

Radio Doom and Gloom - An ACT Defusion Technique

Your mind can be a bit like a radio playing the 'radio doom and gloom show', broadcasting negative stories 24 hours a day. It reminds you of bad things from the past - *"I really made a mess of that one"* and warns you of bad things to come - *"It won't work out and you know it."*

The radio updates you on everything that's wrong with your life - *"My life is a joke. I'm not going anywhere."* If you're tuned into this radio station, then you have a sure-fire recipe for misery and anxiety.

Unfortunately, there is no way to switch off the radio that is your mind thinking. We don't have the power to make it stop unless we short circuit it with drugs or alcohol. Yet, the more we dampen the sound of radio doom and gloom with drugs or alcohol, the louder it gets when they wear off.

Then we also have the stories about our drinking or drug-taking to contend with. Trying to turn off radio doom and gloom this way never works.

There is an alternative. You can simply leave the radio playing what it likes and not attend to it so much. Treat it as background noise. You can focus your intent mindfully on what you are doing, and let it just rattle away. Even though you can still hear it, do not listen to it as such. Try the following practice and application to cultivate this skill.

a) Visualisation

Visualize yourself doing something that arouses anxiety because of the many self-defeating thoughts that arise when you imagine yourself doing it.

It could be a job interview, a presentation, a first date, or joining a new evening class or workshop.

Focus your mind on the activity or event.

Notice any unhelpful thoughts that arise, watch them come and go, and if a cacophony of unhelpful thoughts arises, simply acknowledge the storyline as "radio doom and gloom" and imagine yourself turning the radio down so that it becomes background noise, then focus on what you are doing, anyway.

b) Practical action

When you next deal with a rising chorus of unhelpful thoughts, try this "radio doom and gloom" technique.

Acknowledge the radio doom and gloom show is playing, see yourself turning it down, and do what it is you value doing, anyway.

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