

Sample Scripts for Thought Stopping

Step 1: Explain rationale for thought stopping to child

"The next thing we're going to learn is a way of stopping yourself from spending so much time thinking about what happened to you. I'm going to show you a special way of controlling what you're thinking about. When you learn to stop thinking about what happened so much, you'll find that it's easier to focus on things that are going on around you, like school or hanging out with friends."

Step 2: Demonstrate how technique works

"Let me show you how this can work. I want you to close your eyes and think about something that often pops into your head and makes you upset. OK, are you thinking about it? (Pause 5-10 seconds.) STOP! All right, tell me what you are thinking about right now? Did you stop thinking about what happened to you?"

Step 3: Help the child select thought stopping method

"There are a lot of ways to stop thinking about something. You can do what I just did and say "STOP!" Or you can say something else, like "Cut it out!" You can even wear a rubber band around your wrist and make it snap when you want to stop thinking about something. What do you think will work best for you?...OK, let's have you stop yourself from thinking about what happened to you."

Repeat exercise with child initiating thought stopping. You may want to give the child an auditory cue when it is time to disrupt the thought, such as saying "Now."

Step 4: Introduce replacement thought

"You have gotten the hang of interrupting your unpleasant thoughts. What makes this skill work really well is not only interrupting the unhappy thought, but replacing it with a happy one. Can you think of a time when you were really happy? Or where you felt like things were just perfect and couldn't get any better? Tell me about that."

Elicit as many vivid details as possible.