



Why Regulation?

Regulation tools enable us to cope with stress, reduce burnout, and navigate challenging situations with greater ease.

How Regulated Are Your Responses to Stress?

Your survey responses indicate you tend to remain calm and collected when confronted with typical stressors, though some situations require greater effort to avoid frustration, anxiety, or other stress inducing emotional responses.

Refining some of the skills in this area can lead to a less stressful, more balanced work life. One or more of the following strategies will likely help you through those situations.

Strengthening Your Regulation

There are six easy-to-implement behaviors that make a big impact on how we feel and handle challenging work situations:

- 1. Take a Breath:** When faced with a stressful situation or a triggering event, start by simply taking a deep breath. Pausing for a moment and focusing on your breath can help create a space between the situation and your reaction. This small action can help you re-center and approach the situation with more clarity. Deep, controlled breathing activates the body's relaxation response, helping to reduce stress and promote calmness.
- 2. Practice Self-Awareness:** Strengthening any skill starts with self-awareness. Develop self-awareness by paying attention to your emotional state throughout the day. Take note of situations or triggers that tend to affect you. By recognizing these patterns, you can begin to anticipate challenging moments and prepare yourself mentally to respond calmly.
- 3. Use Positive Self-Talk:** Incorporate positive self-talk into your daily routine. When faced with a stressful situation, remind yourself that you are capable, resilient, and have the skills to handle it. Consider developing a list of affirmations or positive statements that resonate with you. Encouraging words shift your mindset and build confidence in your ability to regulate emotion.

4. **Implement Time-Outs:** When you feel your composure slipping or you are becoming overwhelmed, give yourself permission to take a short break. Step away from the situation if possible, even if it's just for a few minutes. Being in a quiet space to collect your thoughts for a few minutes will help you. Use this time to regroup, collect your thoughts, and regain regulation before returning to the task at hand.
5. **Seek Support:** Reach out to a trusted colleague, mentor, or friend for support and guidance. Share your challenges and discuss strategies for improving regulation. Having someone to confide in and lean on can provide valuable perspective and encouragement during difficult moments.
6. **Reflect and Learn:** After challenging situations, take time to reflect on how you responded and the outcomes. Consider what went well and identify areas for improvement. This reflective practice helps you gain insights into your triggers and identify strategies to handle similar situations more effectively in the future.

These six behaviors will diffuse stress and support you in effectively responding to challenging situations. Now, let's take a deeper look at the effective, healthy handling of stressful situations.

Effective, Healthy Handling of Stressful Situations

Step 1: Understand Your Triggers

Think about situations or interactions at work that cause you stress or negative emotions. What is it about these situations that trigger these feelings?

Step 2: Reflect on specific difficult or stressful situations at work that affected your emotional response.

1. What triggered your response?
2. What was the impact of your response?
3. What could you have done differently to improve the situation's effect on you and its outcome?

Common examples include: A person you have a history with, a task that is unpleasant, and pressure from a deadline.

Step 3: Manage Your Stress

What techniques or strategies do you currently use to manage stress or recenter yourself in difficult situations? Are they effective?

Consider some new stress management techniques. In addition to the six behaviors described earlier, choose one or two of these techniques to try out the next time you're faced with a stressful situation:

1. **Name the emotion:** What am I feeling right now? Studies show that this question helps you identify and acknowledge your emotions, which is the first step toward managing them.
2. **Control your thoughts:** What specific thoughts are contributing to my stress? This question can help you recognize irrational or unhelpful thoughts that might be magnifying your stress.
3. **What would I say to a friend who was feeling this way?** This can help you cultivate self-compassion and potentially see the situation from a new perspective.
4. **Can I view this situation as a challenge rather than a threat?** This question helps shift your mindset from a negative, fear-based perspective to a more positive, challenge-oriented one. This change can help reduce stress and promote resilience.

Step 4: Expand Your Confidence

Reflect on situations where you have felt confident at work. What factors contributed to your confidence? How did your confidence affect your emotional state?

When we are confident in our ability to handle a challenge, we're less likely to feel stressed from it. Confidence reduces feelings of uncertainty and stress. Therefore, confidence supports our emotional regulation, and it is a positive cycle. When we handle tough situations with grace, we gain faith in our abilities to do so again in the future.

Identify one or two areas where you'd like to expand confidence. Develop a simple plan to work on these areas.

1. **Identify quick wins:** Small, attainable goals give you the opportunity to succeed and each success, however small, will boost your confidence. Make sure your goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound (S.M.A.R.T.).
2. **Visualize success:** Studies show that priming the brain by taking 3 to 5 minutes to meditate and visualize a past task or event where you were genuinely successful reframes your emotions from self-doubt to an optimistic, determined state.
3. **Self-care:** Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and sufficient sleep are all crucial for emotional well-being, which in turn can enhance your self-confidence.
4. **Practice gratitude:** Regularly acknowledging what you're grateful for can help shift your focus from what you perceive you lack to what you already have, boosting your self-esteem and overall satisfaction with life.

- 5. Exercise Assertiveness:** Express your feelings, beliefs, and needs directly and respectfully. Being able to stand up for yourself in a positive, confident way can greatly enhance your self-esteem.

Step 5: Create Your Action Plan

Based on your reflections above, create your action plan for handling future difficult situations. This plan could include:

1. Strategies for understanding and managing your emotional triggers
2. Stress management techniques to try out
3. Confidence building activities

Step 6: Reflection

Reflect on this exercise. What insights have you gained?

1. How will I benefit from improving my ability to maintain positive composure in difficult circumstances?
 - a. For my current job?
 - b. For my career?
2. What are the consequences if I don't improve?
3. What steps am I willing to try that are outside my comfort zone?



Common Workplace Scenarios

There are many workplace situations that challenge our emotional stress. Over time, they can contribute to burnout. Consider the following scenarios, and the different approaches to handling them:

- 1. Dealing with a Difficult Customer:** Imagine you're in a customer service role, and you encounter an irate customer who is frustrated with a product issue. Instead of reacting defensively or matching their anger, practice self-awareness. Take a deep breath to compose yourself before crafting a thoughtful and professional response.
- 2. Navigating Conflicting Priorities:** In a fast-paced work environment, conflicting priorities and tight deadlines can cause stress and pressure. To maintain calm, prioritize tasks, set realistic expectations, and communicate proactively with stakeholders. When faced with multiple demands, resist the urge to rush or feel overwhelmed. Instead, take a deep breath, evaluate the situation, and focus on one task at a time, managing expectations and communicating any necessary adjustments. This approach allows you to deliver quality work and minimize stress.
- 3. Handling Unexpected Challenges:** At times, unforeseen challenges or setbacks can disrupt workflow and test your regulation. For instance, imagine you encounter a technical issue during an important presentation. Rather than panicking or losing composure, assess the situation, acknowledge the challenge, and communicate transparently with those who are involved. Seek support and/or solutions or workarounds.
- 4. Managing Conflicts with Colleagues:** Interpersonal conflicts in the workplace can be emotionally charged and challenging to navigate. Approaching conflicts with an open mind and seeking to understand the other person's perspective can help you maintain composure. Active listening and taking time to respond thoughtfully rather than reactively are also supportive of composure.
- 5. Responding to Constructive Criticism:** Receiving feedback or constructive criticism can sometimes trigger defensive reactions. However, try to approach feedback with an open mindset. Instead of immediately reacting or becoming defensive, you can take a moment to process the information. Express appreciation of the feedback, ask clarifying questions, and seek specific examples to understand the areas for improvement. By demonstrating composure and a willingness to learn, you are cultivating a growth-oriented mindset.

Watch Out for Overuse

It's important to maintain a balance between self-regulation and authentic expression. Over-regulating can lead to compromising your own well-being and/or failing to advocate for your ideas and concerns. This can lead to a lack of authenticity, challenges building genuine relationships, and ineffective communication.



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