



OCT
16

Mind Your Health: STOPP Therapy 101

by Focus Disability Network Society

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A FREE online 1-hour workshop with interesting mental health information, resources and self-care tips.

About this Event

Scott Williams will present a deep dive into STOPP Therapy, a key skill for people suffering from anxiety, depression, racing thoughts, and impulsivity. You will leave the session with practical tools to gain control of your responses to situations around you and feelings that arise within.

Date And Time

Fri, October 16, 2020
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM PDT
[Add to Calendar](#)

Location

Online Event



simple skills
that will
help you
take control
of your thoughts

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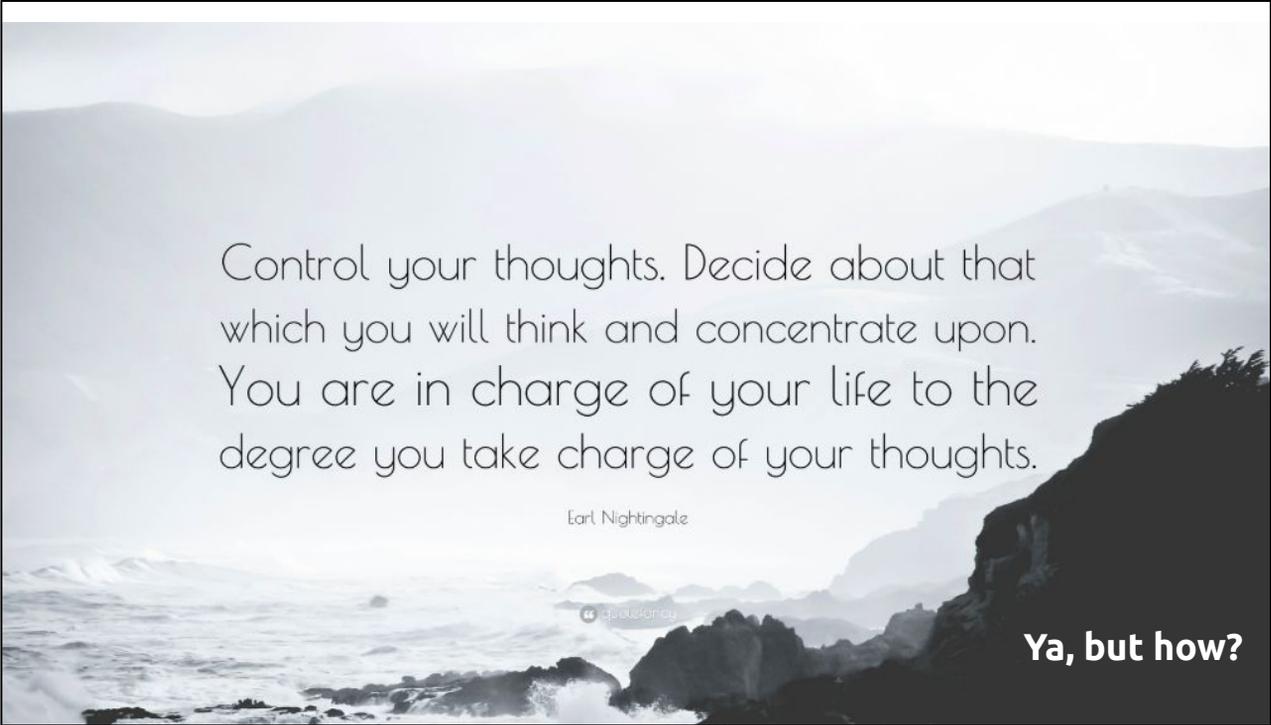
Session One: STOPP Therapy 101

Hi everyone, I'm Scott and today my goal is for you to leave with something from a seminar that is actually interesting and provides you with actual resources that work in the real world.

Alright let's start with some live feedback. **Here's our first Zoom Poll. Annette is going to throw up a quick poll - how many professional development seminars you've been to as a professional or if you're a caregiver or teen let me know how many times you think you've looked online or talk to someone looking for practical advice and didn't get anything that was helpful.**

I don't know about you but I've been to a lot of lousy seminars. Too often the presenter is boring or the material is so basic a high school kid could have presented it.

-Today I'm going to give you even easier material than that! But I'm here to teach you something that has transformed the lives of hundreds of my patients and clients and is the single best tool I use to shut down my stinking thinking. And the weird thing is that not very many people have heard about this even though it's literally Cognitive Behavioural Therapy 101.



Control your thoughts. Decide about that which you will think and concentrate upon. You are in charge of your life to the degree you take charge of your thoughts.

Earl Nightingale

Ya, but how?

Here's the thing

- Almost everybody in the 21st Century seems to be dealing with mental health issues and a lot of the information out there for dealing with this is hype or not based on actual science or reality or is being promoted by a billionaire with a book deal telling you they understand what you are going through.
 - why don't many of us have a process for dealing with our mental health - some of us have had anxiety for 30 years and implement exactly zero tools (unless you count wine) for dealing with something that impacts our life more than our physical shape, our middle class finances, or virtually almost all of the external stimuli in our life

So what do I have to do to deal with major mental health issues like depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, trauma, and ongoing self-harm?



Start with the Bad News - There is no magic pill.

Contrary to all of what we hear in social media and on daytime television there is no book you can read or class you can take that will heal you from a lifetime of trauma or a highly dysfunctional relationship. **Mental Health doesn't work like that.** Some of you were at a recent seminar I did where I said, -- There is no yoga class or diet or ritual you can perform that will be enough to rewrite your neural connections by itself. These things can be immensely helpful but...

Mental Health is an inside job. *It takes a lot of work* to move neural pathways around and deal with the trauma of our past and work through all the weird and messed up coping mechanisms that are dysfunctional.

Repeat - Your screwed up coping mechanisms have spent decades molding you into your own little normal/dysfunctional self and no amount of colon cleansing and yoga and kale is going to change your messed up wiring or generations of faulty parenting (yoga is great but it's not designed to fix a major mental health issue)

Ok, enough bad news, lets get to the good stuff.



1. We need to learn to shut down the voices in our head - grab control of our thoughts.

THE VOICES IN MY HEAD

keep saying 'Banana!'

So what do I have to do to deal with these major issues - Depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and ongoing self-harm?

1. Need to learn to shut down the voices in your head - grab control of your thoughts. (extra points if you know who that person is with the monkey on his shoulder)

Many of us have learned (incorrectly) that in order to get better we need to “feel all our feelings”. This is not actually good mental health advice. What if you are feeling suicidal? Should you allow yourself to go there?

- if you are feeling depressed, should you let yourself go down that pit until somehow, magically, you will begin to feel better?
- those of you with anxiety, how has letting yourself go over the deep end when you are anxious worked for you?

The actual way to deal with extreme thoughts and mental health rabbit holes is to begin by taking control of your mind. This is a learned skill, like impulse control (we'll get to that).

There are lots of tools out there - to shut down the narrative but STOPP Therapy is perhaps one the best because it uses multiple psychological hacks to trick your brain into compliance. It's basically your one-stop-shop for CBT Impulse Control.

But before we go into STOPP Therapy I want to give you a commercial for

some other tools that you should learn.

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

All or nothing thinking Sometimes, collect back and white thinking. If it's not perfect, it's not good. Either it's right or it's not at all!	Over-generalizing Seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly fixated in the conclusions we draw. "Nothing good ever happens!"
Mental filter Only paying attention to certain parts of reality. Not seeing our successes.	Disqualifying the positive Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another. That doesn't count.
Jumping to conclusions There are two key types of jumping to conclusions: - Mind-reading - Fortune telling Guessing what others are thinking or predicting the future!	Magnification (catastrophizing) Blowing things out of proportion (a stomach ache) or magnifying something something to make it seem less important.
Emotional reasoning Assuming that because we feel a certain way others will think must be true. That embarrassment is just an accident!	should/must Using critical words like "should," "must," or "ought" can make us feel guilty or like we have already failed. If we apply "shoulds" to other people, the result is often frustration.
Labeling Assigning labels to ourselves or other people. The label becomes a reality. "This is my fault!"	Personalization Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. People are blaming for something that was your fault.

Mind Full, or Mindful?

This Is My Toolbox

PUBLISHED ON December 3, 2014

This is for you. You know who you are.

I talk a great deal in counseling about "the toolbox". It is a psychological construct that many of us are familiar with. Talking about a toolbox is trendy now, and for good reason. Knowing what it is and how to effectively use the toolbox can be a powerful metaphor. One woman I work with told me that the toolbox doesn't work for her. She has a sewing kit. The actual metaphor isn't important, working it very much is.

And so, in deference to the few who have asked, I'll tell you about my personal toolbox. Sharing this, for some reason, feels like a very intimate confession. This is not your toolbox, but it is mine. Welcome to my particular version of psychological weirdness.

STOICISM

Recognise what you can and cannot control

You determine your reaction to a crisis

Ignore people dominated by their own negative emotions

Master yourself and aim to be virtuous

Learn to move on



STOPP Therapy doesn't work for everyone but that hardly matters. The thing we learn first is that there are many roads to Mecca but **no matter what methodology you choose** you can't half-ass your way there. Real change is hard and it takes way more time than most people are willing to spend. You're talking about rewiring neural pathways.

Question - What do you think is the average length of time people go to counselling.

Let's do a **Zoom Poll**

How many months on average do people attend regular counselling sessions?

1. 6 months
2. 3 months
3. 1 month
4. 1 year or greater

The answer is 2.5 months. 3 months tops. Ok, second question, no Zoom Poll, **how long do you think people go to counselling before they start to see measurable results?**

- Just over 3 months.
-

Most people go to counselling for 6 or 8 sessions then quit and tell the next person

who suggests they go to counselling “Been there-done that”
It didn’t really do much, right?

- Quantitative change takes time and no matter what tools you pick for your toolbox it’s important to realize that you get what you pay for.

The question is, “what are you willing to pay to get over regular panic attacks or crippling anxiety?”

There are all kinds of awesome tools that I recommend you add to your arsenal.
It’s all about what works.-

The goal is to build your own Mental Wellness Toolbox - I have an article on this and it’s all over the internet

Into that Toolbox I put the things that work to keep me from losing it - **those are the tools I constantly employ and practice.**

1. Learn Cognitive Distortions - Do you know the 15 Classic Cognitive Distortions and the most common cognitive biases
2. Mindful Breathing - Do you know your number?
3. Radical Acceptance.
4. Those DBT and counselling sheet like HALT
5. Neurofeedback
6. Mindfulness
7. Existentialism/Stoicism
8. Perspective changing and building
9. Trauma-informed counselling
10. Cheesy psychological props like my Wisdom Rock
11. Somatic therapies that get you in touch with your space
12. Distraction and Deflection Techniques
13. And my personal favorite WWSS (don’t explain....lol)

Dealing with major mental health issues takes hardcore effort and a bunch of tools in your toolbox.

But Today, we’re going to talk about my favorite - STOPP Therapy

STOPP

TAKE A BREATH

OBSERVE: What am I thinking?
What am I reacting to?
What am I feeling in my body?

PULL BACK: Put in some perspective. See the bigger picture. Is this fact or opinion? How would someone else see this?

PRACTISE WHAT WORKS: What's the best thing to do for me, for others, for this situation?



www.get.gg

<https://www.get.gg/docs/STOPP.pdf>



The actual way to deal with extreme thoughts and mental health rabbit holes is to begin by taking control of your mind. This is a learned skill, like impulse control (we'll get to that).

STOPP Therapy (give out exercise and explain - standard tool for shutting down intrusive thoughts)

STOPP is CBT in a nutshell. - Go over with team.

Learn this ONE KEY SKILL and you can start to take control of your emotions and your life.

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space lies our freedom to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom". Viktor Frankl.

STOPP Therapy is based on the idea that there is this small space when you can choose how you react. Those few seconds between when that person coughs on you in WalMart and how you are going to respond.

LORI

STOPP Worksheet	
Notice the intrusive or distressing thought, image, memory, trigger...	Write your reactions and alternative, healthier responses in this column. What works for you? What will help? What can you tell yourself? What do you need to remember at those times?
STOPP! 	
Take a breath 	Stop and Step Back Don't act immediately. Pause. 
Observe - describe the feelings, images, thoughts, body sensations, triggers. 	Take a Breath  Notice your breath as you breathe in and out. Observe What am I thinking and feeling? What are the words that my mind is saying? Is this fact or opinion? Descriptions or evaluations? Accurate or inaccurate? Helpful or unhelpful? What unhelpful thinking habit am I using (e.g. mind-reading, negative filter, thinking the worst)? Where is my focus of attention? What metaphor could I use (mountain, tunnel, playground bully, thought train, beach ball, passengers on the bus)? 
Pull back / Put in some Perspective. What's the bigger picture? Take the helicopter view. Is this fact or opinion? How would someone else see this? Is there another way of looking at this? 	Pull Back: Put in some Perspective See the situation as an outside observer. What would a fly on the wall see? Is there another way of looking at it? What would someone else see and make of it? What advice would I give to someone else? What's the helicopter view? What meaning am I giving this event for me to react in this way? How important is it right now, and will it be in 6 months? Is my reaction in proportion to the actual event? 
Practise what works. What is the best thing to do right now - for me, for others, for the situation. 	Practise what works Do what works and what helps! Play to your Principles and Values. Will it be effective and appropriate? Is it in proportion to the event? Is it in keeping with my values and principles? What will be the consequences of my action? What is best for me and most helpful for this situation? 

STOPP - CBT in a Nutshell

STOPP
CBT in a nutshell

From Getselfhelp.co.uk



STOPP

TAKE A BREATH

OBSERVE: What am I thinking?
What am I reacting to?
What am I feeling in my body?

PULL BACK: Put in some perspective. See the bigger picture. Is this fact or opinion? How would someone else see this?

PRACTISE WHAT WORKS: What's the best thing to do for me, for others, for this situation?



How STOPP Therapy Works

STOPP. - Stop. Take A Breath. Take several deep breaths until you aren't pinging as much.

Stop. Take a breath. Observe. Pull Back. You need to get a different perspective and you can't do that if you can't control your inner monologue.

(Stoicism - "the view from above" (observe)) - you learn to take an out-of body look at yourself. Observe your emotions from outside - see how depressed or anxious or dangerous you are right now - then pull back from those emotions.

This is a learned skill that most people will never learn because of the last letter in STOPP - Practice. Learning this stuff takes hundreds of hours of practice. It's hard for anxious people to reign that in. It's way easier to freak out - and every time you do you teach that neuro pathway to be anxious.

You need to rewrite those neuro pathways and that takes time and practice and input.

Most of us should see a counsellor - for years.

As we said at the top we have spent our whole lives learning dysfunctional ways to cope with stuff and it is going to take a long time to become the jedi masters we dream of being.

So get started.

STOPP				
STOP	Take a BREATHE	OBSERVE	PULL BACK PUT IN SOME PERSPECTIVE	PRACTISE WHAT WORKS
				
<i>Stop and step back from the situation, in your mind</i>	<i>Breathe slowly once or twice</i>	<i>What's happening? What am I reacting to? What am I thinking and feeling? What are the words that my mind is saying? What physical sensations do I notice in my body? Where is my focus of attention?</i>	<i>Is this fact or opinion? See the situation as an outside observer. Is there another way of looking at it? What would someone else see and make of it? What advice would I give to someone else? What's 'the helicopter view'? What meaning am I giving this event for me to react in this way? How important is it right now, and will it be in 6 months? Is my reaction in proportion to the actual event? What will be the consequences of my action?</i>	<i>What can I do that will be most helpful? Will it be effective and appropriate? Is it in keeping with my values and principles? What is best thing to do, for me, for others, for the situation?</i>

This is a version of the familiar **Thought Record Sheets** that every counsellor in the world has used at one time or another.

It's a tool to monitor and remind people that they need to do this 50 -100 times before they see the success they want.

Here's how you bring it into your life.

1. Starts with hindsight - I start with clients by getting them to recall two times in the past week when they lost it.
2. Then after doing that 8-10 times they start doing it at home.
3. You start at home by recording the events and your STOPP steps after the event.

(Go through example of the steps involved - ok I lost it....) - Do that 2x/week for a month

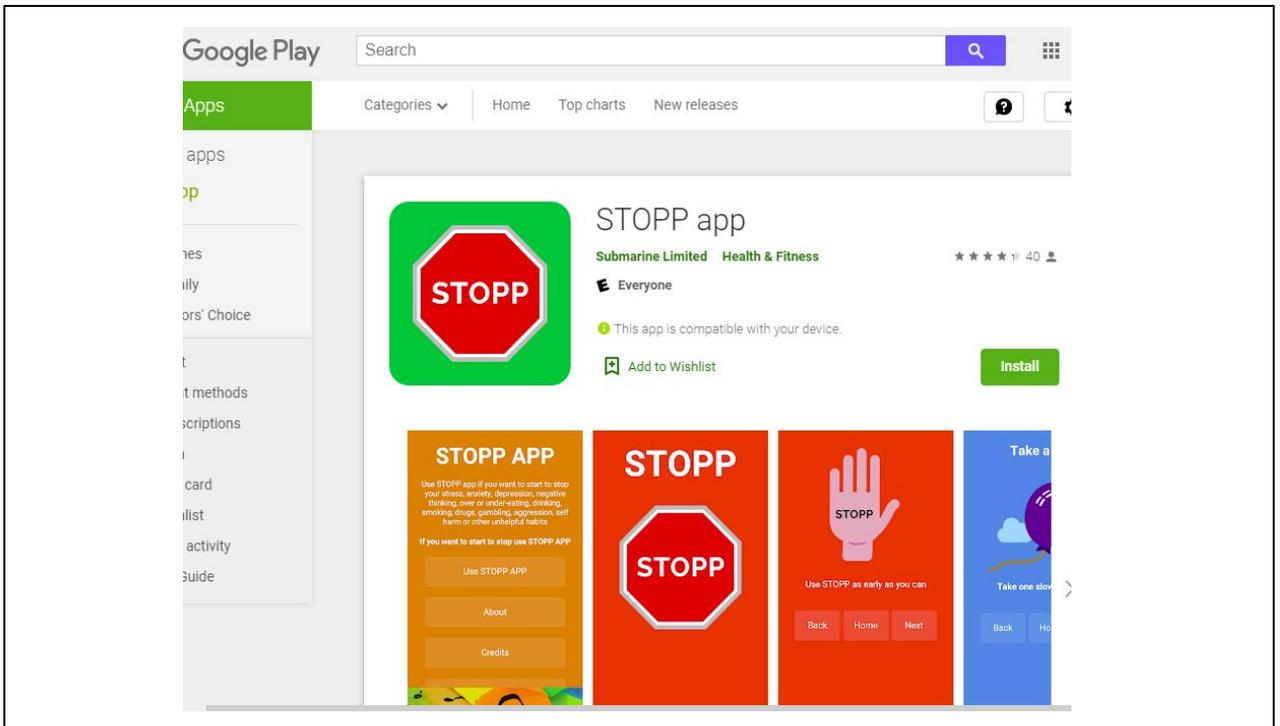
4. Put the sheet up on your fridge (we'll talk about that again in a minute)
5. Then one day, after about 3 or 4 months of doing this, you remember to do STOPP Therapy DURING your emotional episode.
 - It's like OMG, I'm starting to lose it --- STOPP it!
 - And that's the day you know you are going to win this.



- Get a STOPP wallet card and tape it to your phone. This is my friend Steve's phone.
- Fridge magnet the charts and resource materials to the fridge
- Coquitlam Excel Martial Arts - Manager has it taped to the lip of his desk.
- I carried a version of this card on me for probably 3 years and 2 phones.

As we said near the beginning "you are trying to change your very essence, your personality, your belief systems, things that imprinted you since your mom was 7 months pregnant."

- I do an entire seminar on the neurological ramifications of trying to change your brain - it's necessary to imprint and employ neuroplasticity and that takes time.



And there is an app for everything - anxiety and depression trackers, assessments, thought diaries, CBT workouts, mental disorders, guided meditations, hundreds of autism apps for every age range.



WHAT I IF TOLD YOU YOU READ THE FIRST LINE WRONG

#1. Get a hold on your thoughts

2. Change the Narrative (“Pull Back” from that emotion)

Our brains are a porridge of cognitive distortions and bias - we have learned these coping skills and mental gymnastics for a reason - there is a reason for anxiety, for example

- If you are running through the forest being chased by a cougar...

One of the basic tenets counsellors teach says this - **change your mind and your butt will follow.**

We are **tempted to change our outside** and hope that this will change everything - **but that’s a cognitive distortion.**

“Wherever you go you take you with you” (Neil Gaiman *The Graveyard Book*)

Take someone who keeps dating the wrong person - they think, “this one will be different, the last one was a lawyer and this person is blue collar, they’re nothing alike”

What happens? Why? (Because they are still wired up a certain way to be attracted to certain, often subconscious, things)

Why do I always date controlling men?

Why do I always date angry women? (because you are trying to change your circumstances and not your mind)

Change your mind first.

1. You need to change those **intrusive thoughts** telling you that you will

1. never get better.
2. When you are anxious you are firing a million miles an hour and it's mostly bad.
3. You're making mountains out of mole hills, you are literally stressing yourself out about what might happen, about how bad things are, about a dozen things that probably won't even happen.
4. **You need to shut that down and change that narrative.**

How do I do that? How about STOPP Therapy.

I use those Thought Records. I fight back against those irrational thoughts and black and white thinking and Should Statements and Catastrophizing by PULLING BACK from those emotions and taking the "view from above"

Teach STOPP Therapy to Children and Adults Using Lesson Plans

For children:

Breaking the Rumination - Escalation - Aggression cycle: Further Examples of STOPP Therapy, Distraction, and Redirection.

TEACHING PROCEDURE: This exercise is designed to employ redirection and distraction to "snap" the client out of his rumination state. Rumination occurs when the client begins to focus on the negative symptoms of distress, and goes down the rabbit hole of negativity and growing escalation. It's important to move the child away from that downward spiral using quick, focussed distraction techniques, especially when that child is becoming fixated and begins to spiral down towards familiar, and often violent, dysfunctional coping mechanisms.

- These methods, as with most of the tools we will learn, are best taught while the child is at calm baseline.
- While still in a calm state, remind client about how it feels to be stressed out/anxious/angry and elicit verbal agreement that it is much "better" to be happy and have an awesome day.
- Use repetition (always) to further implant the benefits of having a good day (more fun, less stress, everyone is happy, get to do more things, etc.)
- Get child to draw and colour a Stop Sign.

Teach STOPP Therapy (age appropriate):

- Explain that it's important to try to stop ourselves from getting upset. While the child may still be very young they have, by this time, had multiple exposures to such concepts and should grasp on some level.
- Describe why it is "important" in client-centric terms (benefits for client). Review reasons listed above.
- Explain that you're going to learn something together that will help them when they are feeling emotionally overwhelmed (by other people, by feelings in general, when people come to close and invade his bubble, etc.)
- Explain (in your own words) - "Ok we're going to learn how to use our stop sign. We're going to practice using our stop sign when we start to get angry or anxious."
 1. "We're going to pretend you are angry, but only pretend. Show me your angry face. Awesome!"
 2. "Ok, when you get angry we're going to hold up our Stop Sign and say stop!" Practice.
 3. "Great job. Let's try it again, only this time let's use a sad face. Show me your sad face."
 4. "Ok, give me your best sad face. Wow, that's so sad, it makes my heart hurt.". Ok, what do we do next? (prompt when necessary)
 5. "That's right, we hold up our Stop Sign and what do we say? That's right, let's say it together - Stop!"
 6. Practice using various faces. You can refer to the *Emotion Faces Worksheet* if helpful.
 7. Add 3 deep breaths to exercise, immediately after Stop Sign, as soon as possible.

Keep Stop Sign close at hand for when client begins to legitimately become upset and employ as soon as possible, as early as possible. The effectiveness of this tool is inversely proportional to how upset the client is when it is used, and usually ineffectual if attempted after the child is escalated.

For adults:

Mental Health Tool #1: STOPP Therapy And Personal Time Outs - Controlling My Own Frustrations and Anxieties

TEACHING PROCEDURE: This STO builds on supports introduced in earlier Lesson Plans and is designed for implementation by Lead Mental Health Professional or Family Support Worker. Therapeutic intervention (approximately 2 hours plus review).

- This STO teaches parent STOPP Therapy taught to child in earlier Lesson Plans (LP8) for personal application and support of child.
- Begin with a review of last session, including key points regarding the necessity to engage personal stressors, as well as parenting a high needs child.
- Introductory Psycho-educational component/discussion on emotional dysregulation, *Zones of Regulation* (with handout).
- Introduction to *SUDS (Standard Units Of Distress)* Scale with discussion and relevant personal application.

Teach STOPP Therapy:

- Examples of success with other clients.
- Psychological underpinnings of method.
- Explain 5 components - Stop/Breathing/Observation/"View from above"/Practice.
- Watch video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NHZkQ67yzE#action=share>.
- Practice with client.
- Explain application, relative levels of success, need for repetition/practice (P).
- Discuss challenge for week 1 - daily practice
- Week 2 - Reflect on 3 instances of emotional upheaval and practice in retrospect.

DATA COLLECTION:

- Document application of weekly challenges with measurement of attempts. Continue indefinitely.
- Therapeutic intervention - regular Case Notes.

GENERALIZATION STRATEGIES:

- Discuss challenges with any new psychological tool including realistic expectation for outcomes.
- Revisit every client engagement throughout the course of therapeutic relationship.

ADAPTATIONS:

- STOPP Therapy is a standard psychological tool with wide application whenever discussing adverse emotions, escalation, emotional dysregulation, and personal self-control.
- Tools for STOPP Therapy - <https://www.get.gg/docs/STOPP.pdf>
<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/STOPPworksheet.pdf>

How To Teach STOPP Therapy:

1. Please don't teach STOPP Therapy unless you use STOPP Therapy



LET'S GO ON AN
Adventure

Take the 30 day challenge!

So here's your challenge:

I'm holding a follow-up Session for people who have attended my STOPP Therapy 101 only in a month. It's absolutely free, again, and I'm inviting you to try STOPP Therapy for 30 days.

Now here's the funny part - it's not going to work for you! Are you inspired yet?

It's not designed for instant karma but if you do this for a month you will see why I am so passionate about this. It forces you to confront your own Mental Illness.

Take the 30 Day Challenge

- Use the Thought Records you can, once again, find at getselfhelp.co.uk/www.get.gg
- Record your emotional escalation (sadness/anger/depressive or anxious thoughts - I mean heck, some of you wake up at 80% full throttle in the morning, you shouldn't have a problem finding 2-3 times you were stressed each week).
- Drink the Koolaid - Put up the reminders, tape a card to your phone, watch the cheesy videos, etc.
- Do this until our next meeting and 60-90 of us can do our own Psychological Study of how it affects us.
- In a month join me for STOPP Therapy Check-in Session and we'll go even deeper into this and talk about neurochemistry and impulse

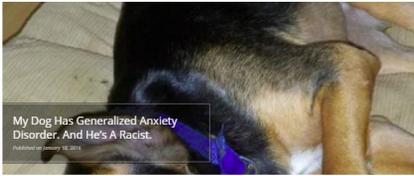
- control and why it's so hard to quit smoking.
- Sign up link will be coming out soon.

Neurophilosophy

But you don't know what that is.

Scott Williams
Clinical Therapist, Life Learner, Storyteller

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My Dog Has Generalized Anxiety Disorder. And He's A Racist.

Published on January 18, 2017



In The Beginning There Was Energy.

Published on September 11, 2016



Aliens May Not

Published on October 23, 2016



Losing My Religion

Published on October 23, 2016



THE STRONG KIDS TEAM PRESENTS

An Evening of Conversation

Come Join Us at The ACT Arts Centre on March 7 at 6:15 pm

FREE EVENT

Dating After You Break-up: Why No One Ever Listens

Published on November 24, 2017

TOOLS for CHANGING your LIFE

THE FIRST IN A SERIES FROM THE MENTAL WELLNESS TEAM

MARCH 4th, 2017
2PM - 4PM
MISSION LOCATION
6995 Bridge Street

FIND OUT:
HOW TO STOP A PANIC ATTACK
HOW TO SPOT A LIAR
An Introduction to reading what people are thinking, with science!
HOW TO CREATE A MEMORY PALACE
Just Like Sherlock!

SCOTT WILLIAMS
Clinical Therapist, Life Learner, Storyteller

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Grabbing The Wrong Handholds

Published on October 5, 2016

with CSI, Ginger Verser. I don't even know what the real name of the guy who tries so very hard to sound like the coach from Rocky and I are forced to endure this for an hour and there has to be something that anyone would say in the real world.

PARENT'S NIGHT: YOUR KIDS & DRUGS A FORUM

Real life perspectives on drug and alcohol use from teens and professionals

- Find out about current drug trends
- Q&A with teens & Abusive Addictions staff
- How to prepare & communicate with your child about the pressures of high school

4pm-8pm
February 17th, 2014
Glenwood Elementary School
21410 Glenwood Avenue, Maple Ridge



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Recent Posts

- In The Beginning There Was Energy.
- Aliens May Not Exist
- Losing My Religion (no title)
- Grabbing The Wrong Handholds

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Q&A