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pause

HARNESSING THE LIFE-CHANING POWER OF GIVING YOURSELF A BREAK RACHAEL O'MEARA

"*Pause* is the real deal. With proven techniques backed by science, Rachael O'Meara shows us how to connect with ourselves and tap into what we really value."

— **Arianna Huffington**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Thrive*

"Pausing can add wonderful value to your life. In this enlightening book, Rachael shares many useful tips and inspiring stories that show how to tune-in to your life, align yourself with your passions, and live with meaning. This is truly a book worth pausing for."

— **Chade-Meng Tan**, bestselling author of *Search Inside Yourself* and *Joy on Demand*

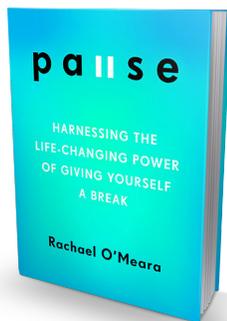
"In a world of constant change and ever-customizable career paths, the ability to *Pause* is a crucial skill we must all cultivate. Rachael has captured a critical component of a life well-lived—taking periodic pauses, or time-outs, to re-align our actions with our inner voice. Career pauses—whether one minute, one day, or one week—are the essential ingredient to making meaningful next moves. If you're concerned about the time or money to make it happen, don't worry—as Rachael says, with the right mindset and creative planning, anything is Pause-able." —**Jenny Blake**, author of *Pivot*

Rachael O'Meara was a customer support manager at Google when she realized she was burned out and needed to reassess her path. The best way to do this was to take a "pause"—a time-out to create space for her inner voice to be heard and to align her actions to lead a more fulfilled life. ***Pause: Harnessing the Life-Changing Power of Giving Yourself a Break*** (on-sale April 4, 2017) is her new book, serving as a GPS for others looking to slow down before speeding up again.

So what is a "pause"? Rachael defines a pause as any intentional shift in behavior that allows you the space to experience a mental shift in attitude, thoughts, or emotions that otherwise wouldn't have occurred.

Pausing can be as simple as a five- minute walk outside, or a day spent unplugged from digital devices. A pause is about taking a time-out to create the space for your inner voice to be heard and to align your actions with that voice in order lead a more meaningful, fulfilled life. Pausing offers you a chance to remember what “lights you up,” and allows you to identify your yearnings, shift your limiting beliefs, recognize and better understand what’s called “amygdala hijacks,” and discover how your relationships with others affect you.

Weaving in psychology, existentialism, and neuroscience-based research, Rachael explains how pausing can boost your emotional intelligence and ability to act, feel, and communicate authentically and responsibly through her and others’ stories of pausing. She helps you create your own “Pause Plan,” regardless of how much time, money, or resources you have, and explains the different ways you can learn to meaningfully pause—whether for sixty seconds a day, an hour, a week, or over the course of several months—and discover what you value most, to lead the most satisfying and fulfilling life you choose.



PAUSE: Harnessing the Life-Changing Power of Giving Yourself a Break

By Rachael O’Meara

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For more information, please visit: <http://www.rachaelomeara.com/book>

"If you've ever hit a wall, this book is for you. Rachael O'Meara's knows – she's been there. *Pause* is an insightful and actionable roadmap for taking a moment to look inward and making change that lasts."

— **Derek Sivers**, author of *Anything You Want*, founder of CD Baby and TED speaker

"*Pause* is a wonderful guide to reconnecting – with ourselves, with the world around us, and with those values we care about the most. Full of warmth and practical advice, reading it feels as though you are being taken by the hand and guided through some of life's tumultuous waters."

— **Sharon Salzberg**, author of *Lovingkindness* and *Real Happiness*

"If you are like me, making a friendship with uncertainty can be daunting. Fortunately Rachael O’Meara’s new book is a practical toolkit for navigating and facilitating change.

What I’ve learned from *Pause* changes everything."

— **Barnet Bain**, director of *Milton’s Secret*, producer of *What Dreams May Come*, and author of *The Book of Doing and Being*

"*Pause* is a much-needed and timely book for those of us who often feel stuck or our to-do lists have taken over our lives. The lessons, stories, and insights Rachael shares will help you discover the practical and powerful value of pausing. In this step-by-step guide, she shows you how to return to the wisdom of your natural flow in your daily life."

— **Agapi Stassinopoulos**, bestselling author of *Unbinding the Heart* and *Wake Up to the Joy of You*

FIVE SIGNS THAT YOU NEED A PAUSE

SIGN 1: You Used to Love Your Job; Now You Loathe It

Do you no longer enjoy what you do despite having been excited and invested in your job previously? Does it feel like you are no longer fulfilled by what you do or you're experiencing burnout? If your responsibilities have not changed but suddenly the perception of your performance at work has deteriorated, clearly something isn't working. Taking a pause, or intentionally shifting your behavior, is one way you can help yourself enjoy what you do again.

SIGN 2: The Boss Tells You It's Not Working Out

Many times this message comes with the proverbial pink slip and a personal escort from your desk to the closest exit. But it may appear as a subtle note in a performance review, a seemingly casual meeting with your boss, or feedback from someone who sees (or hears the writing on the wall). Pausing is a gift. When you can shift your behavior, your passions and strengths will emerge and help you align with what would be a more suitable environment for you.

SIGN 3: An Intervention Separates You from Your Technology

You most likely engage with technology in some aspect for your work or personal life and, like most people nowadays, you might be getting a little too much "screen time." However you receive your wake-up call about technology, it's important to realize the motives underneath your actions. Many people use surface-level means to connect and feel "plugged in" with others to meet deeper hungers, or yearnings. Pausing is a great way to shift to align to your true yearnings.

SIGN 4: A Major Life Event, Challenge, or Change Happens

Take inventory of your last twelve to eighteen months. Did a significant event happen? Did it affect anyone else in your life? Choose to be in the present moment and express how it has affected you. Let it sink in without rushing off to the next activity, event, or responsibility. Avoid going through the motions and getting on with life as if nothing had happened. Life is handing you an opportunity to recalibrate.

SIGN 5: A New Opportunity Reveals Itself

Is there an opportunity you're thinking about but hesitating to act on, like taking a big trip, changing careers, or starting a project? A pause allows you to live in the present and make better choices. It can also be a time when you check in with your emotions. Do you primarily feel fear, sadness, joy, anger, or hurt when you think about this opportunity? What yearnings do you think are behind your motivation to seize it? You can create a pause to check in on a deeper level and evaluate.

Each one of these opportunities is a paradox. Is taking a pause really meant to be time spent to think? Or is it time to stop thinking so the wisdom and answers have ample room to surface? How often have you stressed out about a specific situation or were stuck in the decision-making process because you didn't make up your mind? Overthinking can kill just about everything.

Taking a pause isn't so that you can think more. It's to the exact opposite. It's the perfect excuse for you to step away from your everyday life and not focus on what is ruling your thoughts.

ABOUT RACHAEL O'MEARA



Photo Credit: Larry Dyer

Rachael O'Meara is a transformational leadership coach and speaker, assisting others to fulfill their potential. She as a senior account executive at Google and also hosts authors who have meaningful messages about mindfulness and emotional intelligence for the Talks at Google YouTube channel. Her book *Pause* was named one of 2017's top business books for your career, and was featured in the *New York Times* and on WSJ.com. She leads workshops and speaks regularly on the practice of pause. She has a Certificate in Transformational Coaching from Wright Graduate University, and an MBA from Fordham University.

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Rachael O'Meara works in Learning & Development at Google, and is also a transformational leadership coach who hosts personal growth authors for the Talks at Google YouTube channel. She has a certificate in Transformational Coaching from the Wright Graduate University for the Realization of Human Potential, and has an MBA from Fordham University and was a national rowing champion. Get two free chapters of her book on her web site at www.rachaelomeara.com.

AN INTERVIEW WITH RACHAEL O'MEARA, AUTHOR OF PAUSE

Q: To you, what does it mean to pause?

A: I define a pause as any intentional shift in behavior that allows you the space to experience a mental shift in attitude, thoughts, or emotions that otherwise wouldn't have occurred. A few examples are taking a long deep breath, not checking your phone for a set period of time, or doing something outside of your comfort zone that you are interested in. Taking a pause isn't so that you can think more. It's to the exact opposite. It's the perfect excuse for you to step away from your everyday life and not focus on what is ruling your thoughts.

Q: Can you tell us about your own first-hand experience with taking a pause from Google?

A: I realized that I was burning out and not performing well in my job. No matter what I did differently or how much effort I made, I continued to receive feedback that I wasn't meeting expectations. I was mentally defeated thinking I wasn't good enough. I knew if I stayed put or got a new job without taking a serious look at my life, it was likely I would repeat similar behavior in the future. Instead of leaving or remaining miserable, I asked to take a three month unpaid break, take a meaningful look at my life, and reassess my life path. During those three months, I gave myself permission to not rush into the next thing. I learned a lot about myself, looked at my strengths and returned to Google refreshed and renewed in a new role that aligned better and was more meaningful to me.

Q: You write in the book that there are five different signs that you may need a pause – what are they?

A: Here are the telltale signs you need to pause. If you've experienced one or more of these signs, consider and create a pause plan that works for you. Ask yourself if you've had any of the five signs as you read them. What signs have you experienced?

Sign 1: You used to love your job and now you loathe it

Sign 2: Your boss tells you it's not working out

Sign 3: You have an intervention that separates you from your work or technology

Sign 4: A major life event, challenge, or change happens

Sign 5: A New Opportunity reveals itself, which could appear as an irresistible, high-risk opportunity.

Q: What are the steps to actually taking the pause plunge? What are the important factors that need to be considered?

A: Deciding to take a pause, whether it is part of your day or a long epic journey is an act of courage and self-care. The point is that it works for you. You can set yourself up for success by strategizing how and what you plan to do in a big-picture kind of way and leave room for the unknown.

There are three main steps for planning a pause. The first is to write your rough draft distilled into a few bullet points on your story, your emotions, your beliefs and actions you want to take. The second step is to set an intention on how you want to act and to add meaning to your actions. It may include your vision for how you want to be and feel during or after pausing. The third step is to create your plan for *how* you want to spend your time. It's ok to leave things vague and open to leave room for your pause to unfold as you enter the unknown.

Q: What is the “TASER technique” and why is it important?

A: You can apply the TASER technique to “zap” false beliefs about yourself. What belief has come up recently that hasn’t been true or accurate (the key is it is about you, not others)? Some examples may be, “I am not good enough,” “I am too old/young/rich/poor” or “I don’t matter/exist/belong.” You get the idea.

T – Tune in and catch your belief as soon as it happens or once you realize you had it.

A – Acknowledge the belief you have and what emotion you experience.

S – Shift your false belief to a new and updated belief.

E – Express this new belief, out loud if possible along with any feelings. It may feel weird and expect that – after all it’s a new way of thinking. Refrain from judgment and simply experience it.

R – Repeat the process every time you catch a false belief. The more you catch these, the more you can raise your own awareness and intentionally shift your behavior over the long term.

Give it a try. It’s one tool you can use in what I call mental flossing and have an entire chapter on it. Each time you apply TASERing, you are “zapping” a false belief that maybe at one time was true. The reality is it now outdated and a barrier to change the way you think.

Q: You write that anyone can take a pause and the key is the Pause Dashboard: Money, Time and Activity. How do these three factors interact with one another?

A: Anyone can pause, and what and how much you do depends on three factors: money, time and activity. No matter what your pause looks like, these three levers are at your disposal in the art of crafting a pause that works for you. Most people don’t consider a pause because they mistakenly think it costs too much or they don’t have enough time. Money tends to be the most limiting factor, but there is a myth that a pause needs to be some extravagant expensive journey. A pause can essentially be free or within your budget if you intend it to be. Time is also a big factor, but remember it’s about the quality of that time, not how long you take. When it comes to activity, this is where you can review your intentions and ask yourself what could you do that fits your budget and timeframe that would satisfy your intention and deeper desires? I invite you to look at each lever separately, and address what is and isn’t realistic for your pause plan. In the book there are more details on each lever, and with a little creative planning, you don’t have to severely limit what you do. Pausing is creating a shift in behavior so that you are more present with yourself. Everything else is secondary.

Q: Throughout the book, you feature pause stories from many different people, including Jenny Blake, Lissa Rankin, MD., and Tiffany Shlain. Why did you think it was important to include their stories?

I wanted to tell the inspiring stories from people who have taken a pause and as a result have shifted to live a more satisfying life they otherwise may not have discovered. In the book, I feature twelve people who have paused in some way, from Lissa’s “perfect storm” to Danielle’s month of digital device pausing, to Joe’s forced pause when laid off, to Judith’s weekend bicycle trips. Each one is a unique example of a specific pause that worked for them, followed by his or her practical tips or lessons passed along to the reader that I call “practice of pause advice” after each of their stories.

Q: What's the key to keeping the pause mindset when returning back to everyday life?

A: No matter what type of pause you create, it is possible to bring key takeaways from your experience into your everyday life. Imagine you are an astronaut in space returning to earth – you take on overwhelming forces and need to prepare physically, mentally, emotionally and even spiritually transitioning back into the atmosphere. Reentry is when you decide what to do next and how you do it. Whether it's an extended trip, a walk in the woods, or a day without your digital devices, it is important to build in transition time in what you did on your pause and keep your "pause mindset" which is your state of mind you are in while pausing. Ask yourself these questions: What did you learn, how did you grow, and what can you bring into your day to day that incorporates some of that from your pause?

Q: A pause can be big or small – what are a few ways that a pause can be incorporated throughout someone's day?

A: Daily pauses are a great way to start and in many cases are free of charge. Here are a few one-minute pauses that I like and highlight in the book. I recommend picking one that appeals to you and give it a try in the next 24 hours.

- **Belly breath pause:** sit or stand with both feet firmly on the ground and close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so. Place one hand on your diaphragm and slowly inhale, hold your breath, and slowly exhale. Count each inhale until you get to ten breaths.
- **Digital device pause:** create a rule to limit or not engage with your devices – it can mean pausing to not be with your phone or Internet for a day, allowing yourself a limited time to be on email or social media, or not using any devices while with other family members, like at a meal or in the car.
- **The nature pause or a walk around the block pause:** go outside for any length of time or find a color photo or inspiring image of nature. Focus on a section of what you see, and zone in. If you're outside, you can start looking at the ground and ask yourself, "What color is the ground? What is the texture like?" You can kneel down, and feel the ground, or a signpost or tree.
- **Take a course or class pause:** it can become your custom pause laboratory for setting intention and shifting your thoughts or behaviors as you develop your skills. It can even include going back to school at whatever level you are at.

If you already have a daily pause practice, take the next step and journal about your experience or add more time to your existing practice this week.

Q. You talk about a forced pause like a job layoff. How can anyone make the most from this usually unpleasant experience?

A: There is no escaping it: getting laid off stinks. It is an unnerving time and scary to a lot of people, me included. Even though it's difficult to absorb unexpected news, a layoff could be the best thing that ever happens to you. There is an opportunity for a fresh start. You can explore new roles or look for a new job. You are liberated to shift your career or reflect on what you authentically want to do. Maybe you get some time to be with your family or loved ones. Enjoy it and resist panicking, which is what many of us default to. During this time, you can think through your next steps with more focus on yourself and create meaningful intentions once you're ready for a job search. There are many more ideas on how to make the most of this time in the book.

Q: Only 4% of employers offered a paid sabbatical program in 2016, while 12% had an unpaid program, according to The Society for Human Resource Management's 2016 Employment Benefits report. In your opinion, why don't more companies and organizations offer time to pause?

A: Unfortunately too many companies fear a loss of productivity and employees if they adopt a leave policy. The reality is that as an employer, this is a highly coveted perk that attracts loyal employees and can be used to attract and retain talent. New leadership and growth opportunities emerge for other team members who can learn new skill sets to help cover responsibilities. As an employee, I will either return refreshed and renewed to a company and job that I value who trusted me to take this leave, or decide that the role wasn't a fit in the first place, and move on so someone else who is a better fit can take my place. Offering this type of break provides a win-win in benefits for companies and employees. Not offering something like this to qualified employees is an outdated way of thinking.

Q: What do you hope readers will take away from this book?

A: Pausing can be life changing and lead to a more conscious, fulfilling and satisfying life. Anyone can pause – it's about finding what works for you. Pausing can become a way of life and help prevent continuing going down a path of burnout, reduce stress, and lead to new discoveries about oneself. Pausing is a choice that isn't conventional (yet), but is a powerful way to re-align and check in from time to time. Pausing requires courage and facing the unknown, which is both exciting and outside most of our comfort zones. Gift yourself the permission to pause or intentionally shift your behavior so that you can tune in and align to be your best self.