

# Pause Buttons

## What is a “Pause button?”

A pause button is a strategy/tool that you find helpful in slowing your body and mind down when you begin to feel overwhelmed with emotion, stress, anxiety, remembering something from the past, etc. Sometimes when we are experiencing these things, our bodies and our minds speed up, which makes us feel more overwhelmed. Often this feeling of speeding up makes it harder to think clearly or complete the task we’re working on. Pause buttons can help us get back into a state in which we can function better.

## What is an example of a “Pause button?”

Which pause buttons work best will differ from person to person. That means that what works for you won’t necessarily work as well for your best friend. As a result, the following are examples of what a good pause button might be, but that doesn’t mean they’ll work for everybody. Each person has to experiment to fill their “toolbox” with pause buttons that work for them. It is best if we can have different pause buttons that we can use in different circumstances and that will calm both the body and the mind.

As you come up with your own pause buttons that work, make a list of them somewhere handy, so you can easily access them when you need to.

- Relaxation breathing (e.g. box breathing, belly breathing)
- Read a novel or magazine for 7 minutes or more (something unrelated in subject-matter to what you’re feeling overwhelmed about)
- Take a time out for exercise – work out, walk, run, yoga, whatever you like – if you’re short on time, taking a short walk with deep breathing might be effective
- Do some expressive writing: What are you feeling overwhelmed about? Why is it overwhelming you? What might be useful to focus on?
- Do some descriptive writing: Describe a place in which you feel calm and at peace. Describe how it looks, smells, what you hear there, what you feel there, etc.
- Close your eyes and visualize that you are in a calm place – somewhere that is only your own (real or imagined) and that brings you a sense of peace and calm. Notice what you might be seeing, smelling, hearing, feeling, etc.
- Mindfulness or body scan meditation (look on YouTube or use an app like Virtual Hope Box, Headspace, etc.)
- Watch a few funny videos on YouTube or social media
- Look at pictures or videos that make you smile
- Use a CBT triangle to catch your unhelpful thoughts and replace them with something more helpful (see handout)