
PAUSE PRACTICE

A Coaching
Tool for Leaders

Pause Practice

A COACHING TOOL FOR LEADERS

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IS NOT CREATED BY PROGRAMS OR POLICIES. IT IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF WHAT A LEADER BELIEVES ABOUT PEOPLE, EXPRESSED THROUGH THEIR PRESENCE IN THE MOMENTS THAT COUNT. THIS TOOL HELPS LEADERS PAUSE BEFORE THOSE MOMENTS AND RETURN TO THE CONVICTION BENEATH THE BEHAVIOUR.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Use this before a high-stakes conversation, meeting, or moment where psychological safety is at risk. It takes less than five minutes. The goal is not to script your response. It is to return to your actual convictions before you speak.

THE FIVE STEPS

1. **Pause.** Stop before you enter the room, open the conversation, or respond to the challenge.
2. **Name the moment.** What is about to happen? What kind of moment is this for the person across from you?
3. **Check your belief.** What do I actually believe about this person right now? Am I seeing them as a capable contributor or as a problem to manage?
4. **Notice the pressure.** What pressure am I under in this moment? How is it likely to shape my instinctive response?
5. **Return to conviction.** This person deserves to be received, not managed. What does that mean for how I enter this conversation?

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

What is at stake for this person in this conversation?

What story am I telling about them right now? Is it fair?

What would it look like to receive them rather than manage them?

CONVICTION CHECK

Do I genuinely believe this person deserves to be heard right now, even under pressure?

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YES

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NO

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NOT SURE

If no or not sure, what is getting in the way?

AFTER THE CONVERSATION

Did they feel received or managed? How do you know?

Where did the pressure change how you showed up?

What would you do differently next time?

PATTERN TO NOTICE

PATTERN TO NOTICE

Over time, track: In which situations does your conviction hold under pressure? In which does it collapse? The pattern tells you where the formation work needs to happen.

Situations where conviction holds:

Situations where conviction collapses:

"Psychological safety is not created by leaders who try to make people feel comfortable. It emerges from leaders whose internal stability reduces relational threat." Steve