

Reduce Emotional Overreactions with The STOP Technique

The STOP Technique is a mindfulness-based practice designed to help you defuse intense emotions in the moment.

Creating space in the day to pause, slow down a racing mind and return to the present has been shown to be incredibly helpful for mental wellbeing.

Taking a brief pause—even for less than one minute—can help you cool down your emotional brain and shift into a better frame of mind.

Over time and with practice, this way of responding can become a new habit. The next time you notice yourself overreacting to the small stuff, try working through this 4-step framework:

Stop

Interrupt your thoughts with the command 'stop!' and pause whatever you're doing.



Take a Breath

Notice your breathing for a second. Breathe in gently and slowly through your nose, expanding your belly as you do, and exhale slowly through pursed lips.



Observe

Become the observer of your thoughts, emotions and physical sensations. What thoughts do you notice? What emotions are surfacing? How does your body feel? Tune in and stay with whatever arises for a few moments.



Proceed

Mindfully consider how you'd like to respond. What's one small thing you can focus on right now? What would be a helpful response to this situation? Narrow down your focus and take it one small step at a time.



You can use the flashcards on the following page to help remind you of your new desired response to daily stressors. Why not try putting one on your mirror or in your diary? You cannot rely on your memory for adopting these changes in your thinking and behaviour – reviewing this worksheet and flashcards regularly helps you reinforce your learning and create long-lasting change.

THE STOP TECHNIQUE

STOP: Interrupt your thoughts with the command 'stop!' and pause what you're doing.

TAKE A BREATH: Breathe in gently and slowly through your nose, expanding the belly as you do, and exhale slowly through pursed lips.

OBSERVE: Become the observer of your thoughts, emotions and physical sensations.

PROCEED: Mindfully consider how you'd like to respond. What's one small, helpful thing you can focus on right now?

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