

The RESET Program by Alex Howard ©

Module 4 – Q+A Part 3 – Transcript

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Welcome to this video, and in this video I'm going to explore some of the questions that often come up around the actual steps and the technique of the STOP Process.

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The first question is; Should you keep your hands in the gesture having said the word 'stop', or whatever the gesture or word is you're using?

And the answer is generally no, it's fine, but let's say you go 'stop', you can then relax your hands and relax your body. I think holding the hands there is almost like you're holding your body in a sort of effortful pose. So you can relax having done the stop, but as I talk about quite a lot in the module, it is really important to - wherever possible - to actually use your body and make the gesture in whatever way you've set it up to do.

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Can you drop the gesture when you're more familiar with doing the process?

So when you've done the process a number of times and you've got a sort of habit of doing the process, and you might even notice you're around other people, you imagine it in your mind and you get a bit of a shift from doing that.

So that's fine within reason. If certainly if you're around other people, totally fine to do it in your mind and imagine doing it. But there is something extra that we get - as I talk about a lot in the module - communication to ourselves and other people is only seven percent the words that we say. So it's a balance. Sometimes if we're on the move, we're doing certain things and we imagine the sort of stop and we feel our system sort of calm and settling, that is enough. But at least for the time being as you're first getting to grips with the process, wherever possible please do use it as designed. Remember the five P's, precision is one of the P's.

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Why is it important not to be aggressive and hard in the stop?

Put quite simply, we don't want your stop to turn into a telling off of yourself. One of the things that can happen is the inner critic - that voice inside of our mind, which is always judging us, criticising us, measuring our value as a human - being can hijack it and then it becomes stop being such an idiot, why are you so stupid? And it turns into a judgement that doesn't calm our system, it does quite the opposite. We end up then almost feeling on the defence and we're more likely, when we feel attacked, we're more likely to go into a fight flight or freeze response.

So we want it to be calm and kind and gentle. But yes, we do also want it to be firm, but we can be firm without being aggressive or being hard or being critical.

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How do you remember the steps?

So one of the things you can do is print off the hand out with the steps and you can carry it around, or you can write - you take a photograph of that - or write it in your phone, but have a way of, if you need to open your eyes and look at the steps, one of the reasons why I keep it as simple as I do is to make sure that it's not an overwhelming number of things that you are trying to do.

[00:03:13]

Do you need the name of the pattern that you are stopping?

It's helpful to name the pattern, but it's not critical. And as I've talked about some of the other videos related to this module, the more specific you are, the more clear - in a sense to your mind - what it is that you're actually stopping. Having said that, spending too much energy trying to figure it out actually just can cause more overwhelm and more of a sense of maladaptive stress response.

So find a balance, do the best you can. If you're feeling overwhelmed, it may just be a mind blending pattern, and actually stopping that to start with, you may find is very helpful.

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Should we restart if another pattern comes in during the process?

Again, when I've answered in a few other places. But what I would say is if it becomes so overwhelming, the new pattern that you can't follow the steps, then yes, restarting will be helpful.



Having said that, it might also be the case that actually you can just notice it's there, the pattern that's coming in. But bringing your attention back to the steps of the process is enough to be able to be effective and to be able to shift what is happening.

[00:04:30]

Should you bring up patterns to practise stopping?

So should you, when you're practising the STOP Process, almost deliberately get yourself to think certain patterns and then stop those patterns.

The best thing to do is to work with patterns that are already there.

If you are checking into your current experience and there just are no patterns that are there that's great. But you might then imagine yourself in a certain situation and what pattern might come up in response in that situation, and then do a stop with that.

Most of the time there is something in real time that we can work with. And if we've got, let's say, a big event that's coming up and nearer the time we're worried we're going to run patterns, we can even just notice in the anticipation, like what comes up? What patterns are there? And stopping and working with whatever comes up in that moment is still helpful in that point.

But yes, if need be, you can do a certain amount of imagining certain situations and imagining the patterns and perhaps stopping those.

What you will want to avoid doing is deliberately thinking too much about that situation, I'm going to feel that way, because you're almost teaching your brain to have anxiety in that - for example it's anxiety - you're teaching your brain to feel that way.

But if you think about it and the pattern naturally comes up, rather than making the pattern come up, stopping that can be a really good way of practising.

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Should you replace the pattern that you notice with a new thought?

So there's a very deliberate way that this process is designed, which is different to some other versions of working with a STOP Process.

What we're not doing is recognising the pattern, stopping it, making a choice, and then trying to think a positive thought. The reason why we're not doing that is the danger is you end up just being more and more in your mind.



It's like you notice a thought, you put another thought and you get... And you almost end up in a game of sort of mental tennis going back between the thoughts. We've a very deliberate strategy of moving from the mind to being more in your body. To become more in your body we want to stop the idea of putting more thoughts in the mind and really work on connecting, feeling your arms, your legs, your breathing, really bringing your attention to coming into the moment.

[00:07:05]

What if the thought still requires action?

So what if you have an anxiety around something, but calming the anxiety isn't enough, like you actually still need to decide what to do. You need to take an action. You need to address a situation.

Calming the thought and calming your system doesn't negate your capacity to do something about it. But if you do need to take action, it's surely better to take that action from a calmer, more grounded place.

So I'm not saying you can't think about that situation or that action, in fact, you may need to give some attention to that. It's how you think about that situation. And the more you can think about it from a grounded place in this moment, embodied, connected, the more likely you are to make a good decision that has a good outcome.

So this is not about not being able to think about certain things, it's about changing the way you're thinking about it. If you're going into anxiety patterns, you want to stop the anxiety, calm the anxiety and then revisit.

And it may be that you start to then run, you stop the anxiety, you come back and you might do this a number of times, but ultimately you're then able to think about things from a constructive and helpful place rather than an anxiety induced place.

The way you think about something and the way you approach something is really, really important. Changing your thinking doesn't change your capacity to take action. It actually allows you to take better, better informed, better thought out and often action that has a better outcome.

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How long do you focus on the breath or on the body - sorry, I'm just tidying up my questions - how long do you focus on the breath and body afterwards?

Ideally, as long as it takes to feel somewhat of a shift and calming of your system. So in some instances that might just be 30 seconds, a minute or two. Other times it might be five minutes. If you're doing the



Presence Process, we're going to come to on Module Five, it's a longer period of time that you're going to focus for.

There isn't a hard and fast, but ideally enough that you feel a bit of a shift, some of a shift, from being in your mind to being more connected and more in your body.

[00:09:41]

How many times a day should you do the STOP Process?

I was very deliberately not overly prescriptive at the end of Module Four. I could be even more annoying and say enough times. What you want to avoid is doing it in such a way that you're trying to be a perfectionist. You're being so obsessive about catching your thoughts that that becomes a new source of anxiety and stress in your system.

That is obviously not going to be helpful. So we need to come at it in a way which is measured, but equally, if you only do it once a day, you're probably not having a meaningful impact on all of those patterns and all of those things that are going on.

So you want to be regular, consistent, you might have a number of proactive times, like four, five, six times of the day.

And then you also find your reactive when there are situations where your system is over agitated and you need to do something to calm and settle it.

[00:10:40]

How do we - how do you we use [STOP Process] to change responses to triggers?

So what can happen is triggers can mean that our system just goes into a response before we have a chance to run a pattern. It's not like someone says something, we have a series of thoughts and then our nervous system activates. Through neuro section one of the principles of Polyvagal theory, it's like, our system just responds instinctively.

So what you can do is calm the response after it's happened. So something happens, you get a trigger, your system gets wired, and then you work on calming that.

You do that enough times and you'll tend to find your less triggered in the first place, because you're teaching your system, you're retraining your system to have a calmer response, even though you're doing it after that initial response has happened.



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Is it helpful to include some self-reassuring dialogue afterwards?

Yes, it can be helpful. When you say 'very good, well done', you might want to expand upon that. You probably don't want it to become a big, long monologue because the danger is you become more sort of caught in that.

But a few words of 'that was really great', or 'you really did a good job of seeing what was happening there and responding to that', like building on a certain amount that 'very good, well done', that can definitely be helpful.

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A question for the sort of fatigue audience, once you've stopped, how do you know how much activity you should be doing?

By listening to your body. What often is happening is our mind has all these ideas of should do that, shouldn't do that, shouldn't do this, need to do that, need to follow through, need to rest here to do that.

Actually, when you calm your mind and you get better at listening to your body, you can let your body tell you, do I have energy? How do I feel? And then you can experiment; if I do this when I feel like this, do I feel better or more tired?

And learning to decode the messages from your body is really important. But you can't do that when you're talking at your body and dictating to it or your mind is so all of those reactions and all of those triggers. The calmer you become, the easier it is to listen, but you then need to listen, and then you discover your baseline, and once you have your baseline, you can then navigate from that.

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How to distinguish - final question - how to distinguish between real problem solving and energy depleting patterns.

How does it make you feel emotionally? When we're properly problem solving we're not running loads of patterns, it's normally quite satisfying. We feel like we're making progress, even if we're chewing on something and going round, we feel like we are moving forwards, we feel like there's more insight and more clarity that's coming in.

We're running energy depleting patterns, we feel depleted. Like the going round on it, we don't feel like we're solving the problem, we don't feel like we're moving forwards. We just feel more overwhelmed and more depleted.



So listen to how your thinking makes you feel. If your thinking makes you feel better, there's probably a chance that you're actually solving the issue. If your thinking makes you feel worse or more tired, there's probably anxiety patterns, perfectionist patterns and so on that is going on.

The final comment here, I would really say there's a lot to learn despite the fact this process seems simple. It's about the five P's. It's practise, practise the process, be patient, be persistent, persevere and be as precise as you can in following the steps.

You'll find that you get insight and wisdom from your body the more in tune you are with it and the more that you listen to it.

Hope that's helpful. Thank you for watching.

