

The diagram consists of two triangles pointing towards each other, forming a larger shape. The left triangle is inverted and the right triangle is upright. Both are filled with a blue-to-white gradient. The left triangle is divided into three horizontal sections by dotted lines. The right triangle is divided into two horizontal sections by dotted lines. The text is centered within each section.

You believe the thought that
you are boring

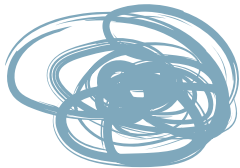
You try **to avoid** this thought

In order to avoid it,
you don't socialize,
which diminishes
your quality
of life

You **recognize**
the thought
is just a thought,
not a fact

You **don't try** to avoid this thought

You socialize, which
increases your quality of life



Defusion →



← Fusion

EMOTION	WHAT IT INDICATES	WHAT IS NEEDED
Sadness	Loss	Slow down and heal
Fear	Danger	Fight, Flight, Freeze
Anger	Boundary violation	Protect or advocate for yourself
Guilt	You've acted inconsistently with your values	Make repairs, apologize
Happiness, Love, Joy	Our need for connection	Making and maintaining bonds

QUIZ: ARE YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS CONTROLLING YOU?

QUESTIONS	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALWAYS
1. I want to stop or control my thoughts.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I believe that I am my thoughts.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I find some of my thoughts intolerable or unacceptable.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I try to distract myself from my thoughts.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My thoughts get in the way of me living my life.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I want to stop or control my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I see my emotions as a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I think some of my emotions are bad or that I should not be feeling the way I do.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I resist experiencing or avoid my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My emotions get in the way of me living my life.	1	2	3	4	5
Score:	+	+	+	+	=



Some kind of difficult emotion arises, maybe it is something fairly innocuous, like boredom, or something heavier like shame.



Some kind of addictive behavior is engaged, whether it is having a drink, smoking a joint, or maybe engaging in some "Netflix and Chill."



Short-Term Relief.
The thing about addictive behaviors is that they are addictive because they work really well (at least temporarily).



Problems persist or worsen. Lack of movement toward values and committed ACTION.

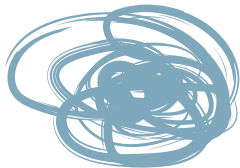


PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Sometimes, when people have difficulty being present with their thoughts and feelings, or are resistant toward them, people develop physical manifestations of them. This is sometimes referred to as somatization. Here are some examples of the way suppressing your thoughts might show up physically in the body:

- Aches and pain
- Muscle tension
- Clenched jaw and teeth grinding
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Headaches
- Low energy or fatigue
- Weakness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Constipation
- Diarrhea

Do you experience any of these physical symptoms? Psychological distress may be causing or exacerbating your symptoms, but it's always important to consult with a medical professional and rule out any possible underlying medical condition.



Defusion →



← Fusion

STRATEGY

IDENTIFYING UNHELPFUL VS. HELPFUL THOUGHTS

The first step in identifying helpful versus unhelpful thoughts involves using defusion to create enough distance from the thought to evaluate it. Try using some of the strategies in this chapter to observe your thoughts. Once you are able to observe them, imagine that you allow these thoughts to direct your behavior. What would you do? What actions might you take? Is this behavior helpful in some way or unhelpful? Is it leading you toward or away from the things you value?

Here are a few examples of thoughts. Think about whether and why they are helpful or unhelpful.

THOUGHT	HOW WOULD THIS THOUGHT DIRECT MY BEHAVIOR?	IS IT HELPFUL OR UNHELPFUL?
"I am stupid, lazy, and unmotivated."	It would decrease my motivation to try things.	Unhelpful
"This has to be perfect. I cannot make a mistake."	It would create a lot of pressure and make it harder to engage.	Unhelpful
"It is his fault. He is to blame."	It may or may not be true, but it doesn't change anything.	Unhelpful
"I better stop procrastinating and start working on this assignment."	It would help me get started.	Helpful
"I want to make it to the gym three times this week."	It would help me schedule workouts for this upcoming week.	Helpful

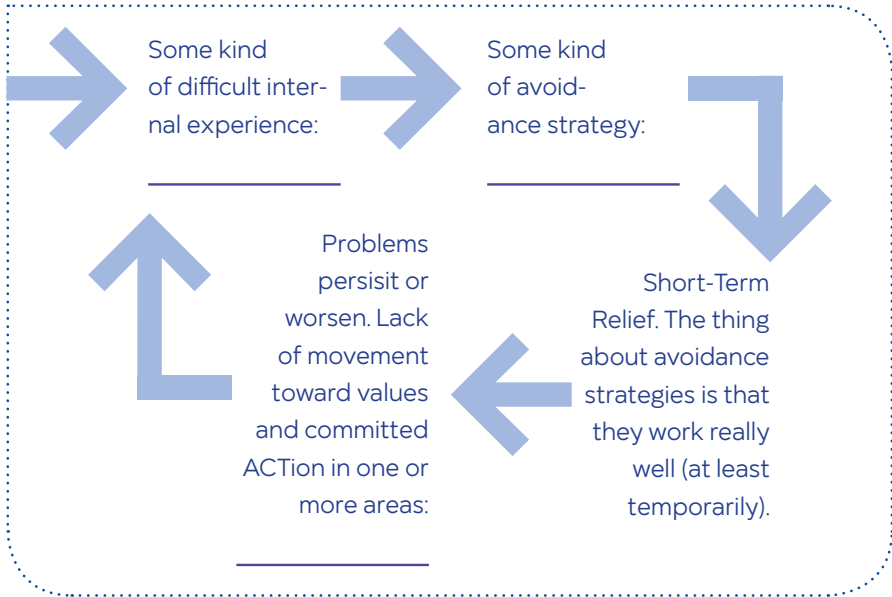
Use the last few lines to fill in some of your own thoughts. How do they direct your behavior? Can you tell which thoughts are helpful and which are unhelpful?

It might be easier to evaluate which thoughts are helpful and which are unhelpful after seeing them on the page instead of when you are lost in your own mind. Even the simple act of writing them down on paper can help you defuse from them. This is another strategy you can use to not only defuse from your thoughts, but also to evaluate whether the fusion is problematic or not.

STRATEGY

CYCLE OF AVOIDANCE

Remember this cycle? Try filling in the blanks below with your difficult internal experiences, avoidance strategies, and consequences.



Here is a list of difficult internal experiences, some avoidance strategies, and areas of potential consequences if you are having trouble:

DIFFICULT INTERNAL EXPERIENCES	AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES	AREAS OF POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES
Some kind of difficult emotion (e.g., boredom, loneliness, loss, feelings of inadequacy, guilt, shame)	Some type of distraction (e.g., television, music, reading, computer or video games, work)	Education/Employment

Intense or difficult physical sensations (e.g., anxiousness, heart racing, tingling, numbness, shortness of breath)	Avoiding people, places or things (e.g., procrastinating on work or important tasks, not going to the grocery store or mall due to crowds, not dating)	Intimate Relationships
Distressing memories or images (e.g., traumatic experiences)	Trying to stop or change your thoughts	Health
Intrusive thoughts (e.g., obsessive thoughts, rumination)	Dismissing or minimizing your feelings	Family
Urges (e.g., drinking, smoking, arguing, sending angry text messages or e-mails)	Using alcohol, marijuana, or other substances	Friendships

Feel free to fill in some of your own experiences. What have you learned about the difficult internal experiences you have, the ways in which you might try to avoid them, and the costs associated with doing so?

You can use the chart below to keep track of your progress and your observations:

	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THUR.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.
What informal practice did you do?							
When did you do it?							
Where did you do it?							
For how long did you do it?							
What were your observations?							
What formal practice did you do?							
When did you do it?							
Where did you do it?							
For how long did you do it?							
What were your observations?							

STRATEGY

INCREASING YOUR MOTIVATION FOR COMMITTED ACTION

Let's start by taking a look at the benefits and costs of engaging in committed ACTION.

BENEFITS OF ENGAGING IN COMMITTED ACTION	COSTS OF ENGAGING IN COMMITTED ACTION
BENEFITS OF NOT ENGAGING IN COMMITTED ACTION	COSTS OF NOT ENGAGING IN COMMITTED ACTION

For example, if one of your commitments is dating, one of the benefits would be opening yourself up to the possibility of loving connections, and one of the costs would be opening yourself up to the possibility of rejection, abandonment, and betrayal. Benefits of not dating include protecting yourself from the pain of rejection, abandonment, and betrayal, but the cost is the pain of loneliness. How will you complete the grid with the benefits and costs of your commitment?

STRATEGY

VALUE-DRIVEN EXPOSURE

Exposure is a great intervention for any type of anxiety, including OCD, panic attacks, phobias, and social anxiety. In ACT, the goal is not to reduce your anxiety, but to increase your psychological flexibility so that you are able to pursue committed ACTION. Any exposure exercise is also going to be linked to values. For example, if someone with panic attacks goes to the grocery store, the goal isn't just to stay there for X amount of time, or until the anxiety starts to reduce, but in service of doing something meaningful such as buying food to prepare a meal for a loved one. I'll give you a few more examples.

For someone with OCD who has a fear of germs:

WHAT COMMITTED ACTION CAN YOU ENGAGE IN?	WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE ROOM FOR (E.G., THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, PHYSICAL SENSATIONS)?	WHAT VALUE IS THIS IN THE SERVICE OF?
Cooking a meal for your family, which involves handling raw meat	Distressing, obsessive thoughts related to contamination	Family

For someone with panic attacks, exposure will involve engaging in things that bring on physical sensations similar to panic. Take a look at the example below:

WHAT COMMITTED ACTION CAN YOU ENGAGE IN?	WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE ROOM FOR (E.G., THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, PHYSICAL SENSATIONS)?	WHAT VALUE IS THIS IN THE SERVICE OF?
Going to a spin class	Increased heart rate, which provokes thoughts and feelings of anxiety related to having a heart attack	Health

For someone with a phobia of flying:

WHAT COMMITTED ACTION CAN YOU ENGAGE IN?	WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE ROOM FOR (E.G., THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, PHYSICAL SENSATIONS)?	WHAT VALUE IS THIS IN THE SERVICE OF?
Getting on a plane to attend a friend's wedding	High anxiety	Friendship

For someone with social anxiety:

WHAT COMMITTED ACTION CAN YOU ENGAGE IN?	WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE ROOM FOR (E.G., THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, PHYSICAL SENSATIONS)?	WHAT VALUE IS THIS IN THE SERVICE OF?
Going to a friend's birthday party	Anticipatory anxiety, physical discomfort associated with anxiety	Friendship

If you are experiencing OCD, panic attacks, phobias, or social anxiety, it may be helpful to come up with a list of things that produce some level of anxiety or uncomfortable emotion. Rank them 1 through 10, with item number 1 being the most anxiety-provoking thing you can imagine and item number 10 being something that brings up some anxiety but feels manageable. When you start to engage in committed ACTION, start at the bottom or with the situation that causes the lowest level of anxiety and work your way up to number 1. Or, as I like to tell my clients, you don't have to jump into the deep end of the pool; you can stick a toe into the water to see how it feels, and slowly walk your way in.

continued

VALUE-DRIVEN EXPOSURE, CONTINUED

WHAT COMMITTED ACTION CAN YOU ENGAGE IN?	WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE ROOM FOR (E.G., THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, PHYSICAL SENSATIONS)?	WHAT VALUE IS THIS IN THE SERVICE OF?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

STRATEGY

BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION

This strategy is useful for depression. One of the things that can contribute to and/or maintain depression is a lack of activity. I don't just mean physical activity like exercise, although that would be a great example of committed ACTION: I mean anything that gets you up and out of bed or brings you a sense of pleasure or accomplishment. If you struggle with depression, you might consider making a commitment to engage in activities that are meaningful to you. Here, it might be helpful to take a look back at the values you identified. Take a look at some of the examples below and fill in the blanks:

DAY/TIME	COMMITTED ACTION	VALUE
Monday/7:00 a.m.	Making a healthy breakfast in the morning	Health
Monday/7:15 a.m.	Taking my vitamins and medication	Health
Monday/7:30 a.m.	Doing yoga	Health
Monday/8:30 a.m.	Meditating for 10 to 15 minutes	Health
Monday/8:45 a.m.	Driving to work while listening to a favorite podcast	Recreation
Monday/9:00 a.m.	Working	Education/Employment
Monday/12:00 p.m.	Having lunch with a coworker	Friendship
Monday/5:00 p.m.	Coming home and taking the dog for a walk	Parenting
Monday/6:00 p.m.	Making dinner and watching a favorite TV show	Recreation

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Score:	+	+	+	+	=

STRATEGY

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

This worksheet may help remind you of the strategies and skills you can implement as you work toward your values through committed ACTION:

What is the committed ACTION you are trying to engage in?

What thoughts are arising?

Defuse from your thoughts and use mindfulness to come back to the present moment

WHAT EMOTIONS ARE ARISING?

WHAT PHYSICAL SENSATIONS
ARE ARISING?

--	--

Practice acceptance of your experience and connect with the observer self

What value is this committed ACTION in the service of? Are you willing to engage in it despite the thoughts, feelings, and sensations that may be arising? Are you able to commit to value-directed ACTION while holding these thoughts in kind awareness?

STRATEGY

STAYING MOTIVATED

Let's reexamine the benefits and costs of engaging in committed ACTION.

BENEFITS OF ENGAGING IN
COMMITTED ACTION

COSTS OF ENGAGING IN
COMMITTED ACTION

BENEFITS OF NOT ENGAGING IN
COMMITTED ACTION

COSTS OF NOT ENGAGING IN
COMMITTED ACTION

RESOURCES

GENERAL WEBSITES

Association for Contextual Behavioral Science (ACBS)

www.contextualscience.org/acbs

HelpGuide

www.helpguide.org

Psychology Today

www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists

Society of Clinical Psychology, Division 12 of the APA

www.div12.org

MINDFULNESS WEBSITES

UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC)

www.uclahealth.org/marc/mindful-meditations

MINDFULNESS APPS

Calm

www.calm.com

Headspace

www.headspace.com

Insight Timer

www.insighttimer.com

JKZ Series 1, 2, or 3

www.mindfulnessapps.com

The Mindfulness App

www.themindfulnessapp.com

MINDFULNESS GROUPS

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

www.mbct.com

Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP)

www.mindfulrp.com

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

www.umassmed.edu/cfm/mindfulness-based-programs/mbsr-courses/find-an-mbsr-program/

Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC)

www.chrisgermer.com

www.self-compassion.org