

S-T-O-P That Thought

Prologue:

The major concept presented in this session is perhaps the most critical of all. It is pivotal in grasping control of our immediate world, for each of us lives within a world created by our thinking. In a nutshell, it is: "As we think, so we become."

This session works with the following powerful key: What we hold in our minds makes all the difference about how we eventually feel. This doesn't necessarily mean that we will immediately recover from a hurt by changing our thinking, but that changed thinking can help heal a person in time.

By taking responsibility for our thinking, we can also step out of a victim role. Think of healing a scraped knee. If the scab is continually picked, the wound cannot heal. So it is with hurts; it is not constructive to hash out old hurts. It leaves a bigger scar. Instead, we promote healing with a positive self-image created out of positive thinking, thus developing inner strengths that can handle hurts.

Objectives:

Group members will:

- * learn a model for halting negative thinking patterns
- * practice the model
- * brainstorm recurring thoughts they would like to stop
- * decide on a specific thought pattern to S-T-O-P in daily life

Materials:

Copies of the S-T-O-P That Thought model for each member
Red construction paper
Scissors

"Let the sadness
die out for lack of
attention."

Pegge Butenhoff

Procedure:

Lead a discussion of how thoughts can go around and around in our heads, even when we want them to stop. Give some examples of these “sticky” thoughts: (I can’t ..., I’ll never be enough ..., Nobody likes me ..., This hurt will never end ...). Ask for others to share examples of their own.

Then you might say, “Each of you has come to the group because you are dealing with something hurtful in your life. We’re here to talk about life, because for each of us it is full of pain and celebration. This may not be the best time of your life, but things can change and be different. People come out of all kinds of adversity and struggles to become stronger and more healthy. How do they do that? One way is to change their thinking.

Life is full of pain and celebration. Where do you choose to place your attention?

“Did you know that as you think, you become? You may not be able to change what’s already happened, but you can change the way you feel about the events by changing how you think about them.

“It helps to focus on what you want your life to be like, things you like, talents you have, things you are good at, what service you can offer. Do this instead of focusing on the negative, the hurtful emotions, situations and feelings. Look for things of interest in your life, for example, find books about things you like, play sports, draw, or spend time with friends. Keep your focus and your thoughts on the things you enjoy and that bring you good feelings.

“So today we’re going to do an activity that will help us to grasp some control over our thinking. It’s called: S-T-O-P That Thought .”

Introduce the S-T-O-P That Thought model as a method for stopping a sticky thought process and replacing it with something more favorable.

Pass out and read the S-T-O-P That Thought model.

Brainstorm some sticky thoughts that might be helped by this model.

Practice aloud with a few examples.

Each group member then cuts out a red stop sign and pastes the S-T-O-P That Thought model on it to keep as a reminder of the S-T-O-P process.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do those sticky thoughts first get stuck in our heads?
2. In what way does praising ourselves help to change our thinking?
3. What is the one and only thing in life we can control? (Our thoughts) Explain.
4. If we don't control our thinking, who else does?
5. How can I change my thinking to feel good about myself?

Extension Activity:

Role plays are such an important way to experience and rehearse behavioral changes. If time allows, try role-playing some of the negative thought patterns along with the S-T-O-P That Thought model. See how they come alive when acted out.

“Whether you think you can, or that you can't, you are usually right.”

Henry Ford

When you have negative thinking,
use this process...

S-T-O-P That Thought

Stop when you become aware of a sticky thought.

Then rephrase the thought into more helpful words.

Over and over again repeat the new thought.

Praise yourself for changing your thinking.

"Your words create what you speak
about. Learn to speak positively."

Sanaya Roman