“STOP” Skill

The STOP skill consists of the following sequence: Stop, Take a step back, Observe, Proceed.

**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 Listen to the Automatic Thoughts that occur...remember those are based on an outdated Belief System.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?

________________________________________________________________________

*Continue to the next page...*
“STOP” Skill

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Did you remember to take deep breaths and continue breathing until you were in control? *(circle one)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Find more online: DBT.tools