

OPTIM

Strategize, Energize, Optimize.

HOW TO APPLY THE STOP-WAIT-GO PROCESS TO REDUCE STRESS

(An Excerpt From Stop Wait Go - Rules For a Busy Mind By Aruna Krishnan)

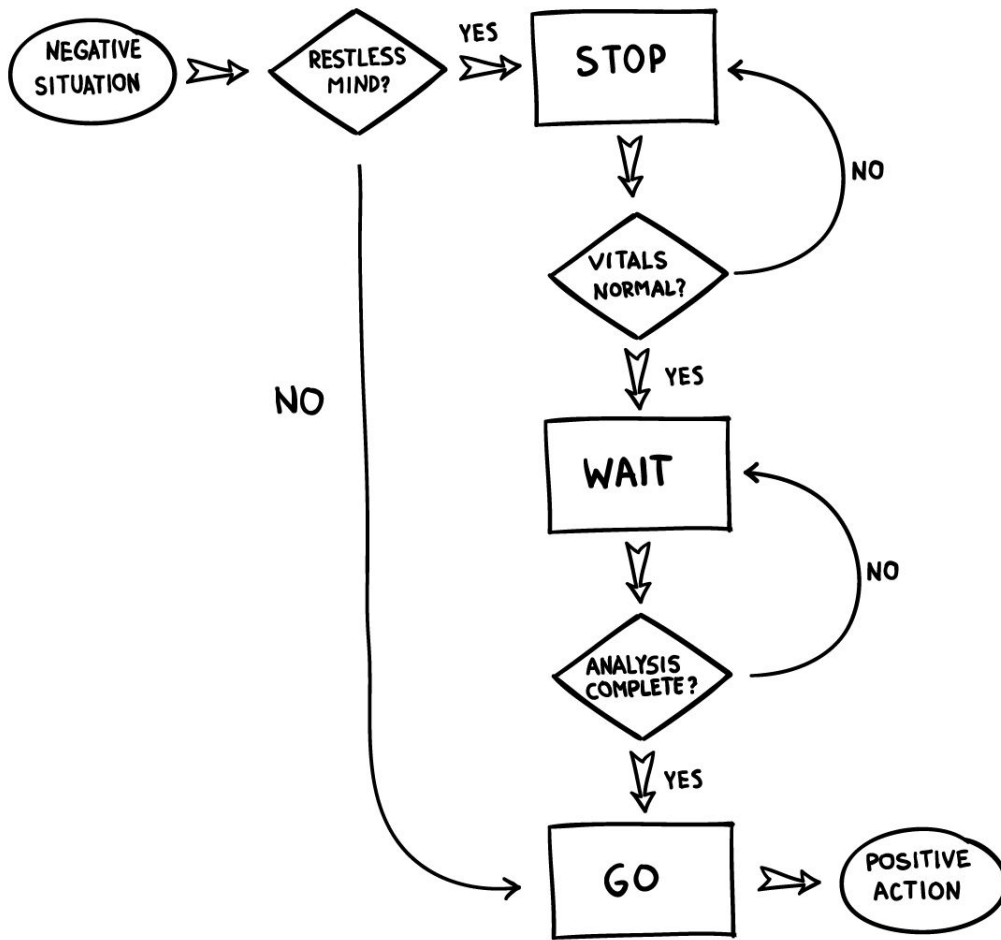
PROCESS OVERVIEW

NEGATIVE SITUATION

When faced with a “Negative” situation, the first thing to focus on and understand is your state of mind (which determines the risk of overreacting).

If calm and collected, you can safely proceed to the decision making and action phase i.e. GO.

On the other hand, if you’re feeling restless and agitated, then walk through the 3-step STOP-WAIT-GO process outlined below.



STOP

This is the most challenging step in the process. From personal experience and observation, the key to mastering this skill is practice. It takes a lot of willpower and self-discipline. It requires being open to a new way of thinking.

I was able to adopt this process after accepting the fact that we create our own stress. Whether it is a situation or a person “causing” our stress, we have to remember that we can choose how to respond when faced with those circumstances.

By “stopping”, we allow ourselves to have some space. That space gives us a chance to drop our defenses and just be. It helps us get to our baseline mood and vitals which in turn puts us in the right frame of mind for the “WAIT” stage.

We cannot proceed to the “WAIT” stage until we have calmed down. Proceeding without this prerequisite would only result in a poor and incomplete execution of that phase.

WAIT

This step is where most of the analysis occurs. These are some of the questions we can ask ourselves:

- Have you identified the possible causes of stress?
- Have you considered the other person’s point of view?
- Have you put this in the context of the bigger picture?
- Have you identified possible solutions?

Once we have cycled through these questions in earnest, we are likely to have a plan of action that is less erratic. It will likely be logical, kind or even considerate. Being able to look at things from a 15,000-foot viewpoint usually reveals that things are not as bad as we make them out to be.

The biggest factor in making this step successful is our willingness to consider someone else’s angle. In most cases, we don’t care enough to do that - we just vilify them if they trouble us. This basically makes us blame them for everything, and we just sit there feeling annoyed.

We certainly can't make them change how they behave, but we can change how we think or respond. So why wouldn't we? I am not saying we always have to give in or compromise. Instead, we should consider whether there is a need for empathy on our part. If the problem goes beyond showing empathy, we can either have a direct conversation with them, get help to solve the conflict or, worst case, part ways.

Once we have formulated an action plan, we can move on to the "GO" phase.

GO

At this point, all the hard work has been completed. We have taken the time to evaluate our problems and the root causes. We have also broadly outlined a potential solution. Whether the problem was relationship-based or situation-based, we are in a position to tackle it. Because we have gone through the 3-step process, we are able to move forward with genuinely good intentions.

Once we have become experts at applying the three-step process, the cycle time between initial "Negative" thought to "GO" becomes significantly less.

POSITIVE ACTION

By using this model, our actions are well thought out and have a tone of "positivity". This, therefore, increases the odds of receiving a positive response in return.

How can we apply this theory to practical situations? The next section conceptualizes this model with life-like scenarios.

SECTION 4 - STOP

Were there instances in your life where you could have applied the 3-step process for a better outcome?

This section introduces four characters that encounter a difficult situation. The characters are fictional, but the scenarios are based on true events.

Each person has a different role and a different perspective, but the core problem for each of them is the same. Their thoughts become as chaotic as a busy intersection. This means they need to learn to regulate the flow of those thoughts in order to move forward safely.

The first step for each of them is to recognize when to “STOP”.

*For more on this topic, check out **STOP WAIT GO - Rules for a Busy Mind By Aruna Krishnan** on Amazon.com*

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