

# Woman Unclouded



Thoughts & Truths Advice to our daughters

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Wellbeing 25 Apr - Written By Dr Natalie Kenely

## The power of the pause: How emotional intelligence helps you respond instead of react



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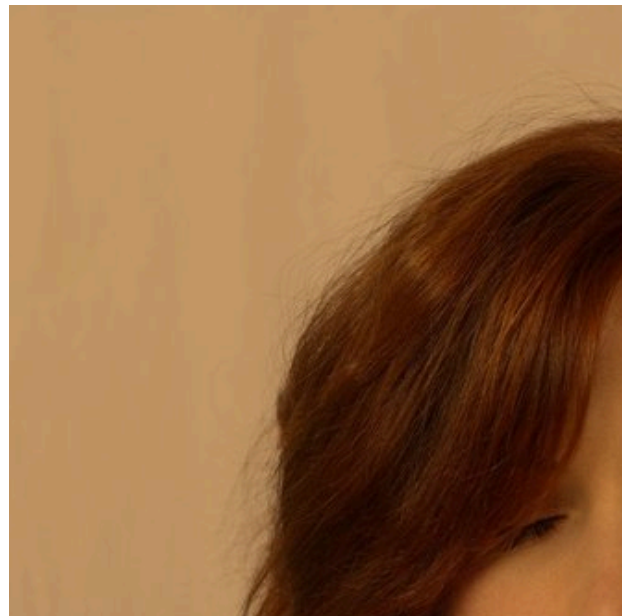
Have you ever sent a text you regretted five seconds later? Or said “yes” when every fibre of your body was screaming “no”? We've all been there - caught in a moment that felt automatic, where emotion took the wheel before logic could fasten its seatbelt.

That’s where the power of the pause comes in.

It’s that tiny, invisible space between what triggers us and how we respond - and it can change everything. Especially for women, learning to pause isn’t about silence or suppression. It’s about reclaiming choice, grounding our emotions, and responding with intention rather than reaction.

### What is “The Pause”?

The pause isn’t a dramatic silence. It’s not passive. It’s the moment, however fleeting, when we catch ourselves. It might be mid-thought, mid-sentence, or mid-sigh. It’s the tiny gap between emotion and action, where emotional intelligence lives. And for many of us, especially women juggling roles, emotions, and expectations, this pause can be a lifeline.



*“The pause is not about pushing emotions down. It’s about letting them rise without letting them take over.”*

It's the moment where we choose *not* to fire off that snappy reply. Where we say: "Can we talk about this later?" instead of diving headfirst into an argument. Where we breathe - just once - before responding to the child, the partner, the boss, the friend.

The pause is not about pushing emotions down. It's about letting them rise without letting them take over.

## **Emotional regulation through the lens of EI**

Emotional intelligence is made up of several key abilities, and emotional regulation - the ability to manage your responses in emotionally charged situations - is one of its pillars. It doesn't mean we don't feel things deeply. It means we can feel something strongly and still stay grounded.

For women, this can feel complicated. We're often labelled "too emotional" when we express ourselves, and "cold" or "difficult" when we don't. So many of us have learned to either mask our emotions entirely or let them out in ways that don't always serve us.

But emotional regulation isn't about becoming robotic. It's about staying in the driver's seat, especially when emotions are high. The pause helps us do that. It gives us just enough space to ask: "What am I feeling? And what do I want to do with it?"

## **Why the pause is powerful for women**

From an early age, many of us are taught that being "nice" is more important than being honest. We're encouraged to be agreeable, accommodating, and "easy to work with." Anger is unattractive. Assertiveness is too much. Emotion is either a liability or a weapon, depending on how it's received.

So we learn to smile when we want to scream. We nod even when we disagree. We soften our "no" into a "maybe," and our "yes" comes at the expense of our own energy.



In this context, the pause becomes more than just a helpful technique - it becomes a radical act of clarity.

When we pause, we are interrupting generations of conditioning. We're saying: "Wait. What do I actually feel here? What do I need? What's true for me, and how do I want to respond from that truth?"

This is not weakness or hesitation. This is power. Quiet, grounded, self-owned power. And the more we practice it, the more it becomes not just a skill, but a way of being.

### **Everyday applications: Where the pause changes everything**

Let me tell you about a moment that could've gone very differently. I was in a meeting, and a colleague, who had a habit of being dismissive, cut me off mid-sentence. It wasn't the first time. Every cell in my body wanted to react: sharp words were at the edge of my tongue, and I could feel the familiar wave of frustration rising.

But I paused.

Just for a second. I took a breath, reminded myself of what I wanted to create in that moment - not just for me, but for the dynamic in the room. I gave myself a moment to feel what I felt, and to *choose* my next move.



*“When we pause, we are interrupting generations of conditioning. We’re saying: “Wait. What do I actually feel here? What do I need? What’s true for me, and how do I want to respond from that truth?”*

Instead of snapping, I calmly said: “I’d like to finish my thought, I think it’s important to the discussion.” The room stilled. He nodded. I spoke. And the conversation moved forward - with a very different tone.

The power of the pause isn’t just for heated meetings. It shows up in all kinds of moments:

- In parenting, when we’re exhausted and want to yell, but choose connection instead.
- In friendships, when a throwaway comment stings, and we pause instead of ghosting or snapping.
- In our inner world, when the voice in our head turns critical, and we pause to ask: “Is this true? Is this kind?”

These aren’t dramatic changes. But they are *profound* ones.

### **Building the pause muscle: How to practice emotional regulation**

Like any skill, the pause takes practice. At first, it might feel like it comes too late, after the reaction. But even recognising that *is* part of the growth. Over time, we get better at catching ourselves *just in time* - and eventually, with grace and ease.

Here are a few ways to begin:

- Name the emotion. Simply saying to yourself: “I’m feeling angry. I’m feeling anxious. I’m feeling small”, helps you step out of reactivity and into awareness.
- Breathe first. Literally take a breath. One deep inhale can slow your heart rate and give your brain time to re-engage before your mouth does.
- Ask yourself: “What do I want to create in this moment?” Do you want resolution? Boundaries? Connection? Space? That question can guide your response from reaction to intention.
- Practice small. Use low-stakes situations - traffic, long queues, tech frustrations - as practice grounds for the pause.

And finally, remember: this isn’t about being perfect. It’s about being present.

### **A note from Natalie...**



The more I practice pausing, the more I realise it’s not about getting it right - it’s about getting real. About being present enough to choose how I want to show up, even when emotions run high. That pause? It’s not hesitation. It’s wisdom in motion.

If this resonates, I’d love to hear from you. Have you had moments where a pause made all the difference - or where you wish it had? These everyday moments are where emotional intelligence truly lives, and we’re all learning as we go.

With warmth,

*Natalie Kenely*

## About the author

Hey, I'm Natalie. I'm a senior lecturer, published author, and emotional intelligence expert — I believe emotions belong in every part of our lives, not just in therapy or work meetings. With a background in social work, I've spent years learning about how emotions shape our choices, relationships, and everything in between. When I'm not teaching or researching, I'm a mum, wife, and friend — roles that keep me grounded and constantly remind me that emotional awareness is just as essential in our personal lives as it is in our work lives. I'm passionate about helping people lead with clarity, empathy, and, of course, a little bit of pause.

*You can follow Natalie Kenely on [LinkedIn](#).*

## What do you think?

Is there a woman-related subject you feel needs to be 'unclouded', spoken about, or explained? Is there something you feel passionately about? If so, share your views... or share your story - to inspire and help other women.

Woman Unclouded believes that by sharing - stories, experiences and expertise - women can inspire one another - to take the leap, or to simply make sense of things.

*All you have to do is drop us an email at [hello@womanunclouded.com](mailto:hello@womanunclouded.com)*



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