

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