

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

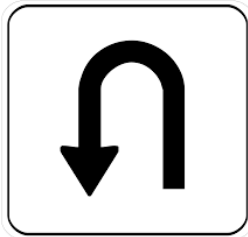


Feeling irritable, on edge, keyed up, hyper-vigilant, fearful, sad, angry, or excited and not know what to do? Our emotions can feel like a roller coaster, up one minute, down another. The range of emotions we experience is a natural and important part of our life. While emotions themselves are not good or bad, there are effective and ineffective ways to behave and express them. Rather than suppressing them, we can learn to experience the emotions and choose to behave effectively. Keeping it dialed in requires skills in self-regulation. Just like others you have, developing this skill set takes time, coaching, and practice.



1. CREATE A SPACE TO CHOOSE YOUR RESPONSE

When you feel strong emotions, stop for a moment. Take a step back from the situation. Name the emotion. Observe yourself, the others involved, and the situation itself. What are the factors influencing you to behave one way or another? What is your goal? Once you feel like you are able to choose a rational course of action, proceed in a way that allows you to achieve your goals.



2. SOMETIMES, DON'T GO WITH YOUR GUT

Emotions help us to rapidly respond to our environment in order to survive. For example, anger can prompt us to attack; fear can lead us to escape. However, our emotional response can be based on faulty assumptions, thoughts, or prior experiences that do not apply. When we choose to behave opposite to the emotion, we can recalibrate ourselves to more accurately judge our situation.



3. PLAN IN ADVANCE TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY

Prepare yourself for emotionally charged situations by being proactive. You can accumulate positive emotions intentionally. Do things you enjoy. Master a hobby or skill to build your confidence. If you anticipate an emotionally charged situation, visualize how you want to respond. Rehearse the whole scene in your mind. Commit to an effective course of action, and see it through to completion.



4. STAY FIT TO FIGHT – FIGHT TO STAY FIT

The mind, and the emotions we experience, are directly related to the condition of our brain. Your brain is constantly evolving, the product of your genetics, environment, and experiences. Its health is directly related to overall health. Optimizing brain health through diet, sleep, exercise, or medication helps keep your mind sharp and increases the likelihood of skillfully regulating emotion.

