# Pause Before You Respond

A practical guide to making room for your next thoughtful step.

A difficult comment, a frustrating message or a stressful day can leave you ready to react. A pause gives you a moment to notice what is happening and choose what you want to do next.

**Try these five steps. You do not have to feel completely calm before you begin.**

P

## Pause for a moment

Put down the phone or stop typing. If it feels comfortable, take a few easy breaths. Give yourself permission to wait.

A

## Acknowledge the feeling

Name what is here: frustration, hurt, worry or something else. Notice it without judging yourself for having it.

U

## Understand what happened

What do you know for certain? What are you assuming? Consider what matters to you and what you need.

S

## Select one helpful response

You might ask a question, set a boundary, explain your view or take a break. Choose a step that fits your values.

E

## Express yourself with care

Use clear words about the situation and what you need. If you ask for a break, agree when you will return to the conversation.

**WORDS YOU CAN BORROW**

“I want to give this a thoughtful response. Can we take ten minutes and come back to it?”

# Put the pause into practice

Use this after a difficult moment, or before a conversation that matters.

**Date:** _____

### 1. What happened?
Describe the facts. What did someone actually say or do?

### 2. What am I feeling?
Name the feeling and any body sensations you notice.

### 3. What am I assuming?
What else could explain the situation? What could I clarify?

### 4. What matters to me here?
Consider your needs, values and any boundary you want to express.

### 5. What will I say or do?
Choose one helpful step. When will you take it?

**Afterwards: What would I keep or change next time?**