

THE STOP TECHNIQUE

A Martial Art for the Algorithmic Age

Shared with our students by _____ [school / team / organization]

You know the feeling. Something in your feed — a post, a comment, a group chat, a game lobby — makes your face hot, your heart beat fast, and your thumb move to fire back *right now*. That feeling is called **the surge**. It's your brain's oldest alarm... and apps pull it on purpose, because they make money every time you get angry or scared. The surge is not the truth. **The surge is the product they're selling — and you're the one paying.** Martial artists train one skill above all: **calm under pressure**. Here it is, in four letters.

S — SENSE the surge

Notice your **body** first: heat, fast pulse, tight chest, the feeling you **MUST** respond *right now*. The moment you can say "that's the surge," you're already halfway free.

T — TOUCH the anchor

Say "**STOP**" (out loud or in your head). Take one slow breath. Press your **thumb and first two fingers together** — the same three fingers that were about to hit *share* become the fingers that break the loop.

O — OBSERVE the design

Now your thinking brain is back online. Ask, in ten seconds: *Who wants me upset right now? · What is this made to make me feel? · What do I actually KNOW — versus what was I just told to feel? · Do I truly need to act, or does the feeling just want out?*

P — PROCEED by choice

Say "**cancel-cancel**" to the pull... then pick one of three doors: **answer calmly and on purpose, check if it's even true before you share it, or let it go and move on in peace**. Whatever you choose when you're calm is **YOURS**. Whatever the surge would have made you do belonged to the machine.

It works off the screen too: the group chat pile-on, finding out you were left out of something everyone posted, the teammate who trash-talks, the argument at home, the message you'll regret at 11pm, big-game nerves. Same loop, different trigger. Same four letters.

One more thing — and it matters: if something online scares you, or someone keeps coming after you, **STOP** is your first move... **telling a trusted adult is your second**. A parent, a teacher, a coach, a counselor. You never have to handle it alone — the strongest martial artists are the ones who know when to call in their team.

FOR TEACHERS & COACHES — TEACH IT IN 10 MINUTES: (1) Have students recall a time a post made them instantly angry or scared — let them describe where they felt it in their body. (2) Practice the anchor together: "STOP," one breath, three fingers. (3) Run the four Observe questions on a harmless example. (4) Ask: "What would you choose from calm?" Repeat weekly for two minutes until it's a reflex. You're building a psychological immune system. *Written for middle school and up — so the youngest students, who are the most vulnerable, can use it on day one.*

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