

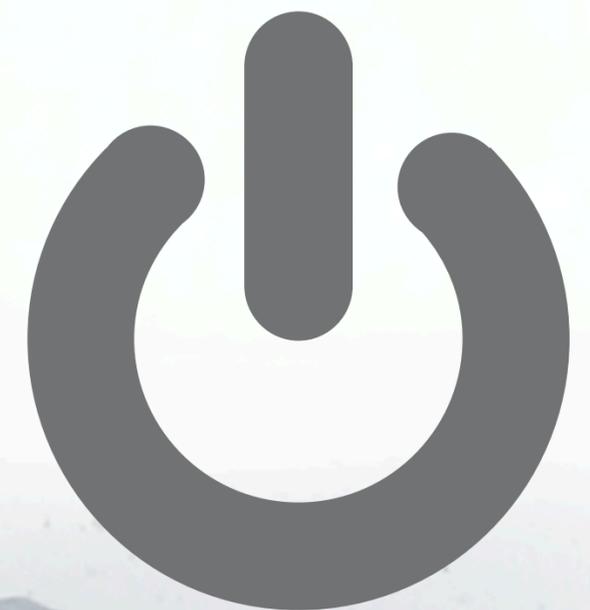
# The Pause

# That Powers You:

## Self-Care as a Strategic Advantage

Helping students (and ourselves) move from reaction to response.

Katie Swanson  
Founder, Flowcraft Creative



# Counselors are emotional first responders

## Receiving

Students bring stress, trauma, and emotional intensity

## Absorb and Respond

You absorb and respond to this energy all day, every day

## Leading by Example

Your nervous system becomes part of the environment  
(and you take it home with you at the end of the day)

*The state of your nervous system sets the tone of the room.*



# Strategic self-care helps you:

Regulate your nervous system

Think clearly under stress

01

02

03

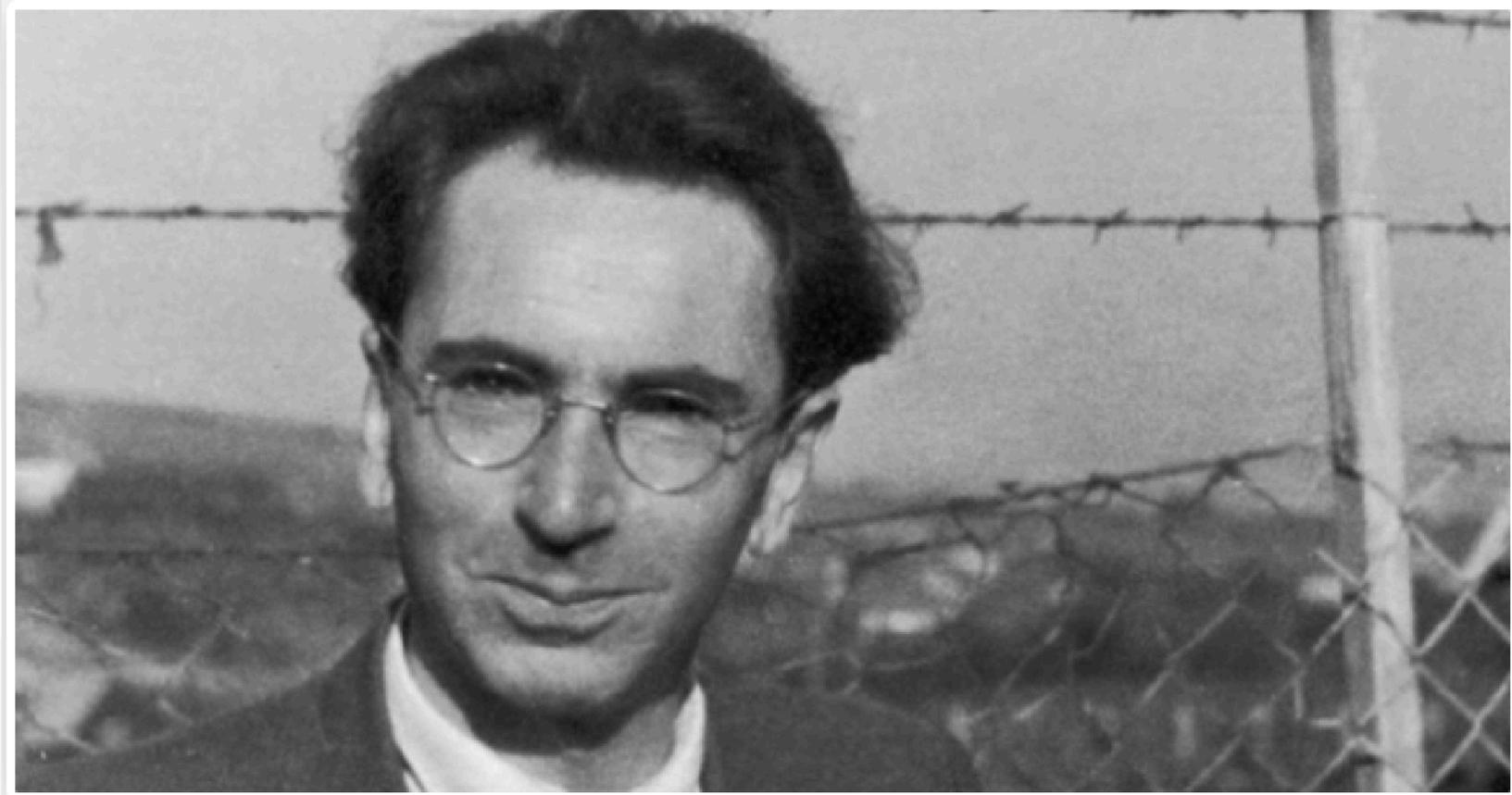
04

Self-care is not an escape.  
It's regulation.

Respond, rather than react

Model emotional regulation

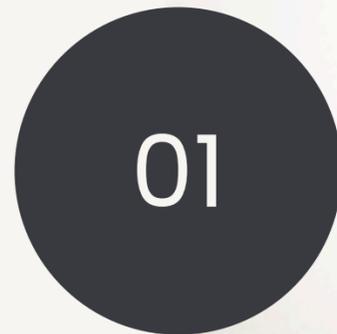
Stimulus and response:  
Creating the pause



"Between stimulus and response, there is a space.  
In that space is our power to choose our response.  
In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

# What I do (And Why it Works)

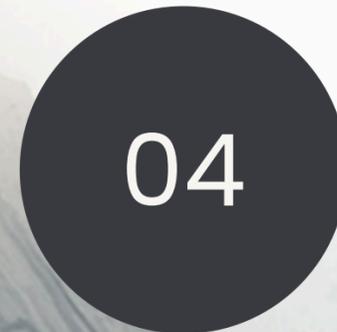
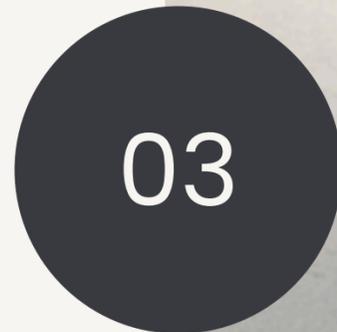
Slow Down



Notice internal environment



Regulate the nervous  
system



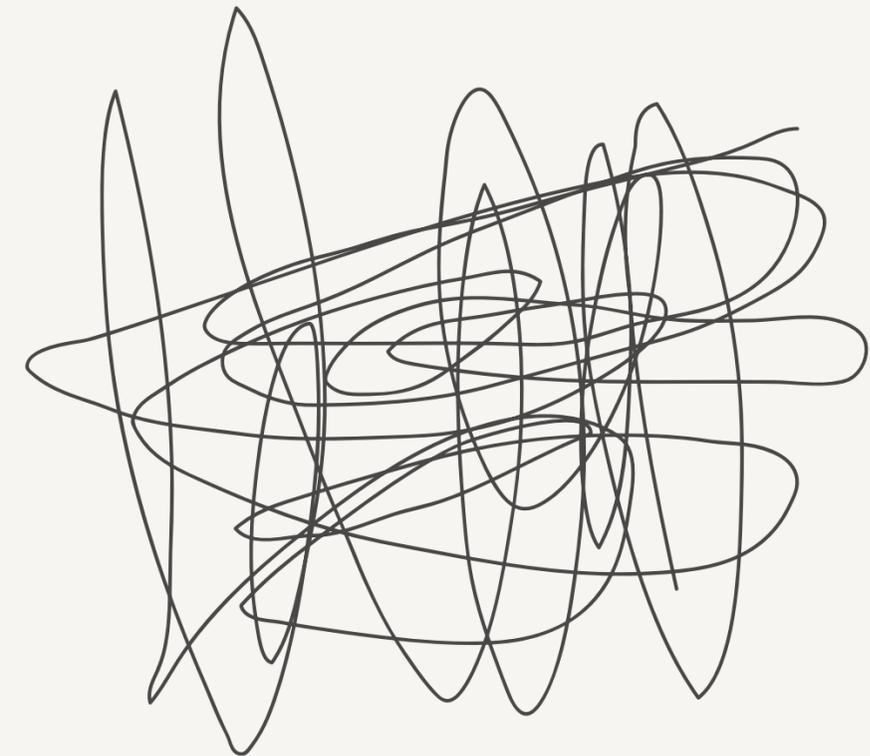
Create the pause

# Experience the Pause

Prolonged exhale:

Inhale 4  
Exhale 5  
Inhale 4  
Exhale 6  
Inhale 4  
Exhale 7  
Inhale 4  
Exhale 8

Page Mucker:



Pause



Notice



Feeling = emotional state

Noticing = observation

*I am feeling...*

I am feeling anxious about the test coming up.

*I am noticing...*

I am noticing that when I get anxious, I forget to eat and I don't sleep well.

# Curiosity regulates faster than criticism

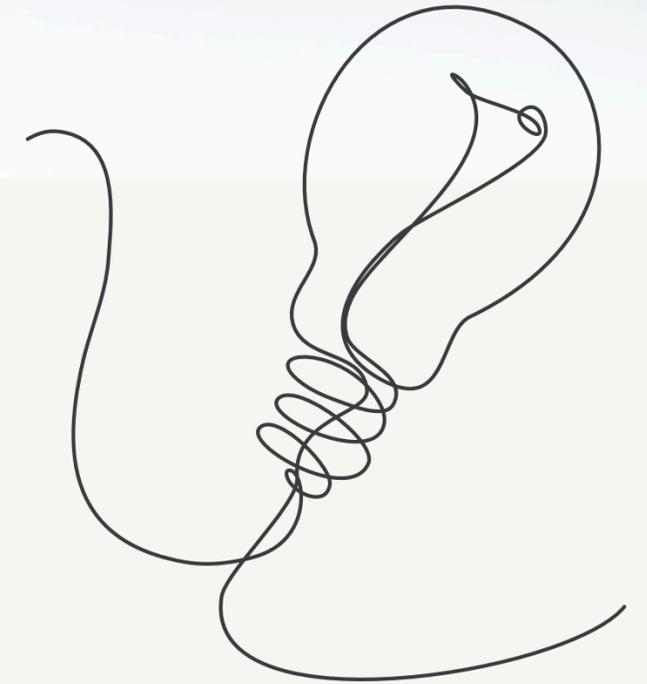
Prompts:

What might be contributing to this feeling?

Where do I feel it in my body?

What does it look/smell/sound/feel like?

What might this emotion need/be trying to tell me right now?



# Preparation beats reaction

## Implementation Intentions

### **When X happens, I will Y**

Examples:

When I get annoyed by bad drivers, I will take three slow breaths.

When a student's behavior triggers frustration, I will count to ten before responding.

When I notice myself getting sweaty and irritable, I will pause to eat something.

*Making a plan makes it easier to pause when stress happens.*



# Pause, Notice, Name, Choose

## Pause

Before you react, take slow, steady breaths

01

02

## Notice what you're feeling

What are you feeling? What are you noticing?

## Name it

Get curious, ask questions

03

04

## Choose

Choose how you want to respond to the situation. What aligns with your values and priorities?

# Not everything needs to be fixed

## Exercise:

Notice your breathing for 60–90 seconds.  
Observe sensations without fixing or judging  
them.

*Emotions move faster when we stop feeding them.*



# Putting it into Practice



## A 30-second reflection tool for students

I feel...

I notice...

I need...

Putting it into Practice



**Take Your Own Medicine**



Your regulation becomes  
their regulation



People don't learn from what we teach  
They learn from how we act and what we model.

Have questions or need help  
finding your pause?

Let's connect!

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IG:flowcraftcreative

Substack: Breath + Ink

Free newsletter (2x/month)  
with journaling prompts.

