

MAKING USE OF THE THOUGHT-STOPPING TECHNIQUE

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Identify obsessive thoughts that produce anxiety and interfere with normal functioning.
2. Implement a thought-stopping technique to interrupt the obsessive thoughts and reduce anxiety.
3. Rate the degree of success at reducing obsessive thoughts and the concomitant -an-xiety.

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR WHICH THIS EXERCISE MAY BE MOST USEFUL

- Anxiety
- Eating Disorder

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

Thought-stopping is a simple, but effective technique to reduce the impact of obsessive rumination. You may want to review the essential elements of the thought-stopping technique with the client and practice its implementation in the office prior to giving this homework assignment. Review the client's implementation after 1 week and adjust the technique as necessary to increase its effectiveness. You may want to add the element of having the client snap a rubber band around his/her wrist at the time of shouting "STOP."

MAKING USE OF THE THOUGHT-STOPPING TECHNIQUE

Obsessive thoughts that recur on a frequent and regular basis can be very frustrating and interfere with normal functioning. You can become preoccupied with these thoughts and therefore unable to focus on other issues. These recurring thoughts can also produce considerable anxiety and they often are connected to worries that a harmful or embarrassing event will occur. A simple but effective technique for coping with obsessive thoughts and reducing their ability to raise anxiety is the “thought-stopping” technique. This exercise guides you through the implementation of this technique and assesses its effectiveness.

1. List any obsessive thoughts that recur regularly and interfere with your normal functioning.

2. Rate the degree of interference of the obsessive thought on your normal routine.



Very Strong
and Frequent

No
Interference

3. List three positive, calming scenes that you could place in your mind to replace the obsessive thought (e.g., sunning yourself all alone on a warm beach, fishing on a quiet lake as the sun sets).

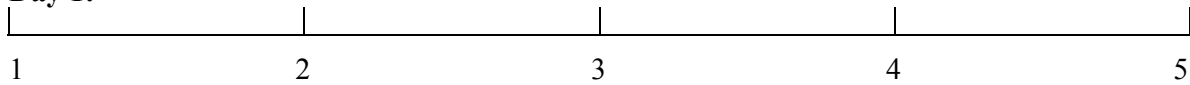
Scene 1:

Scene 2:

Scene 3:

4. Over the next week, each time that the obsessive thought occurs, shout “STOP!” to yourself in your head without making a sound. Picture a large red traffic sign, and then begin to think about one of the calming scenes from the previous question while breathing deeply and relaxing your muscle tension. Rate on a daily basis the degree of your success at implementing this technique to stop and replace the obsessive thought.

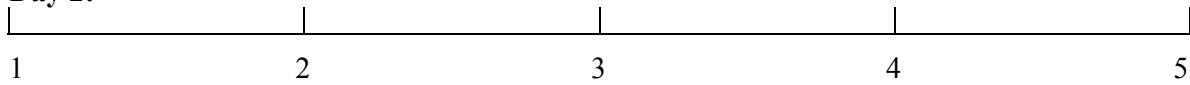
Day 1:



No
Success

Very
Successful

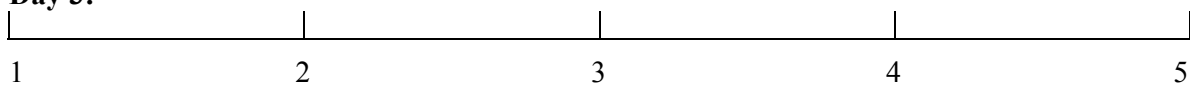
Day 2:



No
Success

Very
Successful

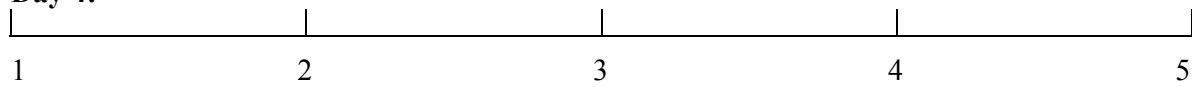
Day 3:



No
Success

Very
Successful

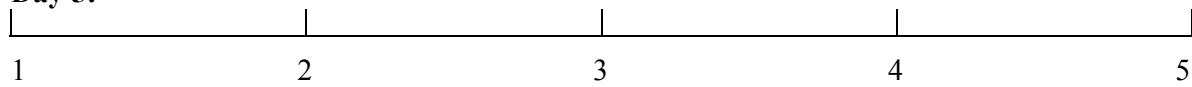
Day 4:



No
Success

Very
Successful

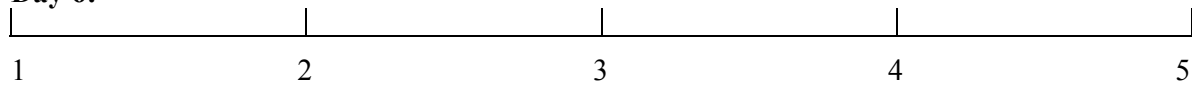
Day 5:



No
Success

Very
Successful

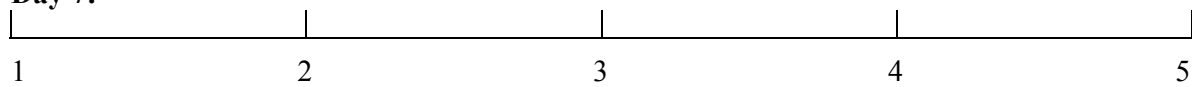
Day 6:



No
Success

Very
Successful

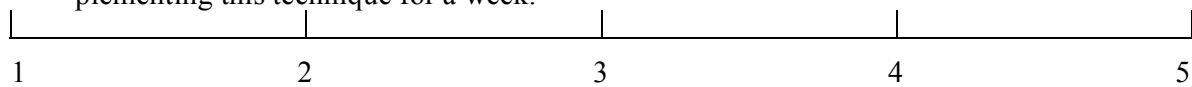
Day 7:



No
Success

Very
Successful

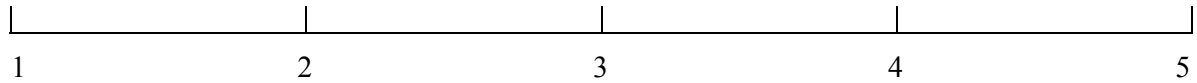
5. Rate again the degree of interference of the obsessive thought on your normal routine after implementing this technique for a week.



Very Strong
and Frequent

No
Interference

6. Describe any anxiety reduction that has occurred as a result of implementing this assignment with its calming scenes and relaxing muscle tension. Then rate the degree of anxiety reduction you have experienced.



No Anxiety
Reduction

Significant
Anxiety
Reduction