



## STOP

- Acknowledge the emotional trigger and consciously stop your immediate, automatic reaction.

## TAKE A BREATH

- Focus on your breathing. Make it slower and deeper. The exhale should be longer than the inhale.

## OBSERVE

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

## PULL BACK AND ADD PERSPECTIVE

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

## PROCEED

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

# STOPP Explained

The STOPP technique is a personal tool for regaining emotional and cognitive control in stressful or overwhelming situations.

The best way to use it is to practice it by running through all the steps several times a day, every day for a week, even when you don't need it. Like any new habit or skill, it will become automatic over time.

## Stop

Say “STOP” to yourself, in your head, as soon as you notice that your mind and/or your body is reacting to a stimulus/trigger. This helps to prevent emotional hijacking by putting space between the stimulus and our response and stopping the amygdala from overriding the brain’s rational centre. The earlier we use the STOPP technique, the easier and more effective it is.

## Take a breath

FOCUSING on breathing to deepen and slow it calms and reduces the physical reaction to adrenaline. It also widens the gap between the stimulus and our response. As we focus on our breathing, we become less focused on the overwhelming thoughts and feelings. Once our minds start to clear, we are in a position to think more logically and rationally.

## Observe

We can then more objectively notice and acknowledge the thoughts going through our minds, we can notice our emotions, we can notice what we feel in our bodies, and we can notice the urge to react in an impulsive way. NOTICING helps to defuse thoughts and feelings and reduce their power and control.

## Pull back and add perspective

Perspective involves CHALLENGING thoughts and thinking differently. When we step back from a situation and start to see the bigger picture, it reduces distressing beliefs. We do this by asking ourselves questions.

## Proceed

The focus here is on behavioural change, or doing things differently. Rather than reacting impulsively with unhelpful consequences, we can be intentional and CHOOSE the most helpful and positive response rather than simply reacting.