

# Mindfulness Explained

3 ways mindfulness promotes emotional freedom

# 1) Mindfulness enables cognitive defusion

Cognitive fusion occurs when:

- you experience excessive rumination and attachment to thoughts and feelings
- you experience thoughts as true reflections of reality instead of imperfect models, leading to overwhelming emotions and reactivity
- your sense of self is fused with your thoughts and emotions

Cognitive defusion occurs when:

- you experience thoughts and feelings as temporary events
- you are able to observe, explore and challenge thoughts rather than automatically believing them

## 2) Mindfulness expands your sense of self

When you are fused with thoughts - also called overidentification - it can feel like you are your thoughts and your thoughts are you

Mindfulness practice develops your “observing self” - the you beyond your thoughts and feelings

**“People can be both actors engrossed in the unfolding story of their minds’ experience of the world as well as third-person observers of that subjective experience”** (Bernstein et al., 2015)

Discovering a you beyond thoughts and feelings can be liberating and empowering

### 3) Mindfulness helps create a safe inner environment

Mindfulness is about observing and naming thoughts rather than judging and reacting to them

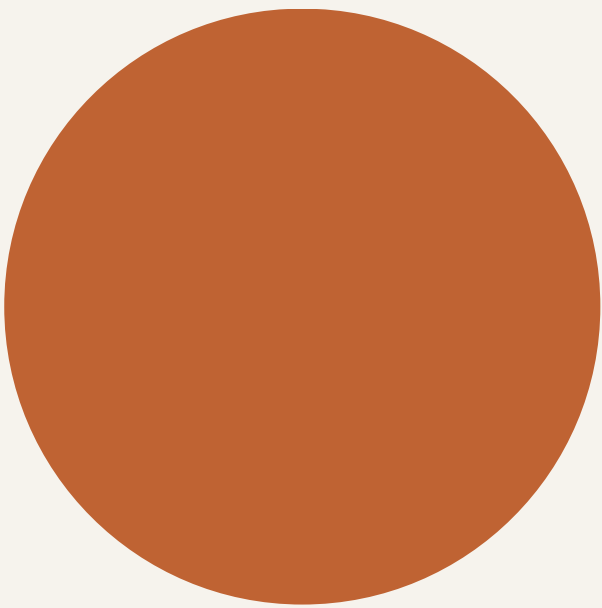
No thought or feeling is off limits

With practice, you will become less reactive to thoughts and feelings

Mindfulness meditation and daily practice can expose and desensitise you to thoughts and uncomfortable feelings you would historically avoid or suppress, building tension and shame

This more relaxed environment, free from harsh judgement, self-criticism or shame, is conducive to honest self-reflection, curiosity and exploration

“Think of your mind like a pond full of fish and each fish is a thought. Try to be the pond, not the fish”



Exercise: How can you talk about thoughts and feelings in a way that supports cognitive defusion?

Some examples:

- “I’m having the thought that ...”
- “A thought that keeps coming to me is ...”
- “Something I’m noticing is ...”
- “This is a temporary thought”
- “This thought does not define me”

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