

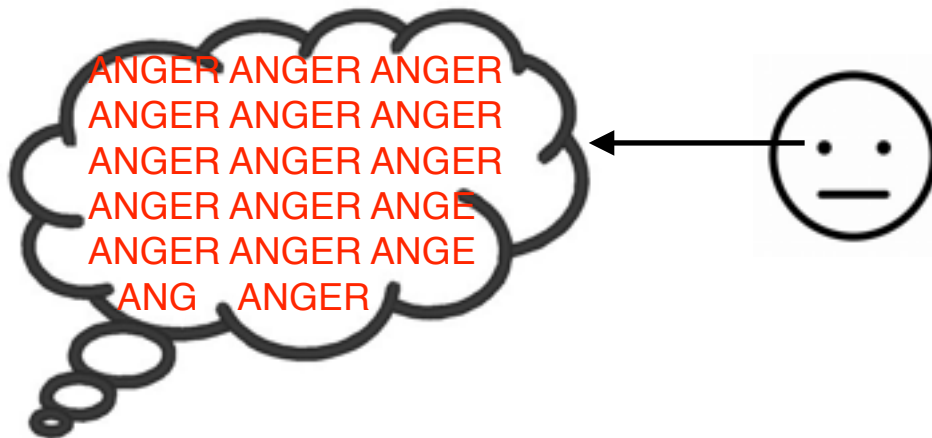
NOTICING THOUGHTS

When we experience difficult thoughts we may say things like 'I'm angry, I'm sad.' Or, 'I'm jealous.' In these situations there is no distinction between us and the thought that is troubling us. It's like we are anger, sadness, or jealousy. We get caught up in the content of our thinking. This process is known as cognitive fusion. When fused with thinking it can feel like we are trapped inside our thoughts.



Fusion can be likened to two pieces of metal that have been welded together to form a single object. Likewise when we are fused with thoughts there is no separation between us and our thoughts. Fusion with thoughts can dominate our behaviour and this can lead to more and more problems. An example might be someone who is depressed and fused with the thought of, 'I am a loser.' The person may choose to avoid certain situations that bring about these type of thoughts. Or, they may use drink or drugs to get rid of their difficult thoughts and feelings. These strategies may work well in the short term but long term they often bring about more problems.

But if we can learn to notice our thoughts rather than be all caught up in them we can move into a mental position of observation. The more we can notice what is happening in our minds the more we can make a distinction between us and our thoughts and the more we can look at our thoughts rather than look from them:



To put some separation between ourselves and our thoughts we could say, "I am noticing the thought that I am X."

Now there is a separation. There is the **I** that is having the thought and the **thought** itself, 'I am X.'

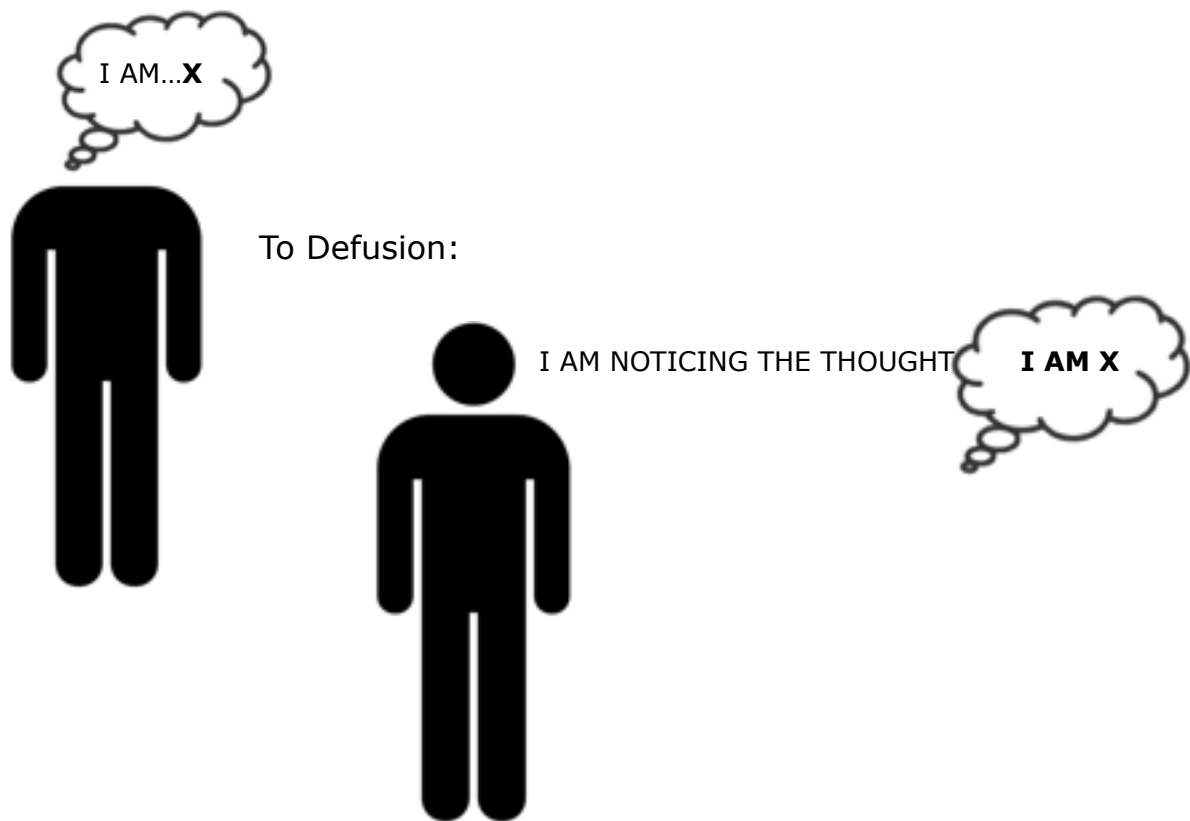
The act of noticing separates the **thought** from the **thinker**.

We now have an **I** that is noticing a **thought**.

Not an I that **is** the thought.

Noticing thoughts takes us from being caught up inside our thoughts to being in a position where we can step back and observe our thinking.

So from fusion:



Noticing a thought does not push it out of our heads as the diagram shows. The illustration just highlights how we move from being inside the thought to being stepped back from the thought. It means we are here and the thought is there. And while the content of the thought remains the same, our relationship to the thought changes. A space is created between the thinker and the thought and this space allows wiggle room to make behavioural choices based on what matters to us and not what our minds tell us to do.

So the next time you are angry, sad, jealous or whatever, try saying:

'I am noticing the thought that I am angry, sad, jealous or whatever.'