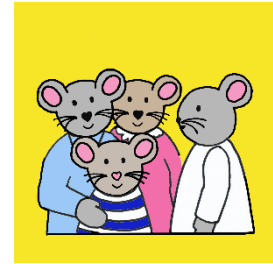


Cognitive - STOP

Use This:

To address negative thinking that can interfere with the course of treatment for anxiety or traumatic stress.



Goals

- The child will learn to identify feelings that may be signs of anxious thinking
- The child will learn how different thoughts can lead to different ways of feeling and acting
- The child will begin to recognise his or her self-talk (expectations, automatic questions, and attributions) in anxiety-provoking situations
- The child will learn four steps to modify anxious self-talk into coping self-talk

Materials

- **Fear Thermometer** (p. 305)
- **Fear Ladder** (2 unrated copies) (p. 307)
- **STOP** worksheet (p. 321)
- Pen/pencil
- **Weekly questionnaires** and **Monitoring sheet** (see pages 268 – 285)
- **Therapist Note Taking Sheet** (p. 267)

If time is tight: Provide the child with the 4-step plan to use when feeling anxious and teach the STOP acronym.

Main steps

<input type="checkbox"/> Set an Agenda	Remember to start by setting an agenda together and by reviewing any practice assignments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain Weekly Ratings	Using the 0 to 10 scale of the Fear Thermometer , obtain Fear Ladder ratings from both the child and his or her parent/s. Review the Weekly questionnaires and Monitoring sheet in detail.
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce Concepts	Explain to the child that you will be spending the session talking about different kinds of feelings that children have and how to identify those feelings in themselves and in other people. Let the child know you will introduce a way to stop bad feelings. The technique is called “STOP”, and will involve several steps that you will discuss together.

Introduce *STOP* worksheet Review the ***STOP*** worksheet, point out the stop sign in the upper left hand corner, explaining that here it refers to the first step. Go through the first two pages of the ***STOP*** worksheet to elicit ideas about feelings from the child, ask the child how he or she would be able to tell if someone else is experiencing these feelings, and find out when he or she has those feelings.

Explain Purpose of Anxious Feelings Next, discuss with the child the idea that there are often many reasons that can explain nervous feelings in a person's body. This should be tied in with what was learned in the "Learning about Anxiety" module.

Example script

Remember all these feelings are part of the alarm system that is meant to help you when there is danger. Why do you think these people have these feelings?

Using as many questions as possible, point out that the alarm makes your heart beat faster, makes you breathe faster (so you might feel out of breath), and makes you sweat so you can cool off if you need to run away. You get butterflies or stomach aches because your stomach stops working on food so your body can concentrate on the danger. Feeling shaky or dizzy or blushing is often from all the increased energy that your body generates. Make sure the child sees that most of these feelings are things that people get when they exercise hard, and suggest that feeling scared gets your body ready for some hard work in case you need to get out of trouble.

Introduce the First Step: "Scared" Point out that the first step in overcoming scared or anxious feelings is to know when you are feeling that way. Ask the child the first thing he or she notices when he or she becomes frightened or scared. We call this step "Scared", and the first letter in *STOP* is also the first letter in scared. Refer back to the stop sign on the worksheet.

Introduce the Next Step: "Thoughts" Point out that the first step in overcoming scared or anxious feelings is to work on the thoughts that make children feel upset. Tell the child that you will be teaching him or her how to identify and deal with these thoughts to make him or her feel better. Explain that anxious thoughts can be unpleasant and even scary, but that there are tools to handle them.

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- Explain How Thoughts Are Guesses** Complete page 3 of the **STOP** worksheet together, making sure that the child has a clear understanding of what a thought is, and how thoughts are distinguished from feelings. Introduce the idea that children’s thoughts can cover a range of different topics, but that thoughts often include guesses about the future. Elicit some predictions of the future from the child to make sure that the child understands this concept, and praise him or her for such efforts. For some children, the idea of a fortune teller or crystal ball may be helpful.

Example script

You: Have you ever heard of a crystal ball?

Child: Uh huh.

You: In stories that you’ve read or films that you’ve seen, what does a crystal ball do?

Child: People look into them and they can see the future.

You: Right! People look into them and make guesses about the future. Sometimes those guesses are right, and sometimes they are wrong. That’s just how your own thoughts can work. Your thoughts tell you what might happen in the future.

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- Illustrate that Guesses Are Not Always Right** Go on to page 4 of the worksheet, and discuss the “roller coaster” picture to illustrate that not everyone makes the same guesses or has the same thoughts about a situation. Some children guess good things will happen, and other children may guess that bad things will happen. Check to see if the child understands the idea that thoughts, which are guesses, can be wrong. If the child makes this connection, you can then point out how a wrong guess is a lot like a false alarm.

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- Make Connection Between Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions** Once the child has provided examples of good and bad guesses, discuss with the child the ways in which different thoughts can lead to different feelings and actions. Use the example on page 4 of the worksheet to demonstrate how two different thoughts in the same situation can result in quite different feelings and actions.

Example script

What would the girl do in this situation? What would the boy do? Who wants to go on the roller coaster? Why?

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- Connect “Thoughts” with “STOP”** Point out that the second letter in STOP stands for “thoughts”. Inform the child that this is the second step in learning to overcome scared or anxious feelings: noticing anxious thoughts. Ask the child to name some ways that recognising thoughts might help when feeling anxious or scared.
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- Introduce the Next Step: “Other Thoughts”** Tell the child that the next letter in STOP stands for “other thoughts.” Mention that you are going to see whether it is possible to make other guesses about a scary situation. Go over page 5 of the worksheet, and ask if the child is able to come up with realistic other thoughts about how the bad things will not come true (e.g., “I bet there will be other new kids” or “It’s OK not to know the answer”). Ask the child how having these other thoughts might make someone feel in a scary situation (e.g., “would you feel better or worse?”).

 - Counter Your Own Thoughts** Complete page 6 of the worksheet, and discuss with the child about what to do in particular situations to better cope with his or her own scared or worried feelings.

 - Apply the Steps to Examples** Discuss how the steps covered so far can help in everyday situations that are scary.

Example script

Therapist: *Let’s imagine that you are at school and the teacher calls on you. You think you know the right answer, but you are afraid you could be wrong. What would you do?*

Child: *I might just not say anything.*

Therapist: *Let’s remember the first step. What is the S for? So would you feel Scared? How would you know?*

Child: *Well, I would probably turn red, and get all hot, and I would feel my heart beating.*

Therapist: *Right! Now what does the T stand for? What kinds of thoughts would you have? What guesses are you making?*

Child: *I’m guessing the teacher will be mad if I say the wrong thing.*

Therapist: *OK. Now let’s look at the third step. What are some Other thoughts that you might have that would make this situation less scary?*

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- Praise and Repeat** Praise the child for his or her efforts in this exercise. If time allows, ask the child to work through another situation in which he or she might feel anxious or scared, indicating how or he or she would use each step on his or her own. Provide praise again.

 - Introduce the Final Step: “Praise”** Inform the child that now you will review the last step in helping to overcome scared and anxious thoughts. Tell the child that this step is called Praise, and discuss the last page of the **STOP** worksheet. Ask the child for some examples of children doing well at a task, and ask the child to suggest some things these children could tell themselves after doing so well (e.g., “it was hard but I did it – nice job!” or “I was really brave this time!”). Is it OK to write some of these down on the last page of the **STOP** worksheet.
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<input type="checkbox"/> Review the Plan	Indicate to the child that he or she just learned a plan that can help to cope with scared or anxious feelings. Point out that it is often difficult to remember all of the steps when feeling scared or nervous, and remind him or her that the first letter of each step spells out the word STOP. Have the child explain to the parent what concepts he or she has learned in the session.
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVITY STOP	Choose a mildly anxiety-provoking item from the child's <i>Fear Ladder</i> . Describe the situation for the child and ask him or her to walk you through what he or she would do in that situation, using the steps from the STOP acronym. If the feared situation involves a social interaction, you should role play with the child and walk him or her through all four steps in the plan.
<input type="checkbox"/> Praise and Prompt Self-Praise	After the child has successfully demonstrated the STOP steps in role-play, praise the child and remind him or her to praise him- or herself when practising these steps in the future.
<input type="checkbox"/> PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT STOP Worksheet	The practice assignment for this week is for the child to complete the <i>STOP</i> worksheet if it was not finished in session. Let the child know that you will review this worksheet together in the next session.
<input type="checkbox"/> Send the materials for the next session	Tell the parent/s you will send a written summary and the materials for the next session. Remind them that they <u>do not</u> need to be completed for next session as you will go through them together in the session. Tell the parent/s you will also send the <i>Weekly questionnaires</i> and <i>Monitoring sheet</i> which need to be completed for the next session.
	Confirm date and time of the next call.
<input type="checkbox"/> Summarising	Ask if they would like you to summarise the session, if they want to summarise or if you should do it together.

Leave ‘Em Laughing

End the session on a positive note with the family by perhaps talking about things that are unrelated to treatment or a game or activity that will leave them feeling good about the work you’ve done today. The end of each session should be used to praise the family’s efforts and to convey support and encouragement.

Helpful Tips

- Once children have used STOP, they should be encouraged to go through the four steps each time an exposure exercise or reading of a trauma narrative is performed. For example, you can ask the child before starting an exposure practice about how he or she will know if he or she feels scared. Then ask about what some scared thoughts might be, and write those down. Next, have the child generate some other thoughts that might be more realistic and reassuring. At that point, suggest that the child recite some of those other thoughts to him- or herself during the practice. Complete the exposure exercise, and then remember to praise and to encourage self-praise. These steps should be used for practice at home as well as those done together.
- To facilitate some children’s ability to identify and label feelings, it can help to use pictures of people, showing different expressions that reflect different emotions. Discuss what type of feeling each person might be experiencing. Pictures illustrating different feelings and emotions can often be found in magazines or in illustrated children’s storybooks.
- When working with younger children, it can be helpful to create a “Feelings Dictionary” by cutting out from magazines pictures that display physical responses to emotions, mounting them on paper, and binding them together in a booklet created by the child.

How’s Your Style?

- Did you praise often?
- Did you review often, by asking questions?
- Did you simplify the steps as needed?
- Did your pace match that of the child or family?
- Did you stay on track?