
Self-Management

The starting point of maturity is the realization that “No one is coming to the rescue.” Everything you are or ever will be is entirely up to you. – Brian Tracy

Self-management is really personal management, time management, and life management all wrapped in one. It’s putting your hands firmly on the steering wheel of your life and taking yourself in your chosen direction.

For coaches, the ability to know and manage emotions and take responsibility for their behavior and well-being is especially critical. Without such skills, we may find releasing judgment, opinion and subjectivity challenging.

When we experience emotions without being controlled by them, it helps build strong, lasting, and rewarding relationships – both in and out of professional coaching.

What is Self-Management?

Self-management is more than knowing yourself – it’s about knowing how to conduct yourself. That’s why one person said, “Anyone can be angry; that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way ... that is not easy.”

A self-managed person is able to control impulsive feelings and behaviors, manage emotions in healthy ways, take initiative, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances.

It requires going beyond spontaneous reacting to thoughtful responding. Daniel Goleman, a pioneer in emotional intelligence research, associates self-management with such characteristics as self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism.

Let's take a closer look at these characteristics:

Self-control

Remember the old 'count to ten' advice when you are really upset? That advice is about self-control and making sure that what you are about to do or say is in your best interest and the best interest of the people around you.

Self-control is the ability to stop and think before acting and to pause and consider the best course of action in the present situation. It involves knowing what is important to you, what isn't, and how that will translate into your actions and behavior.

Trustworthiness

In today's world, we have a tendency toward overcommitment. We say yes to more than we can actually do and end up stressed or unable to follow through on our promises. Self-management involves being trustworthy and honest about what you are and are not capable of doing. But how does this relate to our emotions? If you trust yourself, you can trust that you will respond to your emotions by doing what is best for you in the given situation. Even if your first emotion is a knee-jerk reaction, your values will hold sway in the end and you will do what is right in the situation.

Adaptability

Paragraph The truth is things are always changing. People come and go, budgets get cut and positions get eliminated, divisions reorganize and duties get reassigned.

To enhance your adaptability, you will need to be able to identify what about the change might be causing a negative emotional response. For example, let's say that you are reassigned from one department, team or committee to another.

Why might that cause you to have negative reactions?

Some possibilities are:

- Fear of not getting along with the new boss or colleagues
- Fear of not having customer accounts that are as lucrative
- Fear of not being granted the privileges that your old boss did

Obviously, these are just suggestions – every situation will be different. But once you understand why you might be resisting the changes that you face, you can choose to handle it appropriately by addressing the fears or other feelings you have. The more we practice using this and other tools of self-management the more adaptable we become.

Initiative

Another skill involved in self-management is initiative. People who have a high level of initiative are those that look to continually develop themselves. They recognize that to be truly happy or content, they have to take responsibility for their lives.

That may involve making lifestyle changes such as learning new skills, developing new habits, or other pursuits. They don't blame others or the universe for their problems and can see their own part in their current situation, and accept responsibility for making any necessary changes.

They also take initiative in problem-solving and conflict resolution. They take the necessary actions to clear away negative emotions that are stopping or hindering them, and they take action to prevent further similar occurrences.

Perhaps most importantly, they look forward to taking the next steps because they have experienced the positive benefits of doing so and they want more.

Reflection

1. List your three major challenges in self-management.
2. What makes you "lose" it?
3. Then list three things you could do to better manage this emotional reaction.

Self-Management and Coaching

As a coach, you want to be fully present for your clients. The heart of self-management is the ability to set aside personal opinions, pride, defensiveness, needing to look good and being right. It involves an awareness of yourself, an ability to notice where you are or where you have gone in relationship to another person, and the ability to get back and reconnect.

If you notice you have become distracted when listening to another person be honest about it. If it's an ongoing distraction difficult to ignore, resist pretending it's not happening and push through it.

For example, if your environment is distracting you from fully being present for your client (dog barking, traffic noise, etc.) ask the client's if he or she minds if you take a minute to put the dog in another room or close the windows.

If you notice a pattern of being distracted with the same client, be curious. Ask yourself, 'What's happening here?' 'Is there a judgment or frustration at play?' If this is occurring with a number of clients, what do you need as a coach?

Self-management also involves what we do to prepare for our sessions. Reading client notes and reminding yourself of the agenda you are holding for the client is good preparation. Recording sessions with the client's permission is a good way to reflect your skills.

Coaching requires responsibility, accountability and ownership of our choices. In short, it requires both the coach and the client to be self-managed.

The coach is responsible for focusing solely on the agenda of the person being coached. This requires an awareness of any emotional reactions, bias or blame. Once identified, the coach can let them go and attend to the conversation and what the client wants. A coach who wants to master the coaching process will be able to do this in real time with little or no effort. But this takes practice!

The client is responsible for taking control of his or her desired outcomes. Often clients come to coaching because they're stuck - unwittingly allowing others (or an idea, thought or belief) to dictate their choices. Here is where the coach can support them in seeing the situation from a different perspective – one that explores other possibilities and what they have control over.

Self-Management in the Workplace

Self-Management is an organizational model where traditional functions of a manager (planning, coordinating, controlling, staffing and directing) are distributed to all participants in the organization instead of just a select few. Each member of the organization is personally responsible for forging their own personal relationships, planning their own work, coordinating their actions with other members, acquiring requisite resources to accomplish their mission, and for taking corrective action with respect to other members when needed. Each member of the organization is responsible for their own IDP (Individual Development Plan) and ensuring they work closely with their management team to align their goals and objectives with opportunities for growth and advancement within the Company. Each member of the organization is responsible for identifying strengths and areas of challenge as well.

This form of organizational structure is slowly becoming a more viable alternative to the traditional, hierarchical method of organizing we see most often in modern organizations.

There are a few key aspects central to the Self-Management philosophy that have a lot in common with coaching, namely that:

- People are generally happier when they have control over their own life (and work.)
- It isn't reasonable to give the decision-making authority to the person that is furthest (literally) away from the actual work being done.
- When you give good people more responsibility, they tend to flourish.
- There's an undeniable link between freedom and economic prosperity in nations around the world. The same is true of human organizations.

Interestingly coaching others to be more self-managed is critical to succeeding in the self-managed organization.

- **Self-Management Competency Development Activities**
Analyze your goals and the kinds of skills and expertise you need to achieve your goals. Create a list of the things that you want to learn over the next several years. Focus development on these areas.
- Assess your performance for the past three months and decide which three things you are most proud of doing and which three you are least proud of doing. For those in the least category, consider what kinds of courses and/or other developmental activities or assignments would help you improve your performance.
- At the beginning of each workday or week, list the things you wish to accomplish and the dates by which you wish to accomplish them. Periodically evaluate the progress you are making towards your goals.
- Create an opportunity for learning out of a "failure". Ask yourself what you can learn from such situations and solicit feedback from others.
- Ask for feedback. Ask others for specific comments, suggestions, and feedback in areas you are attempting to improve. When you solicit feedback, ask questions that effectively uncover what you are trying to learn about yourself. Avoid responding defensively to feedback. Defensiveness prevents learning and will cause others to be reluctant to provide feedback.
- Get involved in a variety of experiences to maximize your development. For example, take on additional responsibilities, even if there is no additional compensation for your work.

Resource

Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance

By Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee

<https://hbr.org/2001/12/primal-leadership-the-hidden-driver-of-great-performance>

Improve Your Emotional Intelligence Through Self-Management

<http://bookboon.com/blog/2012/12/imrove-your-emotional-intelligence-through-self-management/>