

The Critical Thinking “Pause Button”

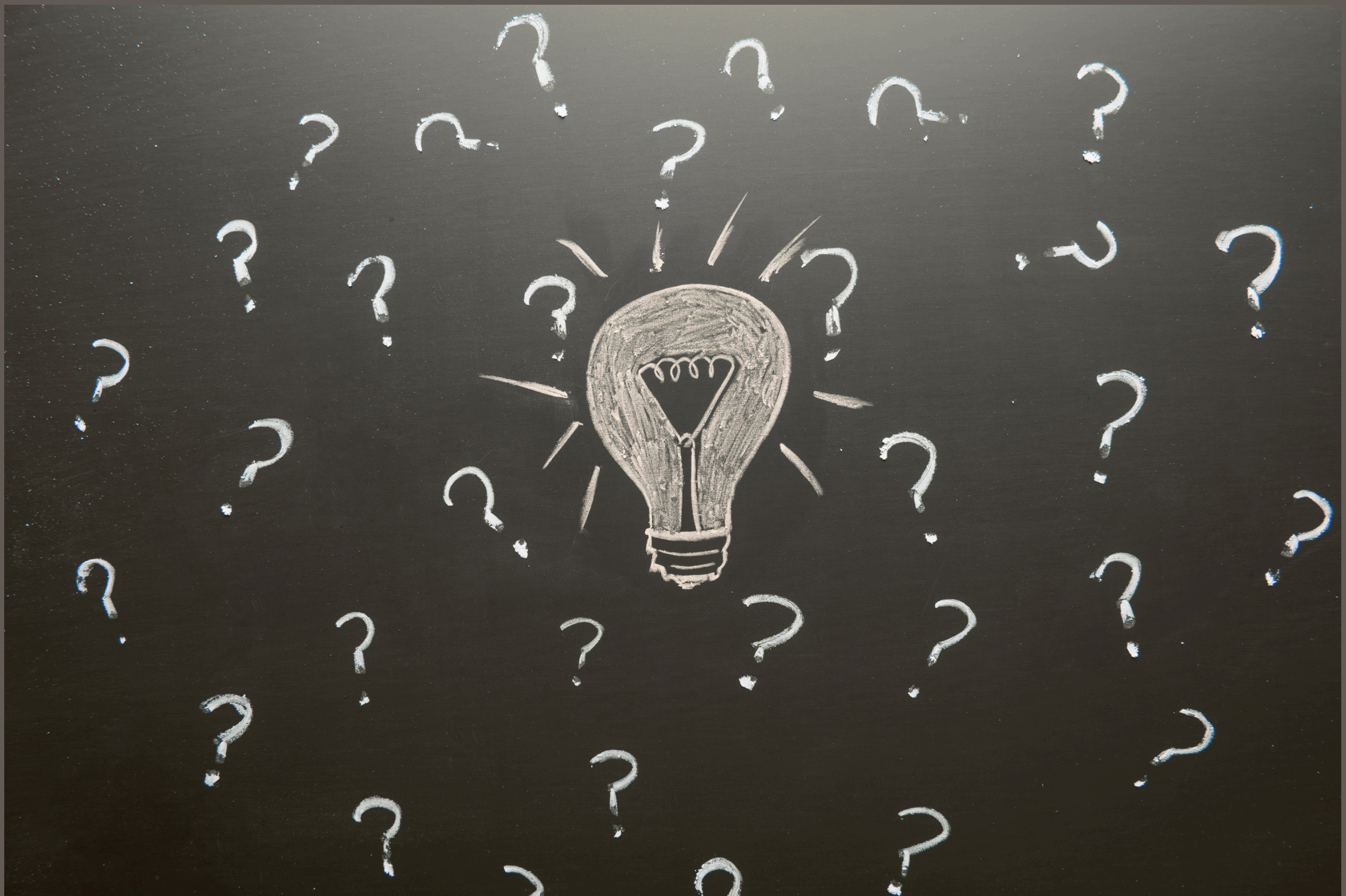
A quick self-check before you believe, share, or react.

A Guide to
Thoughtful
Reflection

Slow down and make
critical thinking a daily
habit.

Make informed decisions
and avoid
misinformation.





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P.A.U.S.E. – Pause, Assess, Verify, Seek balance, Evaluate emotions

Most bad information thrives on speed. If you can slow yourself down for even thirty seconds, you can dodge most of it. The next time something feels urgent, outrageous, or too perfect to be true, run it through this quick mental filter:

1. Who's telling me this? (PAUSE)

Think about the source. Is it a reputable outlet or a random page with no track record? Does the person or platform benefit if you believe this? Example: A “breaking news” tweet from a meme account should not carry the same weight as a verified news agency.

2. What's the proof? (Assess)

Look for concrete evidence, not just opinions or screenshots. Does the claim link to actual data, studies, or eyewitness accounts that can be verified? Example: “Experts say...” without naming them is not proof.



3. Can I find it elsewhere? (Verify)

If it's true, credible sources will be reporting it too. If only one obscure blog or influencer is pushing it, treat it as unverified. Also, check the date, old stories often resurface as if they're breaking news.

4. Is my reaction clouding my judgment? (Seek balance)

Strong emotions—especially anger, outrage, or fear—can override logic. Ask yourself whether you are reacting to the facts or to how the information makes you feel. Example: If a headline makes you furious, it's worth taking a breath before acting on it.

5. What's the other side of the story? (Evaluate emotions)

Even if you think you know, seek out the counterargument. You may find missing context or outright contradictions. Example: Controversial health claims often leave out opposing research that challenges the headline.



Marcus Aurelius once said:

“If it is not right, do not do it; if it is not true, do not say it.”

In the age of instant sharing, those words are a good rule for life online.

The more you practice P.A.U.S.E., the more control you reclaim over your thoughts and choices. Algorithms are built to hijack your attention and emotions, but your mind is still yours to govern. Each time you slow down, you weaken the grip of manipulation and strengthen your ability to see the truth for what it is. That’s how you move from being a passive consumer of information to an active gatekeeper of your own reality.

