

MAKING A PLAN: HOW TO PAUSE BEFORE REACTING

Youth Self-Regulation Worksheet

WHY PAUSING MATTERS

When we react without thinking:

- We often make choices we regret
- Our emotions control us instead of us controlling them
- We might hurt others or ourselves
- We miss opportunities to make better decisions

The good news: Pausing is a skill you can learn and practice!

THE SCIENCE OF REACTIONS

Your brain has two systems:

1. **The "Fast" System** - Automatic, emotional, and quick to react
2. **The "Thinking" System** - Slower, logical, and helps you make better choices

When you feel triggered, your "Fast" system jumps into action. Pausing gives your "Thinking" system time to catch up!

ACTIVITY 1: MY REACTION PATTERNS

Instructions: Think about your typical reactions in challenging situations. Circle the words that describe how you usually react:

Physical Reactions	Emotional Reactions	Behavioral Reactions
Heart racing	Anger	Yelling
Tight muscles	Frustration	Storming off
Clenched fists	Embarrassment	Silent treatment

Feeling hot	Sadness	Saying mean things
Stomach ache	Anxiety	Texting/posting impulsively
Shallow breathing	Feeling attacked	Breaking things
Tears forming	Overwhelmed	Shutting down

My top 3 reaction patterns I want to change:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

ACTIVITY 2: CREATE YOUR PAUSE BUTTON

Instructions: Design your own personal "pause button" symbol below. This will be your mental reminder to stop and think before reacting.

I [DRAW YOUR PAUSE SYMBOL HERE]

My pause button reminds me to:

- Take a deep breath
 - Step back from the situation
 - Remember my values and goals
 - Choose my response carefully
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ACTIVITY 3: MY PERSONAL PAUSE PLAN

Instructions: Create your step-by-step plan for pausing in difficult situations.

Step 1: Recognize my triggers

I know I need to pause when:

- I feel _____
- I notice my body doing _____
- Someone says or does _____

Step 2: Use my pause technique

When triggered, I will:

- Physical action: _____ (Example: Take 3 deep breaths)
- Mental reminder: _____ (Example: "I have the power to choose")
- Time needed: _____ (Example: Count to 10 slowly)

Step 3: Ask myself key questions

Before responding, I'll ask myself:

- Is this worth my energy?
- What do I really want to happen?
- What would the best version of me do?
- How will I feel about this choice tomorrow?

Step 4: Choose my response

After pausing, I can choose to:

- Respond calmly and clearly
- Wait until later to address the situation
- Ask for help or more information
- Let it go if it's not important

ACTIVITY 4: PRACTICE SCENARIOS

Instructions: For each scenario, write how you would use your pause plan.

Scenario 1: Someone posts an embarrassing comment about you online

My trigger feelings: _____ How I would pause: _____
_____ Questions I would ask myself: _____ My
chosen response: _____

Scenario 2: A teacher accuses you of something you didn't do

My trigger feelings: _____ How I would pause: _____
_____ Questions I would ask myself: _____ My
chosen response: _____

Scenario 3: A friend cancels plans with you at the last minute

My trigger feelings: _____ How I would pause: _____
_____ Questions I would ask myself: _____ My
chosen response: _____

Scenario 4: Write your own challenging scenario

Situation: _____ My trigger feelings: _____ How I would pause: _____ Questions I would ask myself: _____ My chosen response: _____

ACTIVITY 5: PAUSE POWER PHRASES

Instructions: Create short, powerful phrases you can say to yourself when you need time to pause.

Examples:

- "Let me think about that."
- "I need a moment."
- "I want to respond, not react."
- "Let me get back to you."

My pause power phrases:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
-

ACTIVITY 6: MY PAUSE PRACTICE PLAN

Instructions: Choose specific times/situations to practice your pausing skills this week.

Day of Week	Situation to Practice In	My Pause Strategy
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Weekend		

REFLECTION: THE BENEFITS OF PAUSING

Instructions: Check the benefits you hope to gain by mastering the pause:

- Better friendships Less conflict with family Fewer regrets about what I say or do More respect from others Less stress and anxiety Better decision-making More self-confidence
 Other: _____
-

MY PAUSE COMMITMENT

I, _____, commit to practicing my pause plan for the next 7 days.

I will track my progress by: _____

When I successfully pause before reacting, I will celebrate by: _____

If I forget to pause, I will: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

REMEMBER:

"You can't control what happens to you, but you can control how you respond to it."

The space between trigger and response is where your power lives!
