

Thought Stopping

What can we do to control and change our self talk?

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Thought stopping is a tool that helps you get relief from negative, unwanted, worrisome thoughts and self talk. It allows you then to control or replace these with positive, productive, more realistic thoughts.

Many times our first awareness of negative thoughts and self talk comes from uneasy, worrisome, or even painful feelings inside of us. In this case we can track backwards to find out what our self talk has been that led to these feelings, because as you remember **WORDS** trigger **IMAGES**, which then trigger **EMOTIONS/FEELINGS**. Sometimes we become aware of these problem thoughts because we keep thinking and thinking these thoughts over and over again until it seems like we can't get them out of our heads. Have you ever woken up in the night unable to get back to sleep because of this? There's even a special word to describe this kind of thinking. It's called **RUMINATION** and comes from the word ruminant. A cow is a ruminant because it has more than one stomach but not the best digestive system. So after chewing and swallowing its food, the cow repeatedly brings it up again then chews and swallows it all over again. To prevent a similar experience from going on inside your head, here's what you can do:

Focus on the thought: If you are not already locked on to the thought, bring all of yourself (not just mental self, but spiritual, physical and emotional, too) to do so. Go ahead and think about it: Hear those words and see those pictures they create in your mind's eye, think about it a lot and feel those negative emotions build up in you, feel it in your body, and feel how it distances you from your own heart, your spirit.

Interrupt the thought: Then once you're locked on to the thought(s) and all it brings up inside you, suddenly holler "STOP" in a very assertive voice. You can holler stop, in your self talk or actually say it out loud. But be prepared for some strange looks! This sudden and loud interruption should be enough to extinguish your ruminations, just like you would a fire, and allow you to calm yourself by focusing on your breathing.

It's important to go right into focusing on your breathing and using your exhalations to breathe unwanted tensions, feelings, images and thoughts from your being, as it will keep you from returning to those unwanted thoughts. Allow all parts of your being to go to neutral or to "reset" like rebooting or restarting your computer. If it helps you to focus on a feeling, let it be that of peacefulness, of deep relaxation, or of a deep, strong connection with Ellam Yua, the spirit world, or an ancestor whom you were close to.

Substitute positive thoughts or self talk: Now in an effort to do away with those troublesome thoughts or self talk it's a good idea to replace them with something positive but realistic. So, if you're having trouble with a wild thought such as "Man, I'm really looking forward to the weekend and the party at _____'s house. His parents are out of town and I can really get loaded since I can sleep it off before I go home and see my parents," stop the thought by shouting **STOP!**

Then calm yourself and replace the thought with something like, "Well, I'm not going to give up all the good I've done by not drinking for the past six months. I like succeeding at controlling myself and I actually feel better by getting all that alcohol out of my system. I can still go and have a good time without drinking and even look after my friends, and if people bug me too much about drinking with them, I can just tell them, no thanks, and go somewhere else."

ACTIVITY: OK, let's give this thought stopping a try.

First, everyone pick out a thought or some self talk that you are often confronted with. Once all are ready, now focus on this thought, repeat it in your self talk. Feel it. How does your body feel? What emotions are you aware of? How does your spirit feel?

Build up the repetition and feelings!!!!

Then, when I count to three, let's hear a nice, loud, assertive STOP.

Now follow that up with clearing your mind, body, emotions and spirit of negative energy and thoughts with every exhale. Relax. Use the exhalations to breathe any and all tension or thoughts from you. Now, after a few breaths with a clear and peaceful mind, body and heart, replace that thought with a positive, opposite, assertive statement about you that is reasonable to you. Pick a thought that you can really believe in and feel it fill you with positive emotions and energy.

The more you practice this technique the better you become at it. It's just like learning to shoot or dribble a basketball. Over time you won't have to holler stop so loud and then not at all.

If this doesn't work well for you, other tricks for interrupting your thoughts are:

- Snap a rubber band kept around your wrist
- Pinch yourself
- Thunk yourself under the tip of your chin with your forefinger (as if you were trying to flick a booger off the tip of your finger)
- Give yourself a gentle "dope slap" alongside of your head
- Grab the skin of your neck just in front of your Adam's apple so as to stop the verbalization of your thoughts and self talk.
- Come up with a way that works for you!