



The **STOP** skill consists of the following sequence: **S**top, **T**ake a step back, **O**bserve, **P**roceed.

Stop

When you feel that your emotions seem to be in control, stop! Don't react. Don't move a muscle. Just freeze (every muscle). Freezing for a moment helps prevent you from doing what your emotions want you to do (which is to act without thinking). Stay in control. Remember, you are the boss of your emotions. Name the emotion – put a label on it.

Take a step back

When you are faced with a difficult situation, it may be hard to think about how to deal with it on the spot. Give yourself some time to calm down and think. Take a step back from the situation. Get unstuck from what is going on. Take a deep breath and continue breathing deeply as long as you need and until you are back in control. Do not let your emotions control what you do. It is the rare incident, indeed, wherein we need to make a split-second decision about anything. Hence, it is okay to take our time to decide how to respond.

Observe

Observe what is happening around you and within you, who is involved, and what are other people doing or saying. Listen to the Automatic Thoughts that occur...remember those are based on an outdated Belief System. To make effective choices, it is important not to jump to conclusions. Instead, gather the relevant facts so as to understand what is going on and what the available options are.

Proceed

Proceed mindfully; ask yourself, “What do I want from this situation?” or “What are my goals?” or “What choice might make this situation better or worse?” or “What behavior will lead me to be successful?” Stay calm, stay in control, and when you have some information about the situation and how that may impact your goals, you will be better prepared to deal with the situation effectively. Remember your brain needs time to think all of this through.

Practice

Instructions: Over the next few days, practice the above skill. Find situations that you may have previously become very emotional about and acted out. If you cannot find any situations that involve you, think of times recently where you could have used this skill or imagine how others might have used it.

What event occurred to trigger your emotion?

What emotion did you experience?

How intense was the emotion you experienced?

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Were you able to just freeze? If so, how did it feel to be in control? *(circle one, answer below)*

Yes	No

Were you able to step back? *(circle one)*

Yes	No
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Did you remember to take deep breaths and continue breathing until you were in control? *(circle one)*

Yes	No
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What were your thoughts?

Did you have any ANTs (Automatic Negative Thoughts)?

What did you observe? What was happening around you?

What did you decide that you wanted from the situation?

Were you successful in achieving what you wanted? *(circle one, answer below)*

Yes	No