



Controlling your thoughts



Below are some ways to help STOP our negative thoughts as soon as we notice them:

Distraction

At certain times, you may want some **short-term relief** from your negative thoughts; this is where distraction techniques may be helpful.



- **Distraction** helps **take your mind off** your negative thoughts
- **Distraction** helps you to **take control** of your thoughts by thinking about something else

This can be done in several ways:

Describe what you see- this involves describing to yourself in detail what you see. Try to



do this as quickly as you can, thinking about **colours**, shapes, **size**, smell,

textures

etc.

Thinking puzzles- This could be things such as:

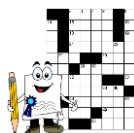
- Counting backwards from 123 in nines
- Naming the songs of your favourite group/singer
- Naming all the players in your favourite sports team.



The puzzle must be **hard enough to challenge** you, so don't make it too easy!

Absorbing activities

Some people find that they can switch off and become totally absorbed in certain activities. For example, **crosswords, Sudoku, reading, watching the TV/film, playing an instrument or listening to music**. The more you **concentrate** on what you are doing, the more you drown out any negative thoughts.



Coping self-talk

At difficult times, instead of listening to your doubts and worries, plan to keep repeating encouraging and positive coping messages to yourself e.g. **I can do it!**





Positive self-talk

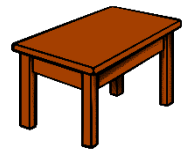
We are not always very good at praising ourselves for being successful. Positive self-talk is a way of helping us to **take more notice of our achievements**. For example:

- Instead of thinking “I’ve only answered one question- I’ll never be able to finish all ten”, say to yourself “**that’s the first question finished- now for the next**”
- Instead of thinking “no one talks to me when we go out”, say to yourself “**that’s the first-time Rory has ever said anything to me**”

Thought stopping

Negative thoughts can pop into our heads often, as soon as you become aware of this negative thought try the following steps:

- **Immediately and loudly** say **STOP**
- Some people find it useful to emphasise this by banging the table or holding a chair or table tightly
- Straight away think of your **challenge** to this negative thought and **repeat it loudly** to yourself



Throw them away

Sometimes it is useful to **empty our heads** and clear our thoughts away.

- At the end of the day, **write down** your negative thoughts on a piece of paper or type them on a computer and print them out.
- Think of them all and write them down
- Once you have finished, **scunch up your paper** tightly and throw it in the bin!



- There are different ways in which you can take control of and challenge your thoughts
- You will probably need to **use a range of methods**
- The method that you choose may not always be successful
- The more you practise the easier it will become, so **stick with it!**