



A WORKPLACE GUIDE

The Team PAUSE

High-performance strategies for team members, managers
and leaders

Master the PAUSE.

Power lives in the PAUSE. Calmness brings clarity.

The PAUSE Method is a short, repeatable way to create space between triggers and responses, so your best thinking can arrive with clarity. This guide helps you to master the PAUSE between trigger and response.

CONTENTS

Inside this guide

01	How to use this guide	One method, every role
02	The performance gap	Why reactions, not knowledge, cost teams most
03	The PAUSE at work	Five stages for pressured moments
04	Micro-pauses for macro-focus	Two-minute PAUSE adaptations for the working day
05	Decisions under pressure	Choosing from clarity, not urgency
06	Reactive moments	Meetings, feedback and messages
07	Real-world scenarios	Before and after the PAUSE
08	The procrastination circuit	Root cause: feelings, not time
09	Stress, capacity and recovery	Coping, recharging and getting support
10	Your role in the PAUSE	Team members, managers and leaders
11	Working together	Shared rituals and team culture
12	Running the plan	Facilitator notes and a kickoff script
13	The 30-day team plan	Four weeks, one stage at a time
14	Daily tracker	Thirty days plus weekly reflections
15	Team Calm Cards	Six printable desk cards
16	The PAUSE Method poster	A printable reminder for your shared workspace
17	References	Research behind the components

One method for the whole team

Pressure does not only reach the top. Everyone at work meets triggers: a sharp message, a tight deadline, a difficult meeting. This guide gives the whole team one shared language for those moments.

| If you are a team member

Use the PAUSE to handle pressure, speak up calmly, ask for help early and protect your focus. You do not need a title to lead your own response.

| If you manage people

Use it to stay steady when things go wrong, give feedback well and make it safe for others to pause and think.

| If you lead the organisation

Use it for high-stakes decisions and to model calm under pressure. Teams copy what leaders do far more than what they say.

| Use it together

Read it as a team, try one section a week, and talk about what worked. A shared method works best when everyone knows the words.

Start here

Team members: 03 The PAUSE at work, then 04, 06, 08 and 14. Managers: 03, then 06, 10 and 12. Leaders: 03, then 05, 10 and 11. Everyone meets again in 13, the 30-day team plan.

Shared language

When anyone can say 'let me pause on that', the whole team gains time to think before reacting.

You already know what to do.

Most teams do not fail for lack of strategy. They lose ground in the moments between a trigger and their response: the sharp reply in a meeting, the decision made to end discomfort, the important task pushed to tomorrow.

| Pressure narrows thinking

Under acute stress, the brain shifts toward fast, habitual responses and the flexible, deliberate thinking we rely on for strategy becomes harder to access. In that state it is harder to see options. That is not a character flaw; it is biology.

| The cost compounds

A half-second reaction can cost a relationship, a decision or the rest of the day. Across a quarter, those moments shape culture, trust and results more than any single plan.

| The PAUSE gives you back the choice

The PAUSE Method is a short, repeatable way to create space between trigger and response so your best thinking can arrive. Master the PAUSE between trigger and response.

| The team insight

High performance is not the absence of pressure. It is the ability, for anyone in the team, to choose a response while under it.

Five stages for pressured moments

| P — Perceive the trigger

Notice the moment: the email, the tone, the tight jaw, the urge to interrupt. Naming it early is the first act of control.

| A — Acknowledge what you feel

Label the emotion in a word or two: frustrated, exposed, rushed. Labelling can reduce emotional intensity and return clarity.

| U — Unwind with breath

Take one or two slow, comfortable breaths with a longer exhale. It settles the body enough for the thinking brain to rejoin.

| S — Select your response

Ask: what outcome do I want here? Choose the response that serves it, not the one that relieves the feeling fastest.

| E — Exit with calm

Act on the smallest useful step: one sentence, one decision, one next action. A calm mind brings clarity; in that clarity, choose your next move.

Important

If longer exhales feel uncomfortable, breathe normally and simply slow the pace. Stop if you feel dizzy or unwell.

04

MICRO-PAUSES

Micro-pauses for macro-focus

The full PAUSE takes a few minutes. The working day rarely offers that. These two-minute adaptations bring the same five stages into meetings, inboxes and the space between tasks.

| The two-minute PAUSE

Perceive the trigger (10 seconds): notice what just hooked you. Acknowledge (10 seconds): name the feeling in one word. Unwind (40 seconds): two slow breaths with a longer exhale. Select (30 seconds): ask what outcome you want. Exit (30 seconds): take the smallest step towards it.

| Before a meeting

Arrive one minute early. Take one slow breath, name how you are arriving — rushed, wary, distracted — and choose how you want to show up.

| Between tasks

Before opening the next tab or call, take two breaths and ask: what is the smallest next step? Switching tasks without a pause carries the last task's stress into the next one.

| After a tense message

Do not reply yet. Run the two-minute PAUSE, then draft. If it still feels hot, wait longer.

| Why micro-pauses work

Brief, repeated pauses give the nervous system frequent chances to settle, so focus is restored many times a day rather than once. Slow breathing is linked with reduced physiological arousal (see References).

Three moments in my day where a two-minute PAUSE fits:

Decisions under pressure

Feelings are part of every decision. They carry useful information, but urgency, fear and fatigue can disguise themselves as logic.

| Strategy 1: The ten-second audit

Before a significant decision, ask: Am I deciding to solve the problem, or to end the discomfort? If it is the second, PAUSE and revisit.

| Strategy 2: Fewer, better decisions

Too many options and too many daily decisions drain quality. Pre-decide routines, set defaults, and reserve your best hours for the few calls that matter.

| Strategy 3: Sleep on reversible-or-not

Classify decisions: reversible ones can be made fast; irreversible ones deserve a PAUSE, a second view and, if possible, a night's sleep.

A decision I am facing, and the feeling behind it:

What would I choose if I felt calm?

Meetings, feedback and difficult conversations

| In the meeting

When challenged, perceive the trigger, breathe once, and ask a question before giving an answer: 'Help me understand what's behind that.' A question buys time and lowers the temperature.

| Giving feedback

Never deliver feedback in the peak of the reaction. Exit with calm: schedule it, name the behaviour and impact, and agree a next step.

| Receiving feedback

Acknowledge the sting privately ('I feel defensive'), thank the person, and select your response later. You do not have to reply in the moment.

| Email and messages

If it made your heart rate rise, it gets a PAUSE. Draft, wait, reread with calm, then send.

Example

Trigger: a colleague questions your work in front of the team. Perceive the heat.

Acknowledge: 'exposed'. One slow breath. Select: curiosity. Exit: 'Good challenge — let me walk through the assumptions.'

My most common reactive moment at work:

Before and after the PAUSE

Two everyday moments, played twice: once on autopilot, once with the PAUSE.

Before: the tense email

A client email lands at 6pm: 'This is not what we agreed.' You reply in four minutes, defending every point. The client escalates, and the next morning starts with a damage-control call.

After: the tense email

Perceive: heat in the chest, the urge to reply now. Acknowledge: 'defensive'. Unwind: two slow breaths. Select: understand before defending. Exit: 'Thanks for flagging this. Let's talk at 10am so I can understand what's missing.'

Before: the missed deadline

A team member realises on Thursday they will miss Friday's deadline. Feeling embarrassed, they say nothing. On Friday the manager finds out from the client, and trust takes a hit on both sides.

After: the missed deadline

Perceive: the knot of dread. Acknowledge: 'embarrassed, worried'. Unwind: one slow breath. Select: honesty early. Exit: 'I'm going to be a day late on the report. Here's what's done and what I need.' The manager replans calmly.

A moment from my week I would replay with the PAUSE:

08

PROCRASTINATION CIRCUIT

The procrastination circuit

Procrastination is not a time-management flaw or laziness. It is an emotional regulation problem: when a task triggers anxiety or overwhelm, the nervous system reads it as a threat and answers with 'freeze' or 'avoid'.

| How the circuit runs

Trigger: the task feels threatening. Feeling: anxiety, boredom or overwhelm. Avoidance: brief relief. Guilt and pressure: the task grows. Stronger avoidance: the circuit feeds itself, and willpower alone rarely breaks it.

| Find your triggers

Common workplace triggers include fear of failure ('if I start, I might get it wrong'), ambiguous instructions ('I don't know what done looks like') and burnout fatigue ('I have nothing left to give'). Each needs a different response, so naming yours matters.

| Breaking the circuit with the PAUSE

Perceive the trigger: which of the three is it? Acknowledge the feeling in a word. Unwind with one slow breath. Select the smallest step — open the file, write one heading, ask one clarifying question. Exit by taking it now. You don't have to feel ready to begin.

| Match the response to the trigger

Fear of failure: shrink the stakes — a rough draft, not the final version. Ambiguous instructions: ask one question before starting. Burnout fatigue: name it to your manager and agree priorities; rest is part of the fix.

My main procrastination trigger, and the task it is attached to:

My smallest first step, small enough to do today:

Stress, capacity and recovery

Sustainable performance comes from cycles of effort and recovery, not endless endurance.

| Know your early signals

Shorter temper, poor sleep, rereading the same line, skipping meals. These are data, not weakness.

| Micro-resets

Use a two to five minute reset between meetings: breathe, stand, look out of a window, or use a reset in the MyResetMode app. Small, frequent resets beat one rare holiday.

| Boundaries are a team skill

'I can't take that on this week, but I can do X' is a calm response at any level. Managers: make it safe to say, and believe it when you hear it.

| Rest belongs in the plan

Schedule recovery as deliberately as delivery. Rest does not have to be earned by finishing everything.

When to seek support

If stress, low mood or anxiety persist or affect your health, speak to your GP, an occupational health service or a qualified professional. Many employers offer a free, confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP); ask HR or your manager. If you are in crisis, contact emergency services or a crisis line such as Samaritans (116 123 in the UK). This guide is self-development, not a replacement for care.

Your role in the PAUSE

The method is the same for everyone. What changes is where you use it most.

| Team members

Pause before replying to a tense message. Name pressure early: 'I'm stretched on this, can we agree priorities?' Ask a question when unclear instead of guessing. Raise concerns calmly; your view matters to the team's results.

| Managers

Respond to bad news with curiosity, not heat, so people keep bringing it to you. Give feedback after the reaction has passed. Check workload before adding more, and protect your team's focus time.

| Leaders

Model it out loud: 'Let me pause on that before I answer.' Separate discussion from decision on major calls, invite dissent before you speak, and treat recovery as part of performance.

| Psychological safety is everyone's job

Teams perform better when people can raise concerns without fear. Every calm response, at any level, makes it a little safer to speak.

Where in my role will I use the PAUSE most?

Building PAUSE into team culture

| Meeting rituals

Open important meetings with one shared breath or a one-word check-in. Close with: what is our smallest next step, and who owns it?

| A team pause signal

Agree a simple phrase anyone can use when a discussion heats up, such as 'Can we take a PAUSE?' It is a cue to slow down, not a criticism.

| Message hygiene

Agree that heated topics move from chat to a conversation, and that no one is expected to reply to tense messages instantly.

| Learning, not blame

After a mistake, ask what happened and what we will try next, not who is at fault.

| Notice the good pauses

When someone pauses well, such as asking a question instead of firing back, say so. What gets noticed gets repeated.

One PAUSE ritual our team will try:

Facilitator notes

Anyone can run the 30-day plan: a manager, a team lead or a volunteer. Your job is to keep it light, regular and safe.

Before you start

Share this guide a week ahead. Pick one regular meeting to host a five-minute PAUSE check-in each week. Make it clear that taking part is invited, not assessed.

The 15-minute kickoff script

Minutes 0–3: 'We all react under pressure. This is a shared way to slow down.' Minutes 3–8: walk through the five PAUSE stages on the poster. Minutes 8–12: everyone names one common work trigger, no detail needed. Minutes 12–15: agree your team pause signal and book the weekly check-ins.

Weekly check-ins

Ask two questions: 'Where did you use the PAUSE?' and 'Where do you wish you had?' Share your own example first; it makes it safe for others.

If people don't engage

Keep going without pressure. Shorten the check-in, invite stories in writing, or pair people up. Never single anyone out; one visible calm response often does more than any reminder.

Keep it safe

Never use the PAUSE to judge someone's emotions or performance. It is a tool people choose to use, not a standard they are measured against.

The 30-day team plan

| Week 1 — Perceive

Everyone notes three work triggers a day. Share one in the weekly meeting; no judgement.

| Week 2 — Acknowledge and Unwind

Label the feeling and take one slow breath before responding. Start meetings with a one-word check-in.

| Week 3 — Select

Use the ten-second audit on significant decisions. Each person applies when-then planning to one avoided task.

| Week 4 — Exit together

Practise the full PAUSE daily, agree your team pause signal, and review together what changed.

End of 30 days: what changed for me, and for us as a team?

14 TRACKER

Daily PAUSE tracker

Tick each day you used the PAUSE at least once. Add a word for the trigger.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12
Day 13	Day 14	Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18
Day 19	Day 20	Day 21	Day 22	Day 23	Day 24
Day 25	Day 26	Day 27	Day 28	Day 29	Day 30

Week 1 and 2 reflection: what changed? What will we try next?

Week 3 and 4 reflection: what changed? What will we try next?

15

CALM CARDS

Team Calm Cards

MyResetMode · Team Calm Card

01/06

Pause before you answer

The fastest answer is rarely the best one. Perceive the trigger. Breathe once. Then respond.

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MyResetMode · Team Calm Card

02/06

Signal or feeling?

Am I solving the problem, or ending the discomfort? Decide from clarity, not urgency.

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03/06

The smallest step

You don't have to feel ready to begin. Define the first step. Take it now.

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15

CALM CARDS

Team Calm Cards (continued)

MyResetMode · Team Calm Card

04/06

Capacity is data

Your limits belong in the plan. A clear boundary is a calm, strong response.

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MyResetMode · Team Calm Card

05/06

Pause together

When anyone pauses out loud, the whole team gets time to think.

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06/06

Power lives in the PAUSE

Between trigger and response, there is a choice. Calmness brings clarity.

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The PAUSE Method

P.A.U.S.E

Five stages that create room to choose before you react.

P

Perceive the trigger

Notice the first signal before it becomes behaviour: a sharp tone, racing thoughts, a tight jaw or heat in your chest.

Example — A critical message arrives and you move to reply immediately. Stop and name it: “This is a trigger, not an order.”

A

Acknowledge what you feel

Name the emotion — anger, frustration, anxiety — without judging it. Locate it in your body and rate its intensity from one to ten.

Example — “This emotion I’m feeling is about a seven, sitting in my chest. I can feel it without acting from it.”

U

Unwind with breath

Your body does not speak logic. It speaks breath. Inhale to a count of 4; exhale slowly to a count of 6-8. Repeat two to four times.

Example — Soften your jaw, shoulders and hands on each long exhale until the urge to react begins to loosen.

S

Select your response

Choose the outcome first, then the smallest intentional action that serves it: answer, ask, defer or decline.

Example — Instead of snapping back, say: “I want to answer this properly. Give me time.”

E

Exit with calm

Move away from the emotional reaction and focus on a controlled, intentional response. Uncontrolled reactions can be costly. Say what you chose to say, then step away.

Example — Take one slow exhale, walk away, and tell yourself: “That is done. I am moving on.”

Important: If longer exhales feel uncomfortable, breathe normally and simply slow the pace. Stop if you feel dizzy or unwell.

Master the PAUSE.

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References

The PAUSE Method is a MyResetMode framework. The research below supports its individual components, not the framework as a whole.

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Power lives in the PAUSE

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