

Defusion

- Defusion lessens the negative impact of your thoughts on your behaviour
- There are a number of exercises in the **open up** section of ACT Companion which can be used to help identify unhelpful thoughts and practice defusion skills

Defusing from your thoughts helps to lessen their negative impact on your behaviour. So defusion is a vital step towards being able to act flexibly, in accordance with core values, instead of being dictated to by inflexible rules, reasons, judgments etc.

There are numerous exercises in ACT Companion with a focus on identifying unhelpful thoughts which would benefit from defusion, or building defusion skills, most of which are found in the **open up** section of the app. Some of these are reading and writing exercises, and some are guided meditation audio recordings.

ACT Companion defusion exercises

1. Letting go

The aim of this exercise is to identify specific thoughts which you would benefit from using defusion strategies to get unhooked from.

You are invited to consider the impact that holding on tightly to a particular thought - a deep regret about the past, for example - has had, and is likely to continue to have, on your life. Then you are asked to think about a more meaningful way of responding when this thought appears, and to acknowledge the uncomfortable feelings you may have to make room for in order to do so.

2. Not good enough

The purpose of this exercise is to help you identify specific unhelpful self-judgments that you become fused with - your own "not good enough" story - so you can practice defusing from it in the future.

You are asked to list some of the most common "not good enough" criticisms that your mind makes of you, and then select one in particular that feels very uncomfortable or which you tend to get pushed around by.

3. Worry time

This is a very useful exercise for people who find themselves wasting a lot of time, energy and attention worrying about problems without coming up with meaningful, action-oriented solutions.

The steps outlined in the exercise are part of a specific evidence-based intervention for reducing excessive worry, and also include acceptance and mindfulness strategies to make them more ACT-consistent.

4. Thought defusion

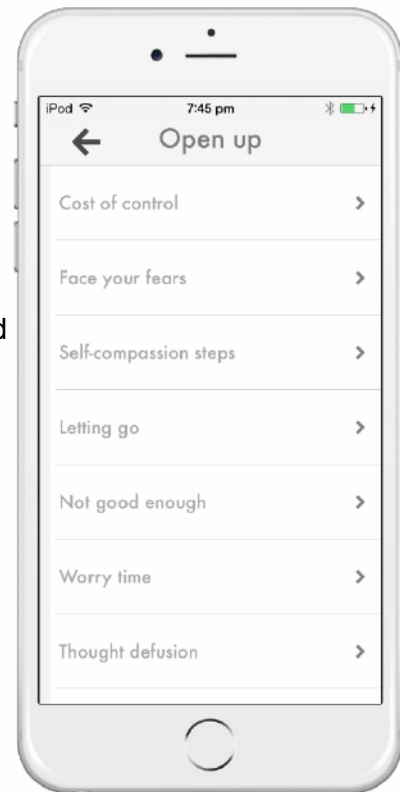
In this exercises, you will find short descriptions of some simple defusion techniques like 'thanking your mind' and 'naming the story', which you are invited to try and see what works best for you.

5. Observing your thoughts

This guided mindfulness exercise takes you through a practice of observing your thoughts, letting them come and go without engaging with their content. It uses the metaphor of 'placing' your thoughts visually on the sides of buses as they pull in and out of a bus stop.

6. Labelling thoughts and feelings

This is another guided mindfulness exercise where every thought and feeling that 'shows up' is observed with curiosity, simply labelled, and allowed to come and go of its own accord. The technique of labelling can be used to accentuate any other mindfulness skill.



Case example: Depression

Please note: The following description is just one example of how a clinician might choose to use ACT Companion with this client, and is not intended to be prescriptive. ACT Companion is a toolbox - become familiar with the tools it contains, and use them flexibly in a way that works for you and your client.

James is experiencing a bout of depression and has been getting fused with harsh self-judgments and painful thoughts, such as "I'm unlovable" and "there's no point trying".

When these thoughts show up, James often avoids spending time with people he cares about and fails to take action towards long-term goals in a number of important areas. As a result, his closest relationships, health and fitness, and performance at work are all beginning to suffer.

SESSION 1

Introduce defusion in session using some specific thoughts that James has been getting fused with as examples. Homework: **Not good enough** and **letting go**.

SESSION 2

Review James' responses to the homework exercises, in particular focus on 'workability' and the impact of fusion on the things that he cares about. Introduce mindfulness of thoughts as a way of facilitating defusion and practice a guided mindfulness exercise in session. Homework: **Observing your thoughts** and **labelling thoughts and feelings**.

SESSION 3

Build on the defusion skills James has been practicing in the mindfulness exercises by introducing a couple of defusion techniques which James can use 'on the go' when difficult thoughts show up. Ask him to try these, and a number of others before next session to see what works for him. Homework:

Thought defusion.

SESSION 4

Find out which defusion techniques James has been having success with and invite him to think about one or two challenging situations he has been avoiding in which he might try to apply these skills - to get unhooked from his thoughts and move towards his values. Invite him to use the **actometer** tool to review his progress when he does so. Homework: **Actometer**