

# DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES

## THOUGHT STOPPING

When you notice your mind is telling a story that isn't helpful, you can stop the story in its tracks before it has any real impact on you by saying to yourself "STOP, this is a story that does not need to happen". Then focus on or distract yourself with something else.

## WHO BREATH

Using the breath is the quickest way to get a serotonin boost and activate the parasympathetic nervous system. The in-breath activates your stress response, the out-breath activates your calm response or parasympathetic nervous system. Lengthening the outbreath is important to help you calm down quickly.

### PRACTICE

You can practice using the breath to calm down by using the WHO breath (when you breathe out, purse your lips like you are blowing out through a straw and it makes a "who" sound). This helps to lengthen the out breath, which activates the parasympathetic nervous system).

## DROP THE ANCHOR

This is a high impact technique that engages the senses and was developed by Dr Russ Harris, an Australian Clinical Psychologist. It's a great one to use in meetings when you are caught in the middle of an emotional storm and there is no way of escaping. No one else knows what you are doing! When dropping the anchor, you take a few breaths and then focus on the senses to help calm the mind quickly.

### PRACTICE

- Ruminates about something that is bothering you at the moment, let it fully sink into you, fully experience any emotions that rise up.
- Now Drop the Anchor. Push your feet firmly into the ground and sit up straight.
- Take a couple of breaths down into your belly.
- Look around and name five things you can see.
- Name five things you can hear, you can also add taste and smell if you wish.
- Come back to the present moment.
- Notice how you feel after completing this exercise.



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## **PLEASANT AND PRODUCTIVE THOUGHTS**

Prepare in advance a list of pleasant and productive thoughts (“Two Ps”) which you can use in the moment, to replace unhelpful or ruminative thoughts (which are generally unpleasant and unproductive).

## **ALLOCATE WORRY TIME**

If worrying easily gets out of control for you, then try to manage it by allocating specific times of the day to “worry time” - just put 10 – 20 minutes aside. During this time, tackle each worry as a problem to solve. This strategy hits the worry in two ways; its creates a ‘wall’ around the process, which stops it from spreading, and it turns the worry into something more constructive. If you start to worry at other times, postpone the worry to the “worry time” and focus on what you are doing or what is happening around you instead.

Often people who allocate worry time find that they only need this time for a few days, then there is nothing left to worry about! Other people even find that they are unable to worry to order, so the worry time turns out to be trouble free. Allocating “worry time” also helps you by ensuring that you have ‘worry-free zones”. These are places where you simply are not allowed to worry, as you limit yourself to worrying only in your allocated time, only in a specific place.

