

What It Is

Self-management is how you direct and control your behavior by recognizing and responding to your emotions. It may also be referenced as self-regulation or self-control.

How Improving It Helps You

Once you've taken steps to improve your self-awareness (your ability to accurately identify your own emotions), you can use that awareness to influence how you respond in a given situation.

Self-management helps to turn reactive instincts into intentional responses.

Emotions can help or hurt situations and people, so being able to manage your emotions allows you to avoid unintentional hurt – both to yourself and others – and create more positive outcomes through the way you manage your behavior.

For clarification, self-management does not mean ignoring emotions – it's about handling them appropriately, not pretending they're not there.

Regardless of how well you're able to manage your emotions now, this is a skill that can continually be improved to see benefits to your mindsets, behaviors, ambitions, and relationships.

Take some time to think about why you want to commit to better self-management, and write your response here:

Why do I want to improve my self-management?

Practices to Improve Your Self-Management

Seek Feedback from Others

We often judge ourselves by our intentions, while simultaneously judging others by their actions. That's why it's so easy to justify our own behavior as okay, even though we judge others to be in the wrong when they do the same thing.

To get a better idea of how well you're responding to your emotions, seek feedback from others to look at your actions, rather than only your intentions. Ask the people who you're closest to, since they'll be more accurate and honest than someone you've met recently.

Don't Dwell Downward

Being aware of negative emotions is helpful – dwelling on them is not. For instance, in the case of anxiety, when you become aware that you're experiencing it, you can take steps to lessen it. But if you keep thinking about how anxious you are and everything that's going wrong and all the ways you're failing and how everyone is upset with you and you'll never accomplish anything and... you get the point.

Negative emotions build on each other, and when you dwell on them you're closing yourself off to positive realities. So, what's the secret to getting out of that downward spiral?

Gratitude. Choose to be thankful, even for the tiniest thing you can come up with at the moment.

Gratitude is a magnet for other positive emotions, so it can be a powerful way to move your mind from dark to light.

The Five Chairs

Behavioral coach and author Louise Evans has developed a method for managing your emotions by considering five choices, represented by five different chairs. Thinking about the choice that each chair presents can help you to respond to a situation with helpful, appropriate emotions.

Here are the basics of The Five Chairs, based on [Evans' 2017 TEDx Talk](#):

1. Attack

This is the "I'm right" chair, and it represents the choice to put your own pride ahead of others' emotions and well-being.

2. Self-doubt

This chair represents judgment of yourself, succumbing to fear, or playing the victim.

3. Wait

This chair means choosing to step back and observe the situation, asking yourself "why" questions to gain understanding and perspective.

4. Detect

This chair is where you choose to become self-aware and assertive (not aggressive) in who you are and what you need.

5. Connect

This chair is the choice to display empathy and compassion, putting your ego on the backburner and listening to others.

When you're responding to an emotional situation, you don't have to choose one of the first two chairs. Visualize yourself sitting in the Wait chair first, so you can move to the fourth and fifth chairs more quickly.

Pick Up the Remote

Shainna Ali, Ph.D. uses a [remote control analogy](#) to describe how you can take control of your own emotions. Through self-awareness, you can learn to recognize your limits when your emotions are heightened, and determine if you need to pause, stop, or turn off and recharge:

1. Pause

This is simply taking a few moments to gain control of your reactions – breathe deeply, count to ten, take a sip of water, stand up and walk around the room, etc.

2. Stop

This is when you need to remove yourself from the situation – leave the room, go for a walk, go get a glass of water – then come back once you feel more in control of your emotions.

3. Turn off and Recharge

If you're noticing emotions frequently getting the better of you, it's probably time to turn off so you can recharge. Disconnect from technology that can be a distraction, then take time to reconnect with yourself and what grounds you. Recharging can look different for everyone, but common preferences are spending quality time with people you love, getting in a focused workout, meditating or praying, or spending time in nature.

Whether through these techniques or others you've learned, write down some ways you can immediately start managing your emotions better:

To improve my own self-management, what steps am I going to take right now?

Questions for Reflection

Once you've spent some time using these or other practices to focus on improving your self-management, think through the questions below to reflect on what you've found.

What have I learned about my behaviors from others' feedback?

How have I used feedback and/or self-awareness to respond more positively to my emotions?

What techniques have helped me pull myself out of negative thought patterns?

***When thinking of the five chairs, which one have I typically gone to first?
Has that changed since I've been practicing self-management?***

How have I seen improvement in my responses to heightened emotions through pausing, stopping, or turning off and recharging?

How am I directing my behaviors to be more aligned with my personal values?
