

Pause Before You React

You can slow this down.

A calmer you creates a brighter tomorrow.



Pause.
Notice.
Choose.

A simple pause skill for moments when emotions are strong and you want to respond with more intention.

This skill is sometimes called the **STOP** skill.

1 Why pause?

When emotions are strong, our brain goes into survival mode. This can narrow our thinking, make it harder to see other perspectives, and increase impulsive reactions.

Pausing gives your brain time to engage your wise mind, so you can respond instead of react.



2 The four steps

Use these simple steps when you notice your emotions rising. You can do this anywhere, anytime.



Stop.

Pause what you are doing, if you can.

Put a mental pause on autopilot.



Take a step back.

Create a bit of space – physically or mentally.

Give yourself a moment.



Observe.

Notice what is happening inside you and around you (see below for more detail).

Be curious, not critical.



Proceed with intention.

Choose how you want to respond, based on what matters most to you.

Choose a next step.

3 What to observe

As you pause, notice what is happening right now.



Thoughts

What am I thinking?
Are my thoughts helpful, unhelpful, or just thoughts?



Feelings

What emotions am I feeling?
(e.g., anger, sadness, fear, frustration)



Body sensations

What do I notice in my body?
(e.g., tension, heart rate, tight chest, restlessness)



Urges

What do I feel like doing?
(e.g., lash out, shut down, fix, escape)



What is happening around me?

What is the situation? Who is involved? What do I notice in my environment?

4 When might this help?

This skill can be useful in many everyday situations, such as:



Conflict

When a conversation feels heated or tense.



Texting when angry

When you feel the urge to send a message you might regret.



Parenting moments

When your child's behaviour triggers big feelings.



Workplace stress

When you feel overwhelmed, criticized or under pressure.



Panic or high anxiety

When everything feels too much and you need to regain your balance.

5 Helpful phrases

Try saying these to yourself (out loud or in your head):

- ✓ I do not have to act on this right now.
- ✓ Let me slow this down.
- ✓ I can pause and choose.
- ✓ What matters most here?
- ✓ It's okay to take a moment.
- ✓ I can handle this, one step at a time.
- ✓ A calmer response leads to a better outcome.

Different choices are possible.

6 If you need more time

It's okay to take extra time. Try one of these:



Step away

(from the conversation or situation).



Drink some water

(to help calm your nervous system).



Take a few slow breaths

(inhale, pause, exhale).



Come back later

(when you feel more calm and clear).



Let the other person know

("I need a moment and will get back to you").

More space. More choice. A kinder you.

7 A gentle reminder

Pausing is not weakness. It is a skill.

It takes courage to slow down when emotions are high. A pause can help you respond with greater clarity, kindness and confidence – for yourself and for others.



You have what it takes.