

Snap Out of It

Your thoughts influence how you feel and how you behave. For example, if your thoughts magnify an uncomfortable situation into something catastrophic, you start feeling overwhelmed. You become angry that you have to live with it. Before you know it, you are reacting as if this really is the end of the world. Unchecked, these angry thoughts keep feeding the feeling... and out-of-control behavior follows.

What Is Thought Stopping?

Part of the solution is to give yourself time to choose a different response. This is where a thought stopping technique becomes helpful. The idea is to snap your brain out of the unconscious, automatic thought process that leads to problems. Interrupting negative thoughts with a “stop” command serves as a reminder and a distraction. You regain a sense of control as you use the technique. When followed with positive coping statements, you break the anger chain and allow a new behavior pattern to emerge.

So Snap Out of It

Here is a simple thought stopping technique you can start using today. You will need to have completed the Change the Voice in Your Head worksheet prior to starting this.

1. Find a thick rubber band that fits comfortably (and loosely) around your wrist. You will be wearing this day and night for the next few weeks so make sure it isn't binding.
2. Practice first:
 - a. Think about a time recently when you were angry. Imagine it in detail until you begin to feel the physical signs of anger (teeth clenching, stomach tightening, etc).
 - b. As soon as you feel the first sign, snap the rubber band hard and say “SNAP OUT OF IT!” The jolt of pain helps break the hold of negative thoughts and gives you time to choose something different.
 - c. Repeat one of your positive coping statements until you feel calm
3. Put it to work in real life. Pay attention for the first signs of anger. As soon as you feel it, snap that rubber band and say “SNAP OUT OF IT!” (You can say it in your head if others are around). Be ready with a positive coping statement.

Try it for yourself for a couple of weeks. Before long you will notice you automatically replace anger-fueling thoughts with more helpful alternatives.