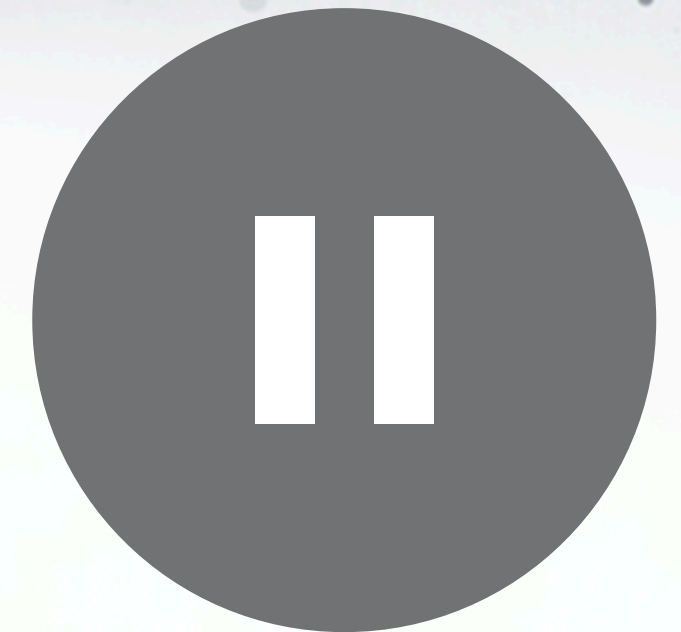


The Pause That Powers You:

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

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

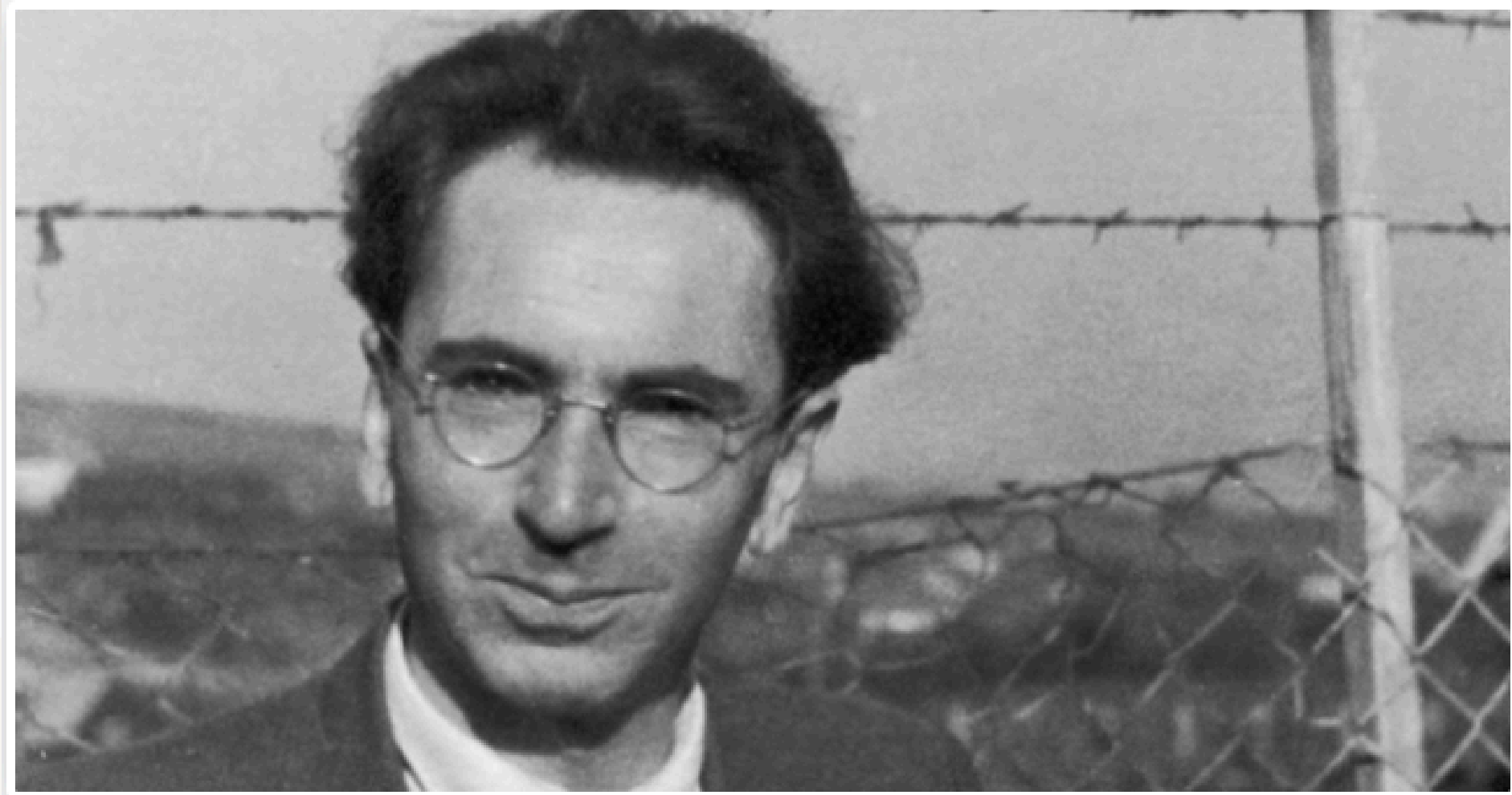
Respond, rather than react

03

04

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

01

02

Notice internal environment

Regulate the nervous
system

03

04

Create the pause

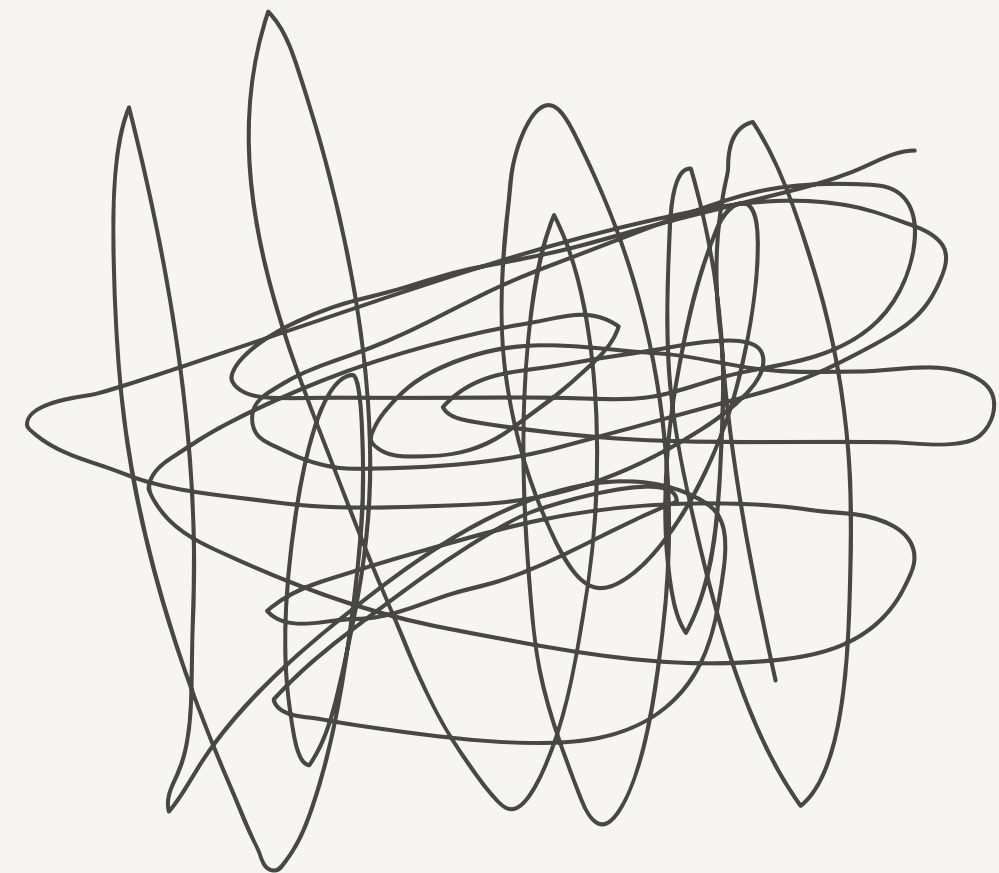


Experience the Pause

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!

katie@flowcraft-creative.com

IG:flowcraftcreative

Substack: Breath + Ink

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

