

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space lies our freedom to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom". Viktor Frankl.

STOP !

Just pause for a moment



TAKE A BREATH

Notice your breathing as you breathe in and out.

OBERVE

- What thoughts are going through your mind right now?
- Where is your **focus of attention**?
- What are you reacting to?
- What sensations do you notice in your body?

PULL BACK - PUT IN SOME PERSPECTIVE

- What's the bigger picture?
- Take **the helicopter view**.
- What is another way of looking at this situation?
- What advice would I give a friend?
- What would a trusted friend say to me right now?
- Is this thought a **fact or opinion**?
- What is a more reasonable explanation?
- How important is this? How important will it be in 6 months time?
- **It will pass.**

PRACTISE WHAT WORKS - PROCEED

- What is the best thing to do right now?
- Best for me, for others, for the situation?
- What can I do that fits with my **values**?
- Do what will be effective and appropriate.

HOW TO USE STOPP

- Practise the first two steps often for a few days - many times every day at any time.
- Read through the steps often.
- Carry written reminders with you (use the printable resources below).
- Practise STOPP by running through all the steps several times a day, every day...when you don't need it.
- Start to use it for little upsets.
- Gradually, you will find that you can use it for more distressing situations. Like any new habit or skill, it will become automatic over time.

The steps explained

Stop! Say it to yourself, in your head, as soon as you notice your mind and/or your body is reacting to a trigger.

Stop! helps to put in the space between the stimulus (the trigger, whatever we are reacting to) and our response.

The earlier you use STOPP, the easier and more effective it will be.

Take a Breath. Breathing a little deeper and slower will calm down and reduce the physical reaction of emotion/adrenaline.

Focusing on our breathing means we are not so focused on the thoughts and feelings of the distress, so that our minds can start to clear and we can think more logically and rationally.

Observe. We can notice the thoughts going through our mind, we can notice what we feel in our body, and we can notice the urge to react in an impulsive way. We can notice the vicious cycle of **anxiety**, **sadness** or **anger** (etc).

Noticing helps us to defuse from those thoughts and feelings and therefore reduce their power and control.

Pull back / Put in some Perspective. The thought challenging of CBT. Thinking differently.

When we step back emotionally from a situation, and start to see the bigger picture, it reduces those distressing beliefs. We can do this by asking ourselves questions.

Practise what works / Proceed. This is the behavioural change of CBT. Doing things differently.

Rather than reacting impulsively with unhelpful consequences, we can CHOOSE our more helpful and positive response.