

## ACT Defusion Techniques

### 1) **Leaves on a Stream**

This is a practice developed by Stephen Hayes, the founder of ACT: Sit quietly with your eyes closed. Imagine a stream burbling along in front of you. Each time a thought arises in your mind, place the thought in a leaf, put it on the stream, and watch it sail gently away. Easy, eh? [Here's Ram Dass](#) guiding people through that metaphor.

### 2) **Hands in front of your face**

Cover your face with your hands, so you can't see anything. Now gently move the hands back. Your thoughts are like that.

### 3) **The Guest-house / Theatre-stage / Ship of Fools**

These are all basically the same techniques. Notice different aspects of you arising, different patterns of thought and feeling, different selves. Greet them as different guests in the guest-house (as in [the Rumi poem](#)), or as different characters on a stage, or as different guests on a cruise-ship. There's self-pitying you, there's bouncy you, there's dirty you, there's yuppie you. Greet them all. They're all part of life's divine comedy. This practice helps you not identify so strongly with the things that arise within you, but to see them as temporary aspects of you rather than the whole of you. That allows you to like, laugh at, and care for the assorted cast as they appear and depart.

### 4) **Playground Bully**

I used this technique when I learned CBT for social anxiety. I learned not to give my power to my Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs), and practiced saying to myself 'I'm not going to let those old ANT thoughts bully me any more. When I don't give them my attention and power, they shrink and lose all their strength.'

### 5) **Silly voice**

Next time you notice a very negative belief you are saying to yourself, write it down, and then read it out in a silly voice, like Donald Duck, say, or Donald Trump. Read it out over and over. It's just words, not reality. When you hear the old negative belief come back, always hear it in the same ridiculous voice.

### 6) **The View from Above**

This is an exercise from ancient Greek philosophy. Think of your self and your situation, then zoom out and see it from the sky – see your house and the street you live on. Then zoom out further and see the city and the country underneath the clouds. Then zoom out further and see Europe, and the Earth spinning round. Then zoom out further and see the solar system, and then the whole galaxy of the Milky Way, and then thousands and thousands of galaxies, containing

billions and billions of stars and planets. Look around you, at the limitless expanse of the universe, glittering with light and energy. What were you getting so worked up about?

#### 7) **Plato's IMAX**

Close your eyes and notice your thoughts racing through your mind. Notice your tendency to follow your thoughts and attribute urgency and importance to them. Imagine your thoughts as images on a movie screen, flashing and banging and generally being very exciting. You're sitting in the movie theatre munching popcorn, utterly absorbed in the movies, filled with rage and joy and fear and sadness. You've been there, lost in the movies, for quite some time now. Then consider the light that makes all these images appear and disappear. Rather than being absorbed in the endless movies appearing in front of you, with their heroes and villains, look at the beam of light projecting the images. Look at it above you. What is it? Merge with that light and rest with it. There will always be movies, always stories that seem really important and urgent. And there will always be the light that projects the movies.

#### 8) **The sky and the clouds**

Look up at the sky and look at the clouds moving slowly across it. Your mind is the sky, the clouds are your thoughts.

#### 9) **Flushed with pride**

Write down a negative belief you feel is holding you back on a piece of paper. Now take the piece of paper, solemnly fold it up, take it to the toilet, and flush it down the loo. As you flush, say to yourself out loud: 'I thank this belief for trying to help me but now I'm letting it go, just as I let go of food once I have taken the nutrition from it'.

#### 10) **You are the Buddha**

Sit in front of a statue or picture of the Buddha, or just imagine the Buddha in your mind. Imagine him or her sitting in front of you, just smiling at you and radiating warmth and friendship and love. Imagine you can literally feel the warmth of their love coming into you, and generating the warmth of love inside you, for yourself and for all beings. Now imagine merging with the Buddha. Recognize the Buddha as the highest potential within you – who you actually are, at your deepest core. It's the incredible power of consciousness, and it's your birth-right. Imagine your Buddha-body blazing with light. Now, within this blazing light of luminous intelligence and love, imagine you see you, ordinary you, sitting in front of you. Ordinary you, just trying to do your best and get through the day, despite all the stuff life throws at you. Feel a deep sense of compassion and love for ordinary you, and all you've been through, sometimes on your own, sometimes dealing with great pain with no one there to help you. And that ordinary-you has been a vessel for the Buddha-you, all these years and all these lifetimes. Say thank you to ordinary you and hug them. As you hug, you come back to ordinary you with a sense of acceptance, gratitude and compassion, as well as a sense of freedom. You are ordinary you *and* you're the limitless luminosity of Buddha-mind. And so is everyone else.