THE STOP TECHNIQUE

A Martial Art for the Algorithmic Age

Taught to you by _____ *[parent · coach · teacher · mentor · school]*

A tool you teach. They keep it for life. STOP works when a trusted adult (a parent, coach, teacher or mentor) teaches it and practises it with the young person. Start with the box at the bottom of this page.

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 PARENTS, COACHES & TEACHERS — TEACH IT IN 10 MINUTES: (1) Have them 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. **What to expect:** the first few times feel awkward. That's normal. Practise on small things before big ones, and notice out loud when they use it on their own. *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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