

14 Pause and Return to the Problem

Decide when continuing now is no longer useful.

SIGNS A PAUSE MAY HELP

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ We are repeating ourselves | ☐ Voices or tension are rising |
| ☐ One of us cannot listen | ☐ We are blaming or attacking |
| ☐ Someone feels overwhelmed | ☐ We need information or rest |
| ☐ The setting is not private | ☐ Continuing feels unsafe |

The signs I notice earliest

A respectful pause sentence

Example: I want to continue this, and I am too activated to do it well right now.

DURING THE PAUSE I CAN

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Breathe | ☐ Walk |
| ☐ Rest | ☐ Write briefly |
| ☐ Drink water or eat | ☐ Seek support |
| ☐ Another grounding activity | |



Either partner may pause without permission. A pause is not punishment or silent treatment; return only when it is safe, useful and mutually workable.

14 Make the Return Clear

Create enough predictability that the pause does not become abandonment or avoidance.

If we return, when or where might fit?

What conditions need to be true?

The one issue we may return to

How we will check whether both people are willing and ready

If returning together is not appropriate, what will I choose instead?

What we want to do differently if we return



If fear, coercion or abuse is present, returning to a joint conversation may not be appropriate. Prioritize safety and individual support.



Reusable tool: return to this page with a new example whenever it would help.