

The Honest Pause

A ten-minute reflection for a difficult moment at work

Before the conversation you've been putting off. Before the decision you keep turning over. Before you reply, agree, withdraw, or push ahead.

The Honest Pause is a few minutes to notice what's happening, see the situation more clearly, and choose your next step with intention.

Pause. See clearly. Choose consciously.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

You don't need a perfect answer or a solution to the whole situation. Set aside about ten minutes for the first three questions. The reflection at the end is optional and may take longer.

Write a few words, make a note on your phone, or simply sit with the questions. If a question feels unhelpful, leave it. You can pause and return to the exercise later.

If you may be at risk, focus on your immediate safety and reach out to someone who can support you.

01 · PAUSE

What is happening in me right now?

Name what you notice. What are you feeling? What are you telling yourself? What do you feel pulled to do next?

You might notice an urge to explain, say yes, shut down, avoid the conversation, or respond quickly. There's no need to judge the reaction. For now, just notice it.

A FEW WORDS ARE ENOUGH

What do I know, and what am I assuming?

First, write down what has actually happened—the words, actions, or facts you can point to.

Then notice what you're predicting or interpreting. What are you worried this means? What might you not know yet?

Your feelings are real and worth noticing, even when you're still working out what the situation means.

WHAT I KNOW

WHAT I MAY BE ASSUMING OR PREDICTING

Does this feel familiar?

If it does, what seems to repeat? Is this situation genuinely similar to earlier ones, or does it only feel familiar in one part?

If it doesn't feel familiar, stay with this moment. You don't have to find a pattern for the exercise to be useful.

What matters to me here?

Consider what you want to stand for in this situation. It might be honesty, respect, care, fairness, clarity, or protecting your time and energy.

You don't have to choose between what matters to you and what feels safe. Take the situation seriously, including any real risks or constraints.

What is one next step I can take?

It doesn't have to settle everything. It could be asking a question, taking time before replying, setting a boundary, preparing for a conversation, or getting support.

Choose a step that feels honest and workable for you.

MY NEXT STEP

WHEN I'LL TAKE IT

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

If you want to look more closely

Sometimes the same kind of difficulty shows up in different situations. If that feels true for you, take a little more time with these questions. If it doesn't, you can leave this section for another day.

Think of three recent moments that brought up a similar feeling—perhaps feeling dismissed, overwhelmed, stuck, or unheard.

MOMENT ONE

MOMENT TWO

MOMENT THREE

What, if anything, seems to repeat?

It could be a kind of conversation, a particular expectation, a point where you find it hard to speak up, or something else. Stay curious. A connection may be there, or it may not.

What might this tell me I need?

Perhaps more information, a clearer boundary, an honest conversation, rest, or support. You don't have to act on the answer today. Noticing it is a useful place to begin.

KEEP THIS NEARBY

The one-minute reset

Before you walk into the room, send the message, or make the decision:

PAUSE

What am I noticing in myself?

SEE CLEARLY

What do I know, and what might I be assuming?

CHOOSE CONSCIOUSLY

What is one next step that feels honest and workable?

A NOTE FROM SONIA

A pause won't make every difficult situation simple. It can give you a little more room to notice what's happening and decide how you want to respond.

That's part of what we do in coaching: make space to explore what's going on, look at it from more than one angle, and work out a next step that fits you.

If you'd like to explore coaching with me, you're welcome to book a discovery call.

Sonia Das

Book a Discovery Call

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