



Separating from Unpleasant Thoughts: INSTRUCTIONS 4e

_____ Situation _____ Initials _____ Date _____

- This tactic is about deliberately and mindfully changing our reaction to unwanted and unpleasant thoughts. The mind is a thought-machine, and generating thoughts is what it does. This exercise is about noting your thoughts, just as mental events, passing through the mind. Thoughts are information, not instructions.
1. **Acknowledge** to yourself that you're aware of the thought or image (getting out of auto-pilot). Recognise that thoughts are thoughts, and the 'you' that is observing those thoughts right now is separate from the thoughts themselves. YOU are NOT YOUR THOUGHTS.
 2. **Relax** the body (breathe deeply) and the mind (saying calming thoughts, like, *"oh there it is again, that thought, and that's normal, it's just thinking" or "okay this is just a worry or memory; this is normal; relax and let it go; I don't need to think about this right now; I can focus on what I'm doing; I've already worked this all out, thinking about it more now won't help; I'm okay there's nothing dangerous"*)
 3. **Unhook yourself from the thought** or imagine using one of these ideas:
 - Pause or adjust the image (this involves some form of imagination, if you can visualise it already)
 - Put it on mute, make it still and shrink the image down and let it disappear.
 - Imagine the thought or image is in a computer window, that you **minimise**, or a TV screen you can change channels on, **swish it away** or turn off.
 - Imagining the image or thought is projected on a screen and it's at a distance from you. Then imagine it switching off.
 - Accept the thought or image as just a passing image, and gently allow it to move on, not trying to hold on to it, just awaiting the next thought.
 - OR maybe replace the image with a pleasant one that's in your control.
 4. **Ground yourself this moment** by becoming fully aware of your surroundings and contact with what's around you. Using your senses, noting what you see, hear and hear, particularly the sense of your feet on the ground.
 5. **Re-focus on the task** at hand (eg driving, talking, working, reading) by paying deliberate attention to what you are doing with your eyes, hands and body. Even saying to yourself, positive instructions such as *"I'm now just listening to such and such talk and gather the main points"*.