



PRESSING PAUSE

Pressing Pause is a strategy used to effectively manage and de-escalate conflicts or challenging situations by temporarily stepping back and creating space for reflection and self-regulation. It involves recognizing the need to pause, taking a break from the situation, and using that time to gather thoughts, manage emotions, and plan a constructive response.

KEY COMPONENTS |

- **Self-Awareness:** Recognize signs of escalating emotions or tension within yourself or others involved in the situation. Recognize when you are tired, hungry and overly stressed and prepare in advance for how you will respond to challenging situations with colleagues and students.
- **Recognizing the Need to Pause:** Understand when it is necessary to take a break and press pause to prevent further escalation. Establish a school wide routine that allows a colleague to tap in while you tap out of the conflict.
- **Create Physical and Mental Space:** Physically remove yourself from the immediate environment or mentally disengage from conflict by focusing on calming thoughts or engaging in relaxation techniques.
- **Reflect and Regulate:** Use the pause to reflect on the situation, assess your own emotions, and practice self-regulation strategies to regain emotional balance.
- **Planning a Constructive Response:** During the pause, consider the best approach to address the conflict or challenge in a constructive and respectful manner.
- **Resuming the Conversation:** After pressing pause, return to the situation with a calmer mindset and a thoughtful response that promotes understanding and resolution.

WITH STUDENTS

A teacher encounters a challenging behavior from a student during a lesson. Instead of reacting impulsively, the teacher presses pause, takes a deep breath, and mentally reminds themselves of their students process information much slower than adults and their frontal lobe that controls executive functioning skills is still developing. They then address the behavior calmly and assertively, promoting a positive learning environment.

WITH STAFF

In a heated discussion between colleagues, one person recognizes the escalating tension and suggests pressing pause. They step away from the conversation, take a few minutes to gather their thoughts and emotions, and then return to continue the discussion in a more productive manner.

WITH FAMILY

During a family disagreement, a family member notices that emotions are running high. They propose a short break, allowing everyone to gather their thoughts and cool down. After the pause, they reconvene with a focus on active listening, understanding each other's perspectives, and finding common ground.



IMPLEMENTATION TIPS |

- Develop **self-awareness** to recognize signs of escalating emotions or tension.
- **Prioritize the need** to press pause when conflicts or challenges arise.
- Physically remove yourself from the situation or mentally **disengage** through relaxation techniques.
- Use the pause to **reflect** on the situation, assess your emotions, and practice self-regulation strategies.
- Plan a **constructive response** that promotes understanding and resolution.
- Return to the situation with a **calmer mindset** and a **thoughtful approach**.

FIDELITY CHECKLIST

The following tool can be used for self-assessment and/or non-evaluative learning walks (e.g., buddy observations, peer observations, coaching observations).

Date	Time		
FEATURE	NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALWAYS
Self-Awareness: I can recognize signs of escalating emotions or tension.			
Recognizing the Need to Pause: I understand when it is necessary to take a break and press pause.			
Creating Physical & Mental Space: I can physically or mentally disengage from the conflict.			
Reflecting & Regulating: I use the pause to reflect, regulate my emotions, and regain balance.			
Planning & Constructive Response: I consider the best approach to address the conflict constructively.			
Resuming the Conversation: I return to the situation with a calmer mindset and a thoughtful response.			

REFERENCES

- Rockwood, P. R. (2021). Serving ALL Students: Social and Emotional Learning in a "Press Pause" World. *Thresholds in Education*, 44(2), 162+.
- Sellman, E. (2011). Peer Mediation Services for Conflict Resolution in Schools: What Transformations in Activity Characterize Successful Implementation? *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(1), 45–60.
- Fung, J., Auby, P., & Luthra, D. R. (2023). 5.70 Implementing Take-Pause, a Mindful Breathing System in Virtual Reality, as a Stress Reduction Tool in a Pediatric Urgent Care in Northern California: Interim Results. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 62(10), S281–S282