

Chapter 10

The Pause

As we know by now, self-abandonment happens when a moment of tension appears. Someone sounds disappointed, asks for help, or a potential disagreement begins to form. Before you have time to fully think about the situation, you find yourself agreeing, reassuring, apologising, or walking on eggshells to avoid conflict. These responses happen so quickly you don't realise until afterwards that you abandoned your own needs. You reflect on the conversation and what you'd have preferred to say.

Responding from panic or fear, determined to keep the peace or maintain someone else's emotional comfort, are some of the reasons the self-abandonment loop can feel difficult to interrupt.

The first step towards changing your self-abandonment pattern is learning to introduce a small pause between the moment of tension and the moment of response.

The pause doesn't need to be long - even a few seconds can create enough space for awareness to appear - but instead

of reacting automatically, that small pause allows you to notice what's happening.

- you notice the tension in the situation
- you notice the familiar urge to smooth things over
- you notice the impulse to agree quickly

That moment of awareness is important. It means the response is no longer automatic but consciously considered. You're beginning to observe the pattern as it unfolds. The pause also gives you time to ask yourself a few simple questions: what do I really want to say here? How do I want to feel? Do I meet their needs or my own?

You may not always know the answers immediately, but simply asking the questions helps bring your attention back towards your own internal signals. The pause doesn't mean you'll suddenly become confrontational or disagree with everything - you may still decide to agree, offer help, or support someone. But the difference is that your response is a thoughtful, considered one that includes your own needs rather than an automatic reaction patterned by your nervous system. You have **chosen your response** rather than **reacted from habit**.

Practising the pause gradually weakens the self-abandonment loop. The space between tension and adaptation becomes wider and within that space, new choices become possible.

Reflection Exercise

Practising the Pause

Think about situations where you often feel pressure to respond quickly. These moments might include requests for help, emotional conversations, or situations where someone appears upset.

Situations where I tend to respond quickly include...

In these situations, I often feel pressure to...

Examples might include:

- agree immediately
- reassure the other person
- apologise
- fix the problem

Write whatever feels true for you.

What might change if you allowed yourself a brief pause before responding?

Practice Exercise

Simple Phrases That Create a Pause

Sometimes a pause can be created by using a simple sentence that gives you time to think.

Examples include:

- "Let me think about that."
- "I'm not sure yet."
- "Can I get back to you?"

- "I need a moment to consider that."
- "I'll check my schedule and let you know."

Write two phrases that feel comfortable for you.

Phrase 1:

Phrase 2:

Final Reflection

How do you imagine it might feel to give yourself more time before responding in difficult situations?

Practising the pause may feel unfamiliar at first. If you've spent years responding quickly to maintain harmony, slowing down can feel uncomfortable. But each time you allow yourself even a small pause, you strengthen your ability to remain present in the conversation while also remaining connected to yourself.

That small moment of space is where the self-abandonment loop begins to loosen its grip.