

Thought Stopping



This may seem like a simplistic concept, but I assure you that with a little practice this strategy can be very helpful.

Steps

1. Attempt to increase your awareness of times when you are caught up in thoughts that are unhelpful, negative or destructive.

Often this state of mind is linked with negative body feelings. For instance, you may have butterflies in your stomach, have the feeling of impending doom or even feel sick to your stomach. Alternatively, you may feel your mood turn really negative or grumpy, this may result in an increase in irritability and agitation which can result in a quick temper and overall feelings of life dissatisfaction.

2. Choose a number of ways to practice stopping your thoughts. You may have to work through the whole list at any given time. See the suggestions below:
 - a) Stand in front of a mirror. Look at yourself directly in your eyes and with a sense of firmness tell yourself to "STOP IT". With intention, feel yourself trying to shake off the thoughts.
 - b) Imagine a great big stop sign in your mind and tell yourself to "STOP IT"
 - c) Carry something with you that makes you feel great and by consequence stops negative thoughts. For instance, I have a necklace with a rock pendant that reminds me of a really peaceful and fun trip I was on. When aware of the negative thoughts, pull out the item and handle it, it will conjure up positive memories and often crowd out the negative thoughts.
 - d) Go for a brisk walk with the intent of shaking off the negative feelings
 - e) Put on your favorite fun song and do a dance
 - f) Sit down for five minutes and just smile. This one feels silly, but it works! It is very hard to think negative thoughts when you are smiling.
 - g) State a mantra or affirmation that you find particularly helpful, e.g. "life is good"
 - h) Deep breathe, while visualizing breathing out the negativity. While breathing in healing and rejuvenation. See the handout on deep breathing for more information.
 - i) Practice letting go of your thoughts, e.g. Imagine holding a bouquet of helium balloons, with each negative thought, place it in a balloon and then release the balloon into the air and watch it go out of sight.