

Thought stopping may provide a useful strategy during periods when you find yourself feeling self-doubt or anxious, particularly in relation to the caring role.

Tips to Assist with Thought Stopping

- Acknowledge the thought, and firmly in your mind or out loud say ‘*Stop*’ (it may be easier to picture a stop sign). Replace the negative thought with a positive thought. It doesn’t need to relate to your current task, the idea is for the positive thought to help redirect your focus.
- As with any athlete the process requires practice. Set aside a few minutes daily, and let a negative thought come in, then stop and bring in a positive thought. Repeat this process to build the skill. Through practice when negative thoughts enter your mind, you may find it easier to replace with positive thoughts.
- You may prefer to try a ‘noise’ cue: when negative thoughts come up clap your hand or play a sound on your phone. The key is always using the same cue.
- Explore whether there is a specific trigger for negative self-thoughts, identify what the triggers are, and whether you can reduce those triggers. It may be that whenever there is repetitive questioning you automatically think you can’t deal with this and either become frustrated or anxious. Stop, and change ‘I can’t cope’ with ‘I am doing the best job I can, I can’t change this behaviour, but I can calmly respond, and by changing my responses I may get a different outcome.’
- Try standing up quickly every time a negative thought comes into your head, as this can shift your focus to your body and the surroundings.
- Try splashing your face with cold water.
- Wear a rubber band on your wrist and give it a gentle snap when you experience a negative thought, replacing it with something positive.
- Try counting backward from a random number, like 100 in intervals of three.
- Visualise a big traffic light turning red and slowly change it to green every time you experience a negative thought.
- The key is to find what works for you and practice it until it becomes a habit.

Your Emergency Brake

- Become a detective and identify how and when negative thoughts arise.
- Pull out your stop sign (whatever works for you)
- Stay in the present through mindfulness activities (e.g. focusing on your breath, noticing everything that is going on around you or even drinking a cup of coffee mindfully (an idea worth exploring))