

S.T.O.P. for Mindfulness in Everyday Life Transcript

This is Rhonda Magee.

The following is an easy-to-remember practice that can redirect your thoughts and feelings when you are overwhelmed.

Mindfulness can support you at difficult moments as they come up at any time during your day. Like that moment when you receive a message that makes the bottom fall out of your stomach and your thoughts turn to the very worst that could happen. Or, the time when a comment from someone triggers a reaction so strong that you can imagine saying something you might regret.

One such practice is called “STOP,” and can be used at any time you notice you’re feeling the need for a moment of mindfulness.

The four letters in the name S. T. O. P. will help you remember how to do it. Each step can take as little as a few seconds to a few minutes to complete. Try it out and see for yourself how long you like to take with each step, but the entire thing is meant to be done in a short time frame.

So, let’s practice S.T.O.P. or STOP.

To begin, the “S” stands simply for *Stop*. Literally. Just stop or pause what you’re doing, whether it’s typing a text, or rushing straight into the door at work. Give yourself a moment to come to rest, to pause, to collect yourself.

The “T” stands for *Take a conscious breath*. Now that you’ve paused, take a deeper breath, or two, allowing yourself to sense the expansion of the belly caused by breathing very deeply. Notice the sensations of being here, now. As you do so, it may help to bring your attention to the sensations of your feet meeting the floor or the bottoms of your buttocks on the chair that you’re sitting in. Feel the support of the ground and of your own relaxing breath as you do so.

Now move to the “O,” which stands for *Observe what’s going on inside you*, including any thoughts, emotions or sensations (such as tension, butterflies, tightness in the jawline). Now, broaden your awareness to take in your circumstances. Notice how you can be in this situation but not ruled by it. As an added support, offer yourself some kindness and compassion as you let go of tension and of stressful thoughts. And as you calm down, try to be open to the choices you have right in front of you. What is the best way to move forward from here?

Finally, the “P” reminds you that when you are ready to close these moments of practice, you simply *Proceed*, taking the next step in your day from this place of strength, wisdom and presence.

The STOP practice will likely come in handy. It can help whenever you’re feeling distress, and especially whenever you remember to pause in the face of a reaction to some stimulating event, creating a space for reserving and taming your feelings and accessing the deeper resources within you.