

## APPENDIX A

### THE ANATOMY AND EXAMPLES OF THE PAUSE

A Pause helps us to find stability in the midst of everyday chaos. For me, a Pause is a way to allow God to crash into my human condition. This moment of stability can help ground and discern your motion. By first settling your body and then quieting your preoccupied mind, you can tap into your heart and identify the burdens, obstacles, concerns, desires, etc., that you may be gripping onto tightly, discover their root, and once discovered, then let the intensity of the grip go. Now, you are ready to listen to gain clarity and direction as you connect your spirit to God, or whomever that is for you. The Pause helps to uncover the path of your true self—so you can move with intention, integration, and impact.

The Pause is a practice—the more you do it, the more you can engage with the world as your true and whole self. When I integrate the Pause into my daily routine, I find it much easier to access it when I need grounding and direction in a situation of high-anxiety or chaos. It can serve as a preventive measure, or it can be a release. It can help you dig deeper into areas where you need healing. It can help you with strained relationships, anxiety, and worry. It can be a way to help you discern your next steps.

The next few pages are intended to outline a few very practical ways to integrate a Pause into your life. Each stake is broken down in three categories:

- *in the moment*—when you need a quick pause in either a stressful situation or in public where it can go undetected.
- *a few minutes in a comfortable environment*—where you can breathe and close your eyes in a private space.
- *more time and space*—where you can be undistracted for a period of 20 minutes or more.

To make the Pause easy to remember, I created the acronym, be **STILL**.

Be . . .

Settle . . . your body

Tune in . . . to the present moment

Inhale and exhale . . . to quiet your mind

Let go . . . to open your heart

Listen . . . as your spirit connects to your source

#### **S - Settle your body**

Settling our bodies can reduce anxiety, ground us when we feel frazzled and fragmented, and get the kinks and tension out of us so we can relax and release. This helps our minds begin to quiet down, and we can access our hearts and connect to our source.

*In the moment:* If you are in an environment where getting up out of your seat and stretching may be inappropriate or a little embarrassing, you can settle your body in an inconspicuous way. Sitting up tall in your chair with both feet planted on the ground, lower your shoulders away from your ears and bring them slightly back. You can ground your body by a simple adjustment in your seat, and then mentally scan your body for any tension. When you find that tension, just breathe and try and let it go, so that your mind acknowledges it, but doesn't focus on it. The very subtle movement of sitting or standing with a straight spine can actually trigger awareness in your whole being to "ground down."

*A few minutes in a comfortable environment:* If your time and the environment allows, you can either sit in your chair or stand, and do a few stretches that work the spine in different directions. These movements can include bringing both hands over your head and back down to your side, using the arms of the chair to turn your body to one side and twisting, bringing one arm over your head into an arc so that your ribs are stretched, turning your head to one side to stretch your neck. You can also rotate your shoulders, your wrists, and stretch out your fingers. Notice where you may be stiff and tend to that area. Breathe deeply as you are moving.

*More time and space:* Settling your body is the first step in de-layering your false self. Therefore, if you have more time, focus on movement that lowers your stress hormones, not elevates them. A quiet, slow-paced walk in nature can accomplish this, as well as swimming, hiking, and yoga. The most important thing is to simply accept where you are at the moment, moving in ways that loosen and activate the nerve endings around the spine. Yoga can be done sitting in a chair, lying on the floor, or going through a flow.

### **T - Tune in**

Tune in to the present moment, noticing your surroundings—sights, sounds, smells, textures. Then notice what is going on inside of you—sensations and tension in your body, the pace and level of focus of your thoughts, the rising up of emotions. Notice *where* you are and *how* you are, without judging—just acknowledging.

### **I - Inhale and exhale**

After we settle our bodies, we are in a better position to quiet our minds. We want to turn down the internal noise of judgement, expectations, striving, agenda, and to-dos. Holding onto these things can keep our minds constantly moving, not leaving any grey matter in our brains for problem-solving, creativity, and just "being." We want to find a pause, a stillness, in ourselves.

*In the moment:* Deep breathing will help bring down your cortisol, lower your blood pressure and heart rate, regulate your central nervous system, and clear your head. It is like ice for an injury—a miracle. Breathing exercises can be done subtly without the outside world even noticing. Deep breathing is especially important when you are in a situation where you need to center yourself and think clearly so you can determine your response. Exhale everything out, making sure you exhale the old stale air out, and then inhale slowly and deeply through your belly, inflating it like a balloon. Inhale and exhale slowly, at least three times.

*A few minutes in a comfortable environment:* Go through the above breathing exercise but add two more components. Start with the complete exhale, and then placing your hand on your belly, expand your belly fully as you inhale. When you feel you have filled your belly completely, place your hands on the side

of your ribs and see if you can inhale a bit more air by expanding your ribs to the sides. After this second part of the breath, inhale a bit more by placing your hands on your collarbones and slightly raising up your shoulders. You will be amazed at how there is a little bit more air that you have the capacity to take in. Repeat each phase (belly, belly+ribs, belly+ribs+shoulders) three times.

Another option is to focus your attention on the end of your exhalation—or the pause at the end of your breath. Breathe in deeply, and as you exhale everything out, notice that at the end of your exhalation there is a pause, where your lungs aren't doing anything. Focus on this pause at the end of every exhalation. I like to call it the “center of stillness,” or the point of nothingness. Each time you focus on the pause, you are clearing your mind a bit more.

*More space and time:* With an appropriate environment and a little more time, you can quiet your mind through various forms of meditation. My favorite one is called Centering Prayer. You may get caught up on the word “prayer,” thinking that it requires verbally conversing with your source. But the best prayer is a prayer that is quiet—in complete surrender. It is not praying for requests—it is surrendering to silence.

To do this, think of a word that reminds you of God (Yahweh, El Roi, Holy Spirit), your source (Universe, Divine Energy, Creator), or something that you value (peace, love, kindness). Every time you find your mind wandering, come back to this word and gently say it in your mind. It is important to not judge yourself when your mind wanders countless times. Just come back to your sacred word. This promotes discipline and focused attention and will get easier as you practice. You can also use a mantra, and pattern the rhythm of each breath with the word or words. I breathe in what I desire, and exhale what is an obstacle in my life. Inhale “peace,” exhale “worry.”

## **L - Let Go**

Our bodies are settled and grounded, our minds are quiet, and now we are ready to open our hearts, identifying and letting go of that which we are holding onto so tightly. There are so many things to let go of—what is triggering us, an obstacle keeping us from living from our true self, a burden or concern, even good things like a desire. When we hold onto something too tightly, it becomes “the thing,” and our whole lives center around trying to accomplish or solve that thing. Then we aren't present and able to look at our current reality or the people right in front of us. By letting go of our grip, we aren't necessarily letting go of the thing itself, but we are letting go of the intensity with which we hold on and let it consume our lives.

*In the moment:* If you find yourself in a stressful situation, identify what is triggering you in that moment. Imagine holding it tightly in your hand—figuratively speaking. Observe how hard you are holding onto it by noticing any sensations it brings up in your body, pictures or words in your mind, and emotions and memories of past experiences. Exhale and release your grip, opening your hand, letting go of the tight grip it has on your body, mind, and heart.

*A few minutes in a comfortable environment:* Go through the above exercise, digging deeper into what memories or stories it may be bringing up in you, and write these down. Ask yourself the question—why is this triggering me?

*More space and time:* Go through the above exercise and work through the programs of happiness to determine if this is feeding a need for control/power, esteem/affection/approval, or safety/security. When you have identified what you are trying to fulfill, go back through the exercise to see where it may be influencing your body, mind, and heart. Journal it. Go deeper into the memories of what may be the root

of the trigger. You can also do this with a therapist or accountability partner.

### **L - Listen**

If you have settled your body, tuned in, quieted your mind, identified your “thing” that you are holding onto tightly, and let go, then now you are ready to listen.

*In the moment:* In the situation you are in, think of your next action, if there is any, and see how it feels in your body, what comes up in your mind, what triggers occur in your heart. If you don’t have the luxury of time to process in the moment, then just set it aside to come back to later.

*A few minutes in a comfortable environment:* Go through the above exercise and add these questions—journaling your responses. What is the level of stress this potential action or no-action is putting on you? Do you feel a sense of freedom? Or a sense of constriction? Is this decision or action aligned with your true self? Do not act until you feel a sense of peace, if possible. If this potential action brings no peace, move onto a different option. Review multiple potential actions and see how they rise up in your body, mind, and heart.

*More time and space:* My favorite process for listening is called *Lectio Divina*, or divine reading. It involves reading and meditating on a passage. An adaptation of the process is as follows:

1. Take a scripture verse, poem, or piece of prose.
2. Read it through once.
3. Read it through a second time, noticing what word or phrase jumps out at you.
4. Read it through a third time, noticing what God may be saying to you through this reading.
5. Read it through a fourth time. What is your prayer or response?

This can also be done using a piece of art or a photo. This practice is called *Imago Divina* (divine image):

1. Look at it.
2. Look at it a second time and notice what jumps out at you in the image.
3. Look at it a third time and notice what your body, mind, heart, and spirit experience as you look at it. Do you feel certain sensations or emotions? What do you feel like God is saying to you through this image?
4. Look at it a fourth time. What is your prayer or your response? In other words, what did you take away from it and how will you act moving forward? How do you need support from God to do this?

### **The Virtual Pause**

The Virtual Pause Podcast is a weekly 30-minute recorded Pause that I facilitate with a live Zoom

community. I start with a topic of whatever human condition scenario I am dealing with at the time, and then I go through the be STILL process. People have found these very helpful as they seek to experience stability in the midst of chaos. The Virtual Pause Podcast can be found on Spotify, Google, Apple, Anchor, and more.

