



Taming Emotions: Take-Home DBT Skills for Emotional Regulation - STOP

Ever have moments where emotion takes over and you act in ways you later regret? You're not alone. We all get hijacked by anger, anxiety, hurt, or other intense feelings sometimes. When emotional circuits override logic, it often worsens situations instead of making things better.

So how can you get back in the driver's seat when feelings floor it unexpectedly? That's where the STOP skill comes in. As the name suggests, STOP helps you slam the brakes on runaway emotions so you can respond thoughtfully.

Let's break down the simple yet powerful steps:

S = Stop

T = Take a step back

O = Observe

P = Proceed mindfully



S - Stop

When you realize emotion has snatched control, shout STOP to yourself and freeze. Press pause on whatever you're doing, and halt any rash urges before they turn to actions.

This buys some space between the trigger and your reactions. Temporary paralysis lets physiological arousal diminish so you don't follow where emotions recklessly lead. Don't berate yourself for feeling this way - just prevent hastiness from worsening matters.

T - Take A Step Back

Calm the physical arousal more by taking deep, centering breaths. You may also find it helpful to create more literal space as well. Step outside, change rooms, or walk away from what (or who) initiated the intensity.

Distance further diffuses your body and mind's fight-flight-freeze response. After a minute or two, you'll gain enough mental quiet to assess wisely instead of instinctively reacting.

O - Observe

Get curious and non-judgmentally examine the situation once your head clears a bit. What facts or events triggered such an emotional spike? Were external issues mainly to blame, or did internal dialogues worsen it? How are others affected by what just occurred?

Observing helps ground you in reality again versus acting while caught in emotion's exaggerated perceptions. Taking this bird's eye view allows the logical parts of your brain to come back online.

P - Proceed Mindfully

Finally, proceed in deciding how to address the situation, but do so mindfully instead of mindlessly. Ask yourself what your true goals and priorities are. How might certain choices make this better or worse? What action aligns with your values? What act will allow for success? Stay calm and stay in control.



It's completely okay to tell others you need more processing time versus responding instantly. Even more time passing as you implement the STOP technique brings greater wisdom. Then you can act purposefully rather than rashly.

Pulling It All Together

Making STOP second nature takes commitment as with building any habit. But it creates the mental muscle memory needed to put on the brakes as soon emotions speed recklessly. Quickly halting harm, creating space, tapping back into logic and asking the right questions keeps you responding wisely instead of reacting foolishly.

With enough practice, STOP becomes your emotional emergency brake so you safely navigate life's curveballs. You've got this!