his shoulders to down around his feet. He steps up on top of the dirt. The farmer continues to shovel, and the mule continues to shake and step up and up, eventually stepping right out of the well.

## **TOMBSTONE**

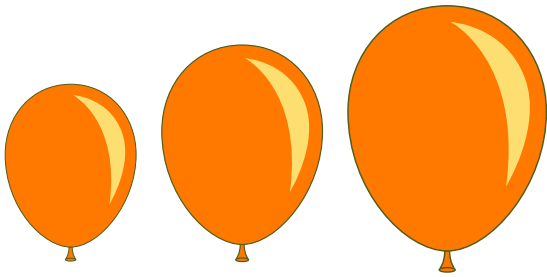
**Values**



When people are buried, an epitaph is often written. They say things like "Here lies Sue. She loved her family with all her heart." If the headstone was yours, what inscription would you like to see on it? How would you most like your life to be characterized? Again, this is neither a description nor a prediction; it is a hope; an aspiration; a wish. It is between you and the person in the mirror. What would you like your life to stand for?

## EXPANDING BALLOON

### Willingness and Commitment

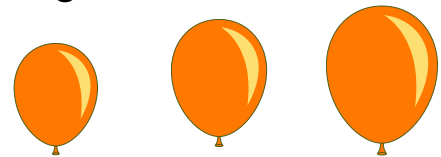


Think of yourself as the expanding balloon

At the edge of the balloon is a zone of growth, where the same question keeps being asked: "Are you big enough to have this?" No matter how big you get, there's always more "big" to get, and the same question keeps being asked. When an issue presents itself, you say yes or no. If you say no, you get smaller. If you say yes, you get bigger.

## EXPANDING BALLOON

### Willingness and Commitment



If you keep answering yes, it does not necessarily get any easier, because of the issue. Shows up may seem just as difficult in relative terms. It does become more habitual, however, and your experience provides a reservoir of strength. If a difficult problem arises, you might think you could say, "No, I don't want that problem to be next," but life presents each new issue as your situation evolves, and it may not be possible to choose the sequence of the challenges. If you hit an issue you refuse to deal with, usually, you have to distort your life around that issue until it is faced.

## FINDING A PLACE TO SIT

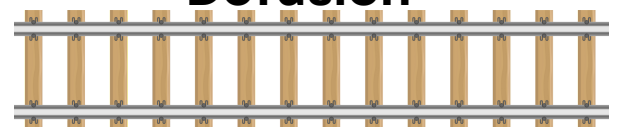
### Defusion



It is as if you needed a place to sit, and so you began describing a chair. Let's say you have a really detailed description of a chair. You are asked to describe the chair. Describe, describe. Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate. And all the while you are getting tired. You need a place to sit. And your mind keeps handing you ever more elaborate descriptions of chairs. Then it says to you, "Have a seat." Descriptions are fine, but what we are looking for here is an experience, not a description of an experience. But what we are looking for here is an experience, not a description of an experience. Minds can't deliver experience, they only blab to us about our experience elsewhere. So we let your mind describe away, and in the meantime, you and I will look for a place to sit.

## MIND-TRAIN

### Defusion



Imagine that you are standing at a railway bridge gazing down at three sets of train tracks. A slow mining train is on each set of tracks moving away from you. Each train is composed of a string of little cars carrying ore. Seemingly endless, all three chug slowly along underneath the bridge. Now, as you look down, imagine that the train to the left carries only the "ore" of things you notice in the present moment. That ore is composed of sensations, perceptions, and emotions. It carries things like the sounds you hear; sweaty palms you feel; skipped heartbeats you sense; sadness you notice; and so forth. The middle train carries only your thoughts: your evaluations, your predictions, your self conceptualizations, and so on. The train on your right carries your urges to act; your pull to avoid and look away; and your efforts to change the subject. Looking down on these tracks can be seen as a metaphor for looking at your mind.

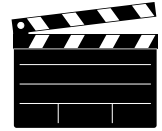
## PLAYGROUND BULLY DEFUSION



Our minds are like school playgrounds that are surrounded by secure high fences – they keep children in, and others out. Any bullies in that playground mean that the other children can't escape for long. This particular bully uses verbal abuse, shouting, teasing, and threats (rather than physical violence). The children are all fenced in together, and ideally, they have just got to learn to accept and learn to be with each other. So neither can we escape our thoughts, we cannot stop them, but perhaps we can learn to live with them by seeing them differently

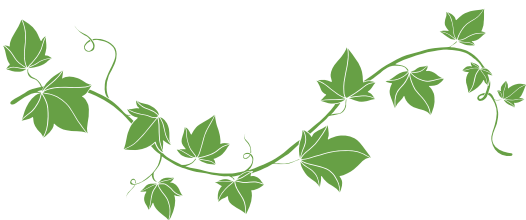
## YOUR LIFE AS A MOVIE

### Defusion & Values



Picture your life as a movie. The first episodes are already shot. (Now summarize what you know of the – usually difficult – salient moments of the client's life). Now the movie is going on. Imagine you are the director and you can direct an actor that plays your part. But you're a special kind of director with limited power. You can't go to the screenplay writer and ask him to change the life events happening to you or direct the other characters to act like you'd want them to do. The only actor you can have an influence on is the one playing your part. You can have him/her play exactly like the person you dream to be. Figure out how you would want him/her to act, in that precise situation you are experiencing now. How would you instruct the actor to act if you want the continuation of the movie to resemble what you would like your life to be, or to show the father/spouse/colleague / etc. you would like to be?

## POISON IVY AND THE ANXIETY ITCH Creative hopelessness



Poison ivy is a plant that produces a strong skin irritant. Most people avoid touching the plant because they know what they get: a nasty, red, blistering rash that itches like hell. If you have been unlucky enough to have been exposed, then you know what this is like. You got the strong urge to scratch. And when you do that, you make matters worse. You end up with open sores on your skin. And if you haven't washed the plant oils from your hands and exposed areas, you may spread the allergic reaction to other parts of your body. No amount of scratching will cure the inflammation.

## POISON IVY AND THE ANXIETY ITCH Creative hopelessness



You need to stop the scratching and allow your body to heal itself. The anxiety itch is like this too. The discomfort rages through your head and body, and you have a strong urge to get relief. So you avoid it. You struggle. The problem is that you can't avoid exposure to anxiety in the same way you can avoid a poison ivy plant. Anxiety can show up anytime or anywhere. When you scratch your anxiety itch with avoidance and struggle, it makes the anxiety worse -- the anxiety grows and spreads to infect most of your life. And all that avoidance scratching pulls you out of your life too.

## QUICKSAND

### Willingness



As the saying about emotional pain goes: What you resist will persist. Alternatively, the less you resist the quicksand, the less you will sink into it. This metaphor is often used to describe the paradoxical nature of emotional and physical pain and the futile agenda of control. When we are stuck in quicksand, the immediate impulse is to struggle and fight to get out. But that is exactly what you must do in quicksand – because as you put the weight down on one part of your body (your foot), it goes deeper.

## QUICKSAND

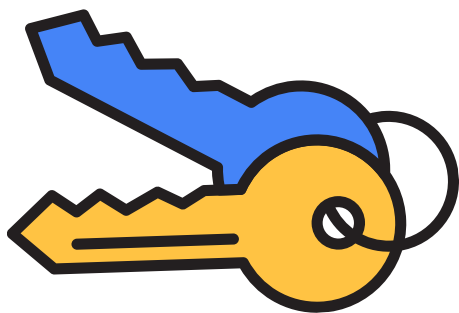
### Willingness



So the more you struggle, the deeper you sink – and the more you struggle. Very much a no-win situation. With quicksand, there is only one option for survival. Spread the weight of your body over a large surface area – lay down. It goes against all our instincts to lay down and really be in the quicksand, but that is exactly what we have to do. So it is with distress. We struggle and fight against it, but we perhaps never considered just letting it be, and being with the distressing thoughts and feelings, but if we did, we find that we get through it and survive – more effectively than if we fought and struggled.

## TAKE YOUR KEYS WITH YOU

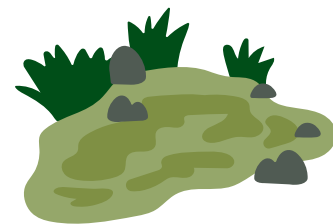
### Willingness and Commitment



Your keys represent different difficult emotions, memories, thoughts and reactions. Picking up the keys and carrying them does not keep you from going anywhere. In fact, the keys can actually open doors that might be locked to us without them.

## SWAMP

### Willingness and Commitment



Suppose you are beginning a journey to a beautiful mountain you can see clearly in the distance. No sooner do you start the hike than you walk right into a swamp that extends as far as you can see in all directions. You say to yourself, “Gee, I didn’t realize that I was going to have to go through a swamp. It is all smelly and the mud is all mushy in my shoes. It’s hard to lift my feet out of the much and put them forward. I’m wet and tired. Why didn’t anyone tell me about this swamp? When this happens, you have a choice: abandon the journey or enter the swamp. Therapy is like that. Life is like that. We go into the swamp, not because we want to get muddy, but because it stands between us and where we are going.

## STOVE

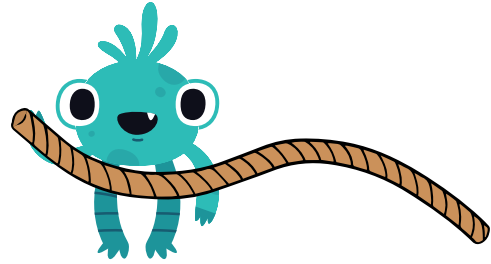
Control is the problem, not the solution



If one experiences physical pain when touching a hot stove, attempting to stop that internal signal of pain or distract oneself from it can have significant consequences (e.g., you may leave your hand on the stove and continue to get burned). So, while the experience of pain is unpleasant, it is adaptive in that it sends the message that action is needed (moving one hand). Further, if one avoids using a stove for fear of the possibility of experiencing physical pain, then the value of self-care becomes secondary to attempts to avoid the internal experience of pain.

## TUG-OF-WAR WITH A MONSTER

Creative Hopelessness



The situation you are in is like being in a tug-of-war with a monster. It is big, ugly, and very strong. In between you and the monster is a pit, and so far as you can tell it is bottomless. If you lose this tug-of-war, you will fall into this pit and will be destroyed. So you pull and pull, but the harder you pull, the harder the monster pulls, and you edge closer and closer to the pit. The hardest thing to see is that our job here is not to win the tug-of-war..... Our job is to drop the rope.

## TUNNEL

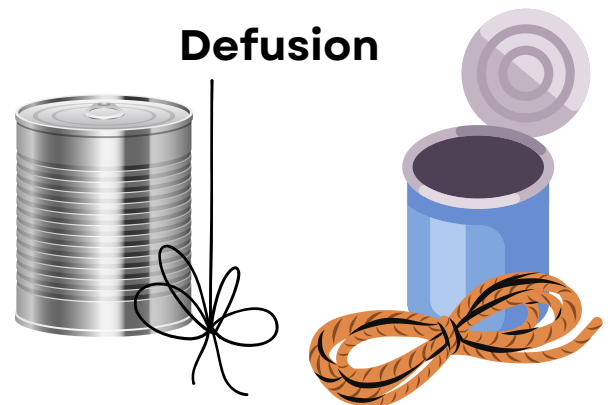
Willingness



When we get anxious driving through a tunnel, the best option is to keep going rather than try to escape. This feeling will pass - there is an end to this tunnel.

## TIN CAN MONSTER

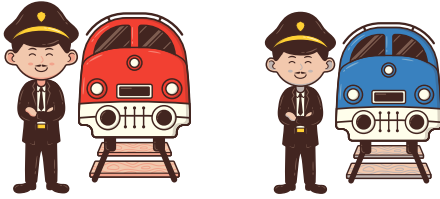
Defusion



Facing our problems is like facing a giant monster who is made up of tin cans and string. The 30-foot monster is almost impossible to face willingly; if we disassemble him, however, into all the cans and string and wire and bubble gum that he's made of, each of those pieces is easier to deal with one at a time.

## WAITING FOR THE WRONG TRAIN

### Willingness and Committed Action



Imagine you are going on a journey. Somewhere really special, where you really want to go, somewhere you've wanted to go your whole life. When you get to the train station you see two trains, one is a bit odd looking and strange, some of the seats look a bit hard and overall it looks a bit dirty and uncomfortable. On the next platform, there is a different train; it's a super train. It looks familiar, safe, reliable, the sort of train an accountant or an insurance salesman might prefer. The sign says it has air conditioning, a cinema, and a fancy all-you-can-eat French restaurant that is free. You think, wow! I just have to take this train, I couldn't possibly make my journey on that other one, no way! So you wait for this 'great' train to get ready to board and the odd-looking train goes on its way. And you wait for the safe train some more and another odd train leaves the station, and another. All the while you are waiting for a chance to board this great reliable train so you can take your journey, as yet another odd looking one leaves. But here is the thing. What if the safe train can't ever board, what if it won't ever leave the station? What if you are waiting for the wrong train?

## TWO MOUNTAINS

### Willingness



We all have challenges in our lives. It is as if we are all traveling up a mountain. We will encounter streams to cross, ditches to maneuver, rocks to scramble and switchbacks to manage. If you can imagine this, you are on your mountain managing your terrain, and I am on my mountain managing my terrain. I have the ability to support and help you because I have a different perspective of your journey from my mountain. I can see the full picture from the distance while you see only the immediate obstacle in your path. In this way, we are all the same and yet, I can be of help in supporting you down your path.

## LIFE AS A MOVIE



### Defusion & Values

Picture your life as a movie. The first episodes are already shot. (Now summarize what you know of the – usually difficult – salient moments in your life). Now the movie is going on. Imagine you are the director and you can direct an actor that plays your part. But you're a special kind of director with limited power. You can't go to the screenplay writer and ask him to change the life events happening to you or direct the other characters to act like you'd want them to do. The only actor you can have an influence on is the one playing your part. You can have him/her play exactly like the person you dream to be. Figure out how you would want him/her to act, in that precise situation you are experiencing now. How would you instruct the actor to act if you want the continuation of the movie to resemble what you would like your life to be, or to show the father / spouse / colleague / etc. you would like to be?

## WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR LIFE TO STAND FOR

### Values



I want you to imagine that through some twist of fate, you have died but you are able to attend your funeral in spirit. You are watching and listening to the eulogies offered by your loved ones. Imagine just being in that situation, and getting yourself into the room emotionally. OK, now I want to visualize what you would like these people who were part of your life to remember you for. Really be bold here. Let them say exactly what you would most want them to say if you had a totally free choice about what that would be. (Go through for several of their loved ones, e.g., wife, children, best friend, etc). Let them say all of these things – and don't withhold anything. Have it be said as you would most want it. And just make a mental note of these things as you hear them spoken.