

STOP

Method Workbook

A simple way to pause, steady your body, observe what is happening, and choose the next right action.



Two-Part Workbook

Part One: Learn the STOP Method

Part Two: Practice With Fillable Worksheets

Personal editing copy

WELCOME

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook teaches the STOP Method in a simple, practical way. STOP is a pause skill. It helps a person slow down during stress, anger, anxiety, craving, emotional overload, or impulsive moments.

The goal is not to erase feelings. The goal is to create enough space to think clearly, notice what is happening, and choose a response that supports safety, dignity, and long-term goals.

This workbook can be typed into directly in Word or printed and completed by hand. The worksheet pages are designed for repeated practice.

Safety note

This workbook does not replace therapy, medical care, crisis care, or emergency services. If there is immediate danger, risk of self-harm, risk of harming someone else, overdose risk, psychosis, or inability to stay safe, call 988, call 911, go to the nearest emergency department, or contact local crisis services.

The promise of STOP

- I do not have to react immediately.
- I can slow my body before I choose my words or actions.
- I can notice my feelings without letting them drive the whole car.
- I can choose the next right action, even if the moment is uncomfortable.

The STOP Method Explained Simply

STOP is a short method for interrupting automatic reactions. It is useful when a person feels triggered, overwhelmed, angry, anxious, impulsive, defensive, or close to doing something they may regret.

The STOP Method gives the brain and body a small reset. It does not solve every problem by itself. It helps the person slow the moment down so the next step can be chosen instead of acted out automatically.

The method has four steps: Stop, Take a step back, Observe, and Proceed mindfully.

Letter	Step	What to do
S	Stop	Pause. Do not move forward on autopilot. Say to yourself, "Stop. I need one moment."
T	Take a step back	Breathe, create space, and step away mentally or physically if it is safe to do so.
O	Observe	Notice what is happening in your body, feelings, thoughts, urges, and environment.
P	Proceed mindfully	Choose the next action that fits your safety, values, goals, and the real situation.

Core idea

STOP helps you move from reaction to response. A reaction is fast and automatic. A response is slower, safer, and more connected to who you want to be.

Why STOP Works

Strong emotion narrows attention. The body may prepare to fight, flee, freeze, please, shut down, use, text, yell, quit, hide, or escape. When the body is activated, the mind may mistake urgency for wisdom.

STOP works because it interrupts the rush. The pause gives your nervous system a moment to settle. The breath gives your body a signal that you are not required to explode or disappear. Observation gives your thinking brain a chance to come back online.

The method becomes stronger with practice. The first win is not perfection. The first win is noticing the moment before it owns you.

STOP can help when I feel...

☐ Angry	☐ Anxious	☐ Overwhelmed
☐ Rejected	☐ Defensive	☐ Impulsive
☐ Ashamed	☐ Triggered	☐ Restless
☐ Craving	☐ Panicked	☐ Shut down

My personal STOP warning signs

My body tells me I need STOP when...	Write here...
My thoughts tell me I need STOP when...	Write here...
My behavior tells me I need STOP when...	Write here...
Other people may notice...	Write here...
The moment I most need to pause is...	Write here...

The Four Steps in Real Life

S

Stop

Pause before you speak, send, leave, use, buy, yell, shut down, or act. The pause is the doorway.

Practice prompts

What am I about to do?	Write here...
What could happen if I act without pausing?	Write here...
What words can I say to myself?	Stop. Take one moment. I can choose. Add your own words here...

T

Take a Step Back

Create space. Take a breath, loosen your jaw, lower your shoulders, drink water, step outside, or ask for a minute.

Practice prompts

How can I safely create space?	Write here...
What breathing pattern will I use?	In for ____ counts. Out for ____ counts.
Do I need physical space?	☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, where can I go safely? Write here...

The Four Steps Continued

O

Observe

Look at the whole picture. Notice body sensations, emotions, thoughts, urges, facts, assumptions, and what is happening around you.

Practice prompts

What am I feeling?	Write here...
What am I thinking?	Write here...
What does my body feel like?	Write here...
What are the facts?	Write here...

P

Proceed Mindfully

Choose the next action that protects safety, respects your values, and helps more than it harms.

Practice prompts

What choice matches my values?	Write here...
What choice reduces harm?	Write here...
What is one small next step?	Write here...
Who can help if I cannot do this alone?	Write here...

PART ONE

A Quick STOP Script

Use this script when the moment is moving fast. Read it slowly or rewrite it in your own words.

Read this during a stressful moment

S: Stop	"I am pausing. I do not have to act this second."
T: Take a step back	"I will breathe and create space before I respond."
O: Observe	"I notice my body, feelings, thoughts, urges, and the facts."
P: Proceed mindfully	"I will choose the next action that helps more than it harms."

Thirty-second version

Stop: Pause your body.

Take a step back: Take one slow breath.

Observe: Ask, "What is really happening?"

Proceed: Ask, "What is the next right action?"

Skill reminder

The STOP Method does not ask you to ignore your feelings. It asks you to slow down enough to stop letting feelings make every decision.

PART TWO

Fillable Worksheet Section

Use the following pages during or after a stressful moment. You can type into the spaces, print the pages, or copy the worksheets for repeated practice.

Do not worry about perfect answers. The purpose is to slow down, notice, and choose.

Worksheet 1: Before I React

Date and time	Write here...
What happened?	Write here...
What am I about to do or say?	Write here...
Emotion intensity	___ / 10
Safety check	Am I safe right now? ☐ Yes ☐ No If no, who can I contact immediately? Write here...
Reason to pause	Write here...

Worksheet 2: My STOP Plan for This Moment

S: Stop	What will I pause before doing? Write here...
T: Take a step back	How will I create space or breathe? Write here...
O: Observe	What do I notice in my body, thoughts, feelings, urges, and surroundings? Write here...
P: Proceed mindfully	What is the next safe and helpful action? Write here...

PART TWO

Worksheet 3: Observe the Whole Moment

Body signals I notice

☐ Tight chest	☐ Fast heartbeat	☐ Clenched jaw
☐ Hot face	☐ Shaky hands	☐ Heavy body
☐ Restless legs	☐ Stomach drop	☐ Numbness
☐ Tears	☐ Tunnel vision	☐ Head pressure

Observation without judgment

My strongest emotion is	Write here...
The story in my mind is	Write here...
The facts I know are	Write here...
The assumptions I may be making are	Write here...
The urge I am having is	Write here...
What I need right now is	Write here...

Helpful question

Ask yourself: “What else could be true?” This question helps loosen the grip of the first story your nervous system tells you.

Worksheet 4: Proceed Mindfully

Proceeding mindfully means choosing the next step on purpose. The step should protect safety, reduce harm, and move you closer to the person you want to be.

Possible action	Likely outcome	Does it match my values?
Write here...	Write here...	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
Write here...	Write here...	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
Write here...	Write here...	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
Write here...	Write here...	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
Write here...	Write here...	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
Write here...	Write here...	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

My chosen response

The action I choose is	Write here...
Why this action helps	Write here...
What support do I need?	Write here...
What I will do in the next five minutes	Write here...

PART TWO

Worksheet 5: STOP Practice Log

Use this log to build repetition. The skill becomes more available when it is practiced in smaller moments before it is needed in bigger moments.

STOP Practice Log

Date	Situation	Feeling 0 to 10	What I observed	What I chose
Write here...	Write here...	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
Write here...	Write here...	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
Write here...	Write here...	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
Write here...	Write here...	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
Write here...	Write here...	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
Write here...	Write here...	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...

Pattern reflection

The situations where I need STOP most are	Write here...
The step I remember most easily is	Write here...
The step I forget most often is	Write here...
One way I can practice this week is	Write here...

PART TWO

Worksheet 6: My Personal STOP Card

Fill this page out, then keep the words somewhere easy to find. The best STOP plan is simple enough to use when your brain is tired, angry, anxious, or overwhelmed.

My STOP card

My warning sign	When I notice _____, I will use STOP.
S: Stop sentence	Write your short pause sentence here...
T: Step back action	I will breathe, move, or create space by...
O: Observe question	The question I will ask myself is...
P: Proceed choice	The helpful action I will try first is...
Support person	Name and number...

Pocket version

S: Stop and pause.

T: Take a breath and step back.

O: Observe body, thoughts, feelings, urges, facts.

P: Proceed with the choice that helps more than it harms.

SAFETY

Support Plan for High-Risk Moments

Use this page when a situation feels unsafe, when emotional intensity is too high to manage alone, or when there is risk of self-harm, harm to someone else, overdose, or loss of control.

Skills are useful, but safety comes first. If there is immediate danger, call 911. If there is suicidal crisis or emotional crisis in the United States, call or text 988.

My high-risk support plan

Warning signs that I need help now	Write here...
My first support person	Name and number...
My second support person	Name and number...
Professional support	Therapist, doctor, crisis line, clinic, or other support...
Safe place I can go	Write here...
Things I will remove or avoid for safety	Write here...
Words I can say when asking for help	"I am having a hard time staying safe and I need support." Add your own words here...

Closing reminder

A pause is not weakness.
A breath is not giving up.
A feeling is not an order.
The next right action is still available.