WORKSHEET 20 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

STOP: not acting in the heat of the moment

A distress tolerance skill (DBT)

AIM

Offer a simple reflex for moments when emotion is very intense: stop, step back, observe and act mindfully instead of reacting impulsively.

WHO IT IS FOR

Emotional overwhelm, impulsivity with anxiety, conflicts. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

10 min to introduce; to use in the situation

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Identify with the person a recent situation in which they reacted “in the heat of the moment” and what it cost them.
2. Introduce the four letters of STOP and rehearse them in imagination with that situation.
3. Identify the personal warning signs (sensations, thoughts, urges) that say it is time to “do STOP”.
4. Prepare one or two concrete actions for stepping back (leaving the room, drinking a glass of water, waiting 10 minutes before replying).

POINTS TO WATCH

> STOP is for not making the situation worse, not for suppressing the emotion. If there are suicidal thoughts or self-harm, this worksheet does not replace a safety plan.

REFERENCES

Linehan, M. M. (2015). DBT Skills Training Manual (2nd ed.). Guilford.

Linehan, M. M. (2015). DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets (2nd ed.). Guilford.

PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 20 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

STOP

When an emotion is very strong, you feel like acting straight away, and sometimes you regret it. STOP helps you gain a few seconds to choose what you do.

1. S for “Stop”: freeze. Don’t move, don’t reply yet.
2. T for “Take a step back”: step away, leave the room, breathe.
3. O for “Observe”: what is happening inside me and around me? What are the facts?
4. P for “Proceed mindfully”: what would really help me, now and later?

Situation	Emotion /10	Did I do STOP? (yes/no)	What I did next

My warning signs, the ones that tell me it is time to do STOP:

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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