Exercise 12b: Traffic light technique

Why?

You can learn to control yourself better. If you struggle with acting impulsively, practice the traffic light technique.

In this exercise, you will learn to work on your behavior.

How?

When you realize that you're in a situation where you usually act without thinking, follow these steps:

1. Imagine a large red sphere in your mind. A red light means you need to stop for a moment and think about what is happening. What situation are you in, and what would you like to do?
2. Then imagine the red sphere turning into a yellow one. Go through different solutions to the situation. Decide what you're actually going to do and justify it to yourself.
3. When you're completely sure of your decision, move to green and carry it out.

- **RED = STOP.** What are you about to do?
- **YELLOW = THINK.** What other options do I have?
- **GREEN = ACT.** Accept the consequences.

When you start practicing this technique, choose just one situation where you tend to act impulsively. Try the technique the next time you're in that situation.

Gradually learn to think of or visualize the color red immediately when the situation arises. For example, when writing an angry message, you can imagine always seeing a red barrier that only disappears after you have gone through the yellow phase of reflection.

If you're used to acting quickly, the technique may feel quite awkward at first. But if you want change, you need to learn to slow down your actions. With practice, you can.