

behaviour

Press pause!

Ever let your temper get the better of you – shouted in haste and repented at leisure? If only we could press rewind on all those regrettably rash outbursts. Hypnotherapists Martin and Marion Shirran have a simple but clever solution

BY **PERRI LEWIS**

Most of us have said things, done things (or even smashed things) in the heat of the moment. Then we really, really wish we hadn't. Seconds after sending a snarky text or bringing up old grievances in the middle of a row, regret usually comes knocking. Often, it's our emotions that take the flak – 'I was angry', 'I was feeling overwhelmed', 'I was frustrated'.

Advice about how to manage your temper and frustrations is plentiful, but hypnotherapists Martin and Marion Shirran have developed a new way of tackling the problem – Pause Button Therapy. The best thing about it? You don't actually have to see a therapist to try it, because the premise is so simple.

Pass the remote

Imagine you get an email from your boss asking you to file your report tonight, not tomorrow as she originally asked. You're annoyed – you know you'll have to stay late and cancel your evening's plans, so you quickly type a reply saying you won't be able to do it. Before you press send, however, the Shirrans would ask you to imagine that you have a remote control.

■ **Press pause.** 'Stop whatever you're about to do,' says Martin Shirran. Do nothing until you've considered all your other options on that remote.

■ **Fast-forward.** Don't just think about the effect of your actions, actually live them in your head. 'We want people to see the consequences of the decisions

they're about to take, smell them, taste them, feel them, experience them, and then decide what they're going to do.'

Visualisation is key here, says Shirran, because studies show that it has a more significant effect on our behaviour than just thinking about it. So imagine your boss receiving your reply: see her come out of her office and hear her shout at you in front of all your work colleagues. Put yourself in your future self's shoes and feel how embarrassed you would be.

■ **Rewind.** Now try that again. Consider another way the situation could play out. Maybe your boss is considering your annual pay rise, but now decides not to approve it – visualise your life for another year without any extra cash.

Or perhaps it goes another way – she calls you into her office and apologises for asking too much of you. Picture what you'd say in response to that. 'Play around with the fast-forward and rewind buttons in your mind. It only needs to be for a few seconds, but you need to visualise both the negative and the positive for it to work,' explains Shirran. By doing this, he believes, you'll be in a better position to decide what course of action to take.

■ **Play.** Will you send the email? Will you re-type it? Or will you just get your head down and finish the report? There's every chance you'll still send it, he says. 'Often, we'll still make the wrong decision after using our pause button, but by doing this more frequently, at least you're starting to think before you act.' In time, you'll be less likely to act emotionally – instead taking a more reasonable path.

The authors admit that there's little new about Pause Button Therapy. The power of being more mindful, visualising and weighing up outcomes has long been known. Yet envisaging using a remote control to manage your impulses is a neat analogy that explains what to do when your emotions take hold.

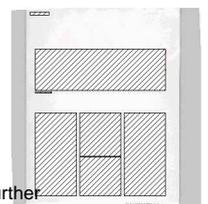
Use your buttons

It can also help with making decisions and stopping bad habits. For instance, the Shirrans ask smokers who want to quit to visualise their (unhealthy) future every time they crave a cigarette. The therapy is also advocated to help relationships. 'If you get people to stop before they react to each other, to think about why their partner is upset, why this always causes them to row... it can really change the dynamics,' says Shirran.

It takes time to slow down: you have to remember to pause, fast-forward, rewind and play (the Shirrans sell mini cardboard remote controls to help, but it's not a vital part of the process). At some point, though, your mindset will change. 'Just like learning to drive, you'll actually stop to think and press your pause button, without having to tell yourself to do it.'

'Pause Button Therapy' by Martin and Marion Shirran is published this month by [Hay House](#)

ARE YOU a
'future thinker'?



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■ **Past thinkers** constantly ponder on what might have been. They worry about what has happened rather than try to prevent it occurring again.

■ **Present thinkers** leave things to the very last minute. They live for the moment, not for tomorrow.

■ **Future thinkers** floss their teeth and have pensions. They know that making sacrifices now will benefit them in the long term.

Pause Button Therapy's aim is to turn you into a future thinker to lessen your chances of doing

something you'll regret. 'A person's attitude to the importance of the past, present and future can colour their everyday actions,' the authors write.

