

THE PAUSE PRINCIPLE

Close your eyes. Breathe. Breathe in deeply and fill your lungs. Now breathe out. Relax. Declutter. Fill your lungs again and slowly release. As you reflect on your life, set aside the worries and stresses you bring. Breathe. Set them aside. Breathe. I invite you now to become fully present to this moment in time. Breathe. Be mindful of the purpose that brought you here. Breathe. Open your eyes. Peace be with you.

In **The Pause Principle**, best-selling business author Kevin Cashman explores the ancient truth that we are our best when we pause. People come to meetings with distractions—family concerns, work deadlines or the state of the world may preoccupy attendees. Setting aside time to pause and become centered brings greater meeting success and more engaged folk.

All religious traditions incorporate some form of the “Pause Principle” in their practices. Buddhism teaches “mindfulness.” Jews, Muslims and Christians pray. Humanists meditate. Hindus chant mantras. Most native peoples in the Americas pray and find that silence in nature brings wholeness and harmony. Albert Einstein is purported to have created the Theory of Relativity after awakening from a long nap.

Cushman writes:

Pause is a universal principle inherent in living, creative systems. It is part of the order, value, and growth that arises from slowing down and stepping back. The Pause Principle is the conscious, intentional process of stepping back to lead forward and with greater authenticity, purpose, and contribution” (Kevin Cashman, **The Pause Principle: Step Back to Lead Forward**, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2012, pp. 7-8).

Mindfulness helps us center on the deeper purposes of our life to bring beauty, compassion, integrity and humility to what we do. Creativity emerges most often after a period of doing nothing.

Pause comes in many forms: prayer, meditation, deep breathing, silence, expressing gratitude, taking a day off, hiking in nature, taking a cat nap.

When we emanate calm in the midst of anxiety, we help our groups function well. When facilitators are centered, groups are more productive. When we take time to pause, our organizations take the first step toward transformation. We treat one another with greater care and respect. Our work of planning, strategizing, creating and innovating emerges with greater ease.

Before you participate in any group or any endeavor, hit the pause button. All will be well.

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