

Just Say No to Stressful Thoughts



When nagging thoughts or worries stand in the way of feeling good, a technique called thought stopping is an effective way to eradicate them. The trick is to recognize negative thoughts, then reduce their impact.

Here's an example: You're so distressed by a petty remark a coworker makes, you can't concentrate on anything else, and you dwell on it for hours. Here's what to do.

1. Isolate the stressful thought.
2. Close your eyes and focus on it briefly.
3. Count to three.
4. Shout "Stop!" (Or, if others are in earshot, imagine a stop sign, a flashing red light, or the word "stop" in bold letters.)
5. If the thought's still present, repeat steps 3 to 5.
6. Resume normal activity, feeling better.

You can use this technique anytime you find yourself obsessed with negative thoughts. (If work problems dominate your thoughts, substitute an "off duty" sign for the stop sign in the exercise described above.)