

# Thought Anesthetized

Managing the intrusive thought.

In this brain training exercise, the goal is to STOP the intrusive or non-beneficial thought that occurs while you are doing something else.

An intrusive thought is a thought that comes out of nowhere and begins to stand out and prevent you from doing what you need to be doing at that time. It's unhelpful and unwarranted in the moment.

This could come in the form of a cognitive distortion while you are in the middle of a procedure. The cognitive distortion creates negative self- and body-talk impinging on how you now perform in dentistry.

Remember, this intrusive thought isn't helping you in the middle of this procedure. So what do you do? Just as if you are anesthetizing a tooth for a crown prep (temporary loss of sensation), you are going to anesthetize the thought.

You will examine the thought, but at a later time. Just as the tooth will regain sensation at a later time.

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## STEP ONE - INTERVENTIONAL

**STOP-THOUGHT:  
WRITE DOWN THE  
INTRUSIVE  
THOUGHT.**

Stop the thought in its tracks. You will revisit it later, but tell it to STOP and refocus your thinking. What questions do you need to ask yourself to help in the procedure?

## STEP TWO - PREVENTIVE

**WORRY TIME:  
REVISIT THE  
INTRUSIVE  
THOUGHT.**

Designate a specific amount of time to worry AFTER the procedure is completed. It could be: 5 mins, 10 mins, 30 mins. Set a timer. Allow your brain to RUN WILD and have all the thoughts it wants. Allow it to think the worst or to catastrophise. If that's where it wants to go, let it. Give your brain the permission to think, because it is doing exactly what it knows how to do...THINK!

## STEP THREE - PREVENTIVE

**WHEN DOES THIS  
INTRUSIVE  
THOUGHT STAND  
OUT THE MOST?**

Pay attention to how your brain thinks. Does this specific thought occur during specific procedures? With certain patients? While managing a unique challenge?

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**Rinse and Repeat:** The more that you learn how your brain thinks or processes, the easier it will be to control intrusive thoughts in the moment, especially those pesky ones that come up in the middle of a dental procedure that aren't actually helping the situation.

**Why Practice?** In order to become a master of STOP-thought in the moment, you need to train often. What do I mean? Practice STOP-thought even when you aren't in the middle of a procedure.

If you notice a specific intrusive thought that comes up often, practice stopping it. Tell yourself, "Not now, later." Then revisit that thought at a later time and give it the 'worry time' it needs.

Your intrusive thought may come up while grocery shopping. Tell it to STOP. Then when you get home, write it down, and give it the 'worry time'.

Think of pre-procedure as training and the procedure as game time. You can't just show up to a game hoping to win if you didn't train for it.

**Looking for coaching?** Look no further!

Reach out to [info@drjessicametcalfe.com](mailto:info@drjessicametcalfe.com) today and start your journey of dismantling self-doubt, perfectionism and burnout.