



A stress management guide workbook

You do not have to carry everything at once.

Power lives in the PAUSE. Calmness brings clarity.

Notice your stress signals, make room for what you feel, and use the PAUSE Method to choose one useful next move.

Research-informed guidance

Reflection pages

Seven-day practice

10 Calm Cards

A self-reflection workbook, not a diagnosis or a replacement for medical or psychological care.
There is no deadline to finish and no promise of a stress-free life.

01 UNDERSTAND

When pressure starts to spill over

You can be doing your best and still feel overwhelmed. Stress is not proof that you are failing.

| What stress can feel like

Stress is a response to pressure or perceived threat. You might notice muscle tension, a racing mind, irritability, tiredness, disrupted sleep, avoidance or difficulty concentrating. These signs can also have other causes; this workbook cannot diagnose them.

| A signal, not a character flaw

Short-term stress can help you meet a challenge. When demands keep coming without enough rest or support, it can become harder to recover. A calming exercise may help in the moment, but it does not remove unfair workloads, financial pressure or unsafe situations.

| Begin where you are

Use a pen and return to any page that helps. Skip any question that feels too personal. Write only what you are comfortable keeping on paper. Aim for a little more awareness and one manageable action, not perfect calm.

What has been taking the most from me lately?

A gentle starting point

You do not need to finish the whole workbook today. One honest answer is a beginning.

WHY THE PAUSE? / THE SCIENCE

Stress can narrow your view

Stress narrows thinking — in that state, it is harder to see options. The PAUSE method gives you back the choice. Master the PAUSE between trigger and response.

| Why options can become harder to see

Under stress, attention can become more focused on what feels threatening or urgent. A research review describes how stress can disrupt prefrontal brain functions involved in holding information in mind and guiding behaviour [1]. A meta-analysis found that acute stress impaired working memory and cognitive flexibility on average, while effects on inhibition were mixed [2]. Stress does not affect every person or task in the same way.

| What that can look like in everyday life

When three requests arrive at once, “I must do everything now” may feel like the only option. It may be harder to hold alternatives in mind: ask what takes priority, share the load, or say what you can realistically do. This is not a character flaw, and a stressful moment is not proof that you cannot make good decisions.

Choice, not a guarantee

“Gives you back the choice” is an invitation to practise, not a promise that one pause will restore clear thinking. PAUSE may help you notice an urge and consider another response. You can still take a useful step while stress remains.

When stress narrows my view, the option I often miss is...

WHY THE PAUSE? / PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

A little space. A different response.

PAUSE brings together noticing, naming feelings, comfortable breathing and a deliberate next step. Research supports aspects of these practices — not a clinical claim for the whole MyResetMode method.

| P + A: notice and name

Perceive the trigger, then acknowledge what you feel: “I notice pressure, and I feel overwhelmed.” In a laboratory brain-imaging study, labelling emotions in images was associated with reduced amygdala activity and increased activity in a prefrontal region [3]. This supports exploring emotion naming; it does not prove that naming your own feeling always reduces stress.

| U: offer a comfortable pace

A systematic review links slow breathing with changes in autonomic activity and psychological outcomes, but studies and methods varied [4]. A later meta-analysis of randomised trials found small-to-medium average reductions in self-reported stress after breathwork, with limits in study quality [5]. Neither establishes that a few breaths will work for everyone, or that longer exhales are necessary.

Important — breathing safety

If longer exhales feel uncomfortable, breathe normally and simply slow the pace. Stop if you feel dizzy or unwell. Never force deep breaths. If breathing focus increases distress, look around the room and feel the support beneath you instead.

| S + E: choose, then take the step

Select a response that fits your capacity; Exit by putting the smallest useful step into practice. This is a practical application of the framework, not a separately proven research outcome. A clearer mind may help you see a boundary, a request for help or a next action. No stage requires perfect calm.

References [1]–[5] appear on the Research references page. PAUSE is an educational framework, not a clinically validated treatment or a replacement for changes to stressful conditions.

Map your stress

Notice the pattern without judging yourself. Choose one recent, everyday moment rather than your hardest experience.

What happened? Describe the situation, not what it says about me.

What did I notice in my body? (For example: tight shoulders, warm face.)

What thoughts and feelings showed up?

What did I do next, and what did I need?

How strong did it feel, from 0 (none) to 10 (very strong)? What helped?

This scale is for personal reflection, not a clinical assessment. A number is information, not a grade.

03

THE TURNING POINT

Not everything needs an answer now

The shift is not from stressed to perfectly calm. It is from automatic reaction to a little more choice.

| Separate the feeling from the instruction

"I feel overwhelmed" does not have to mean "I must fix everything immediately." You can recognise the feeling, steady yourself if possible, and decide which demand actually needs your attention.

| Regulation and practical action belong together

A pause can help you think. A boundary, a request for help, a change in workload or a real break may be what helps the situation. Stress management is not learning to tolerate everything silently.

Power lives in the PAUSE

You can make a helpful choice while some stress is still present. You do not have to wait until you feel completely calm.

The instruction my stress keeps giving me is...

A kinder, more useful response could be...

Five stages. One useful next move.

The PAUSE Method is MyResetMode's reflection framework. The resources at the end support its general coping practices; they do not establish this branded method as a clinically validated treatment.

| P — Perceive the trigger

Notice what happened and your earliest stress signal. Catch the arrival before following the urge.

| A — Acknowledge what you feel

Name the feeling and the need beneath it. You can acknowledge a feeling without obeying it.

| U — Unwind with breath

Breathe gently at a comfortable pace, or ground yourself through the room around you. Nothing needs to be forced.

| S — Select your response

Choose an intention and a response that fits your real capacity: a priority, a boundary, a question or support.

| E — Exit with calm

Let clarity guide your smallest useful step. Close the moment as gently as you can; calm is a direction, not a requirement.

You can repeat a stage, take longer, or stop. If you are in danger, prioritise safety and help rather than completing the steps.

05

P

P

Perceive the trigger

Notice the arrival. The earlier you catch a stress signal, the more room you may have to choose.

Try this

Describe the trigger in plain terms: “Three requests arrived while I was finishing something.” Then notice one body signal and one urge. An urge to rush, snap or withdraw is not an instruction you must follow.

An everyday example

A message asks for another task. My shoulders tighten and I want to say yes straight away. I notice the pressure before I reply.

The trigger was...

My earliest body signal was...

The urge was...

A reminder that could help me notice sooner is...

06 A

A Acknowledge what you feel

Naming the feeling gives it a place without letting it make every decision.

| Try this

Complete: "I notice ___, and I may need ___." Be specific if you can: worried, frustrated, stretched, disappointed or tired. You do not have to prove the feeling is reasonable to recognise it.

An everyday example

I notice overwhelm and worry about letting people down. I may need a clearer priority and permission to say what I can realistically do.

The feeling I can name is...

The thought that comes with it is...

What I may need is...

What I would say to a friend feeling this way is...

07 U

U Unwind with breath

Offer your body a gentler pace. Comfortable breathing matters more than counting.

| A gentle option

Sit or stand in a supported position. Let your breath flow without forcing it. If comfortable, breathe in gently and let the out-breath be slightly longer. No breath-holding is needed. Let your shoulders soften. Try a few easy breaths, then check how you feel.

Important — breathing safety

If longer exhales feel uncomfortable, breathe normally and simply slow the pace. Stop if you feel dizzy or unwell. Do not force deep breaths. If focusing on breathing increases distress, use the grounding option below instead.

| An alternative: orient to the room

Keep your eyes open if that feels better. Notice three things you can see, two sounds, and the contact of your feet with the floor or your body with a chair. There is no need to change your breathing.

An everyday example

Before answering the message, I feel my feet on the floor and take two comfortable breaths. If breath focus feels wrong today, I look around the room instead.

The option that feels most comfortable for me is...

After trying it, I notice... (No change is also useful information.)

08 S

S Select your response

Ask what matters here, then choose a response that respects both the situation and your capacity.

| Try this

Ask: What actually needs attention now? What can wait? What can I ask someone else to help with? Select an intention first: clarity, safety, fairness, rest or connection. Then choose a response that supports it.

An everyday example

I choose clarity rather than an automatic yes. My response will be to ask which task takes priority and explain what I can finish today.

What matters most in this moment is...

My realistic options are...

The response I choose is...

Something I can let wait, share or decline is...

09 E

E Exit with calm

A calmer mind can bring clarity. In that clarity, choose the smallest useful step you can take.

| Turn the response into one action

Select is the decision; Exit is putting it into practice. Send the clear message, ask for help, take the agreed break or begin the first small task. You can act carefully even if some stress remains.

| Close the loop gently

If it helps, write when you will return to the issue so you do not have to keep rehearsing it. A pause is not avoidance when it includes a realistic next step. Not every problem can be resolved today.

An everyday example

I send: "I can finish one of these today. Which is the priority?" Then I return to one task rather than trying to do all three at once.

My smallest useful action is...

I will do it when...

Afterwards, I can close the moment by...

10

REDUCE THE LOAD

What is mine to carry?

Use your energy where it can make a difference. Some pressures need shared solutions, not more self-discipline.

Within my control: one action, choice or boundary I can make.

Within my influence: something I can discuss, request or negotiate.

Outside my control today: something I can name without solving.

| A boundary can be simple

"I cannot take that on today." "I need to check my workload before I agree." "Can we decide what can wait?" If a direct boundary could put you at risk, seek support and choose a safer approach.

A boundary or request I want to practise is...

Give recovery a place in your day

Small moments of recovery can support you. They are not a substitute for safe conditions, sufficient rest or professional care when needed.

| Choose what is realistic

Consider a regular sleep routine, meals, water, gentle movement suited to your health, time away from demands, or contact with someone supportive. Pick one adjustment rather than turning wellbeing into another long list.

One thing that leaves me more depleted is...

One thing that helps me feel more supported is...

A small recovery break I can protect is...

Someone I can ask for practical or emotional support is...

Rest does not have to be earned by reaching the end of your to-do list.

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PUT IT TOGETHER

One message. A different next move.

Example: You are already stretched when someone asks for one more thing. This is a practice example, not a rule for every situation.

| P — Perceive the trigger

Another request lands. I notice tight shoulders and the urge to agree immediately.

| A — Acknowledge what you feel

I feel overwhelmed and worried about disappointing someone. I need a realistic workload.

| U — Unwind with breath

I take a few comfortable breaths, or notice my feet and the room if breathing focus is unhelpful.

| S — Select your response

I choose clarity. I will explain my capacity and ask which task has priority.

| E — Exit with calm

I send one clear message, then work on the agreed priority. My smallest step is to open that task.

A situation where I could practise this is...

Notice, practise, reflect

Try one PAUSE in an ordinary moment each day. Missed a day? Continue when you can. This is practice, not a test.

Write: trigger or signal / response or smallest step / what I noticed afterwards.

Day 1 · Trigger → response → reflection

Day 2 · Trigger → response → reflection

Day 3 · Trigger → response → reflection

Day 4 · Trigger → response → reflection

Day 5 · Trigger → response → reflection

Day 6 · Trigger → response → reflection

Day 7 · Trigger → response → reflection

Make your next pause easier

Keep what helped and adapt what did not. No change after one exercise does not mean you did it wrong.

The signal I want to notice sooner is...

When I notice it, I will...

The smallest action or boundary I want to keep practising is...

The support I will ask for is...

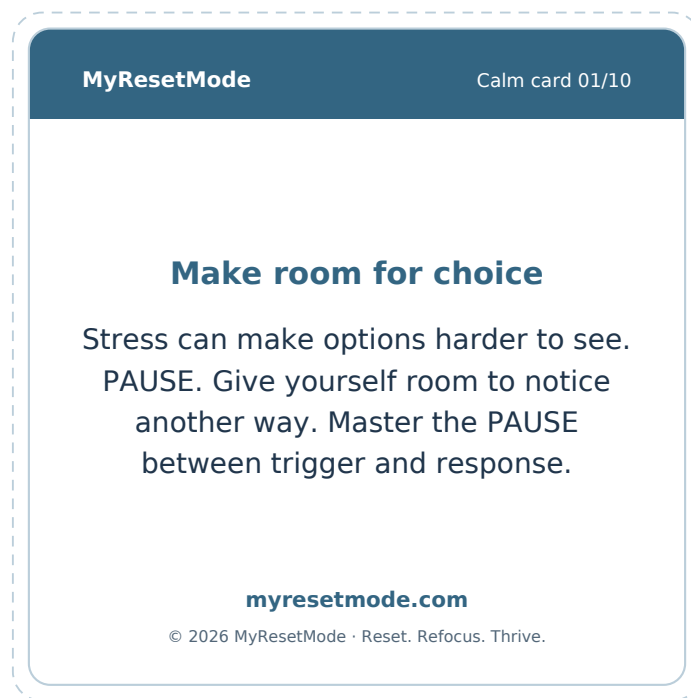
I will review how this is going on...

Power lives in the PAUSE. You do not have to carry everything at once.

KEEP A LITTLE CALM

Your printable Calm Cards

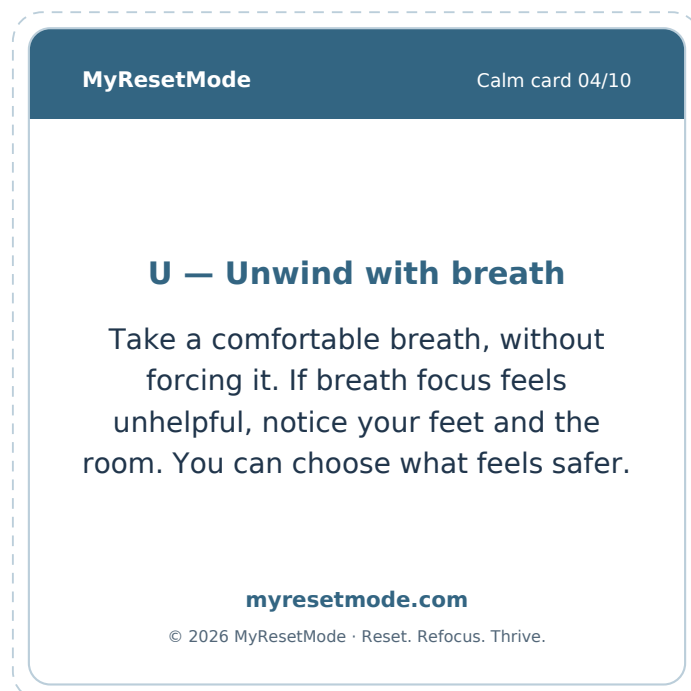
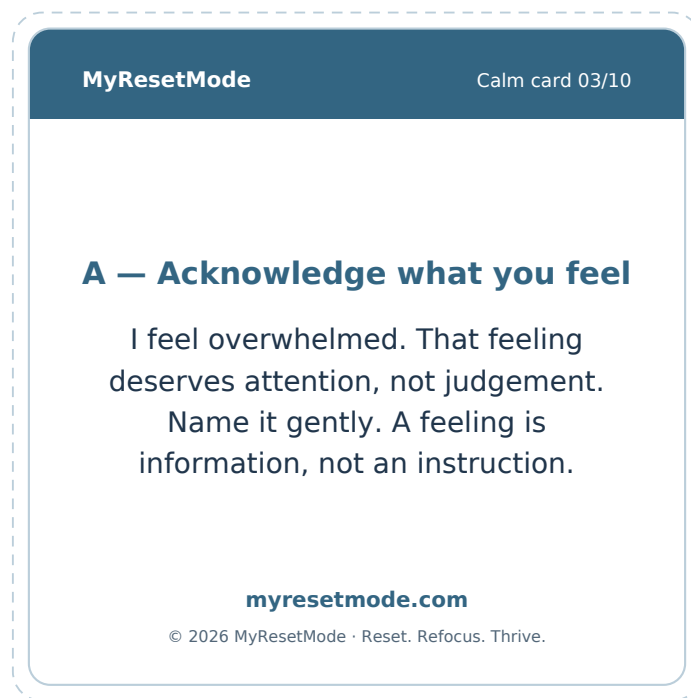
Cut out a card to keep nearby, or return to one when pressure builds. These are reminders, not a test or a treatment.



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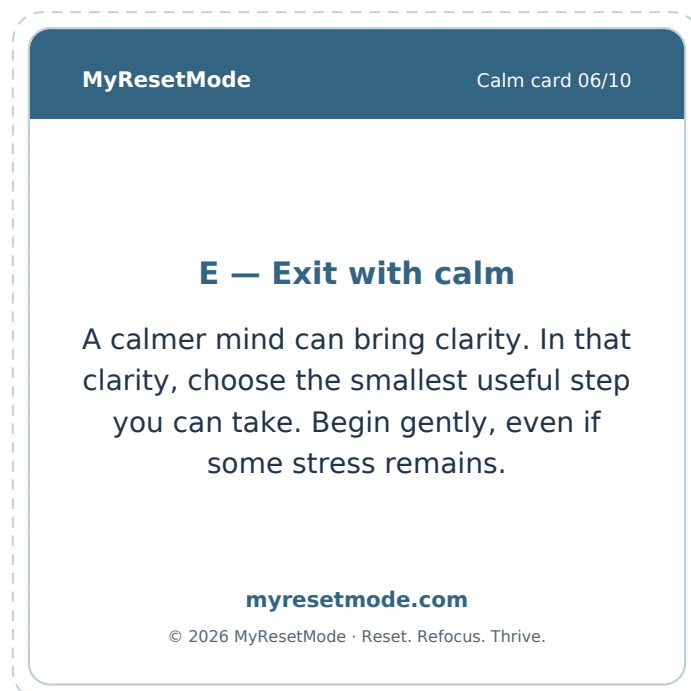
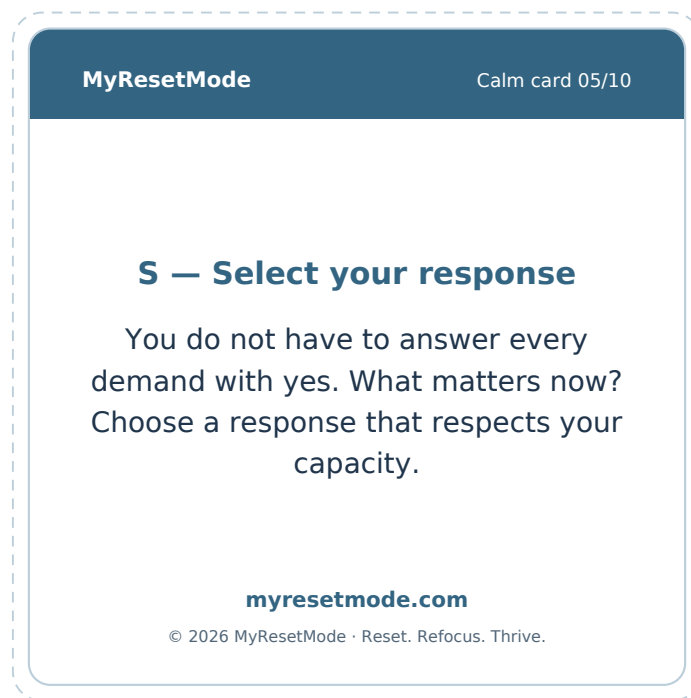
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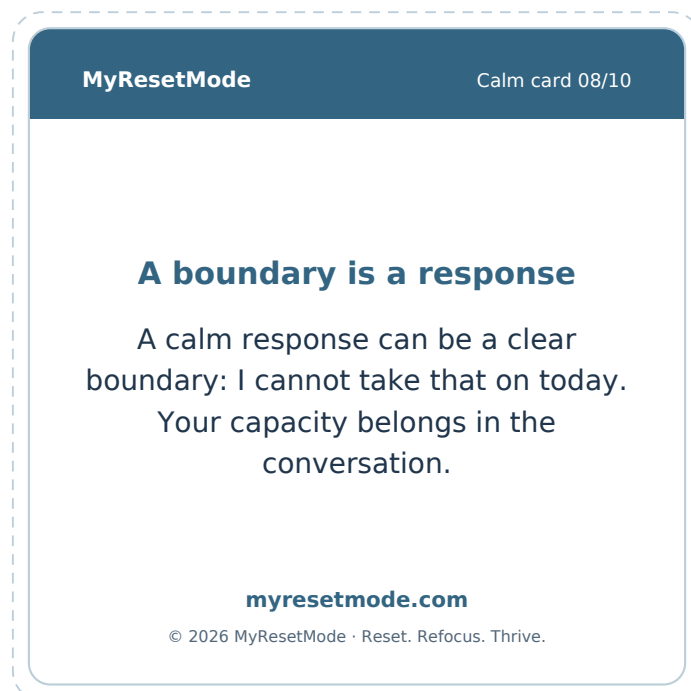
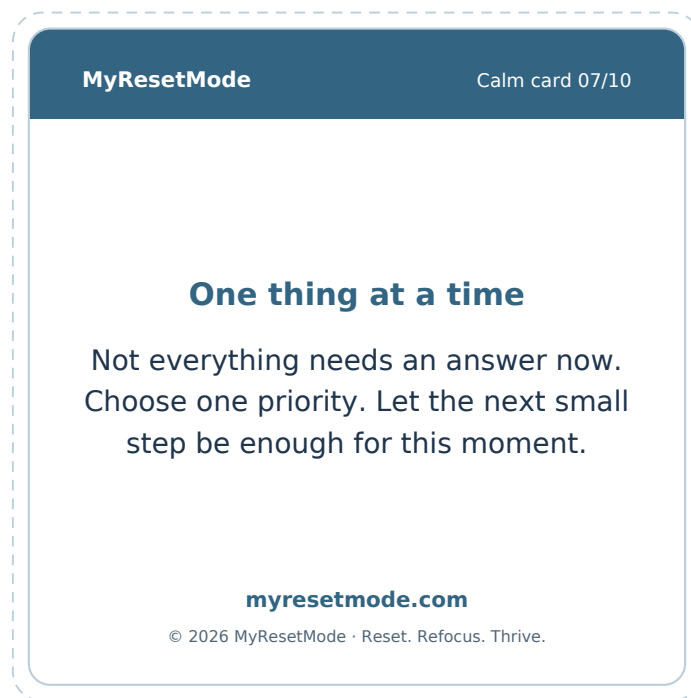
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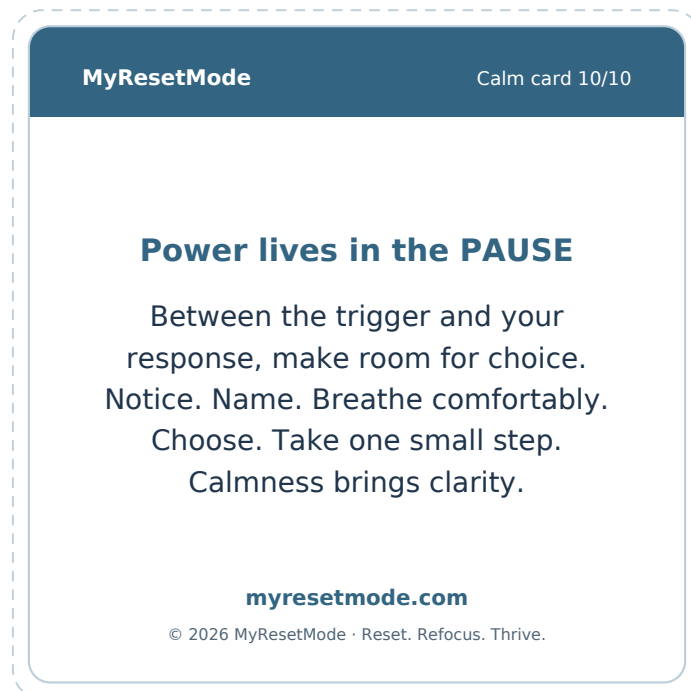
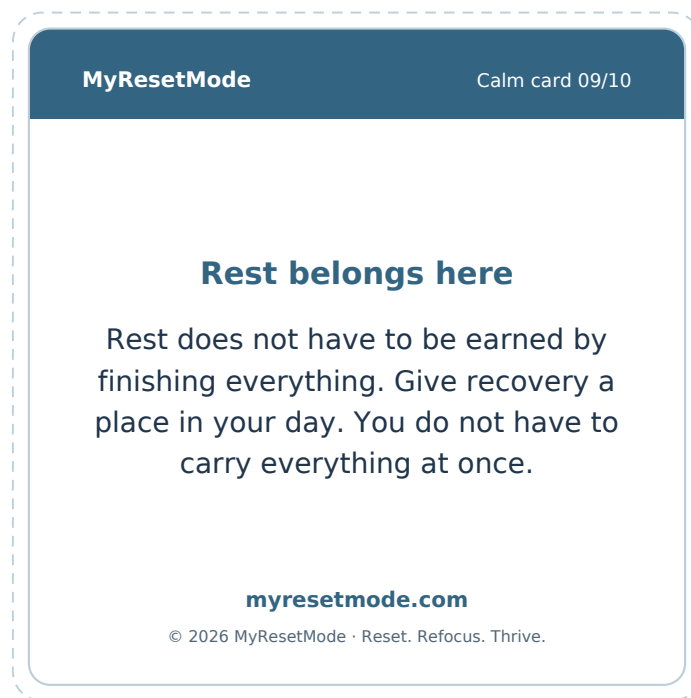
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RESEARCH REFERENCES

The evidence behind the explanation

These studies inform “Why the PAUSE?” They examine stress, emotion labelling or breathing practices — not the branded PAUSE Method itself.

[1] Arnsten, A. F. T. (2009). Stress signalling pathways that impair prefrontal cortex structure and function. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 10, 410–422.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn2648>

[2] Shields, G. S., Sazma, M. A., & Yonelinas, A. P. (2016). The effects of acute stress on core executive functions: A meta-analysis and comparison with cortisol. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 68, 651–668.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2016.06.038>

[3] Lieberman, M. D., et al. (2007). Putting feelings into words: Affect labeling disrupts amygdala activity in response to affective stimuli. *Psychological Science*, 18, 421–428.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01916.x>

[4] Zaccaro, A., et al. (2018). How Breath-Control Can Change Your Life: A Systematic Review on Psycho-Physiological Correlates of Slow Breathing. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 12, 353.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2018.00353>

[5] Fincham, G. W., et al. (2023). Effect of breathwork on stress and mental health: A meta-analysis of randomised-controlled trials. *Scientific Reports*, 13, 432.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-27247-y>

Association is not a guarantee of benefit. Laboratory findings and average trial results do not predict an individual response.

You do not have to do this alone

If stress persists, feels unmanageable, or affects sleep, work, relationships or daily life, consider speaking with a GP or qualified mental health professional.

| When to seek urgent help

New, severe or worrying physical symptoms should be medically assessed rather than assumed to be stress. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, contact local emergency services. In the UK, call 999 or go to A&E. For urgent mental health help in England, call NHS 111 and select the mental health option. Outside the UK, use your local services.

| Further reading

These sources inform the general stress, grounding and gentle breathing guidance. This workbook is MyResetMode's original educational adaptation, not a WHO or NHS publication or endorsement.

World Health Organization — Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide (2020)
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003927>

NHS — Stress
<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/stress/>

NHS — Breathing exercises for stress
<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/breathing-exercises-for-stress/>

NHS — Where to get urgent help for mental health
<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/>

Continue with a free guided reset at myresetmode.com/app.