

The 5 Steps For Self-Regulation

Review and Practice Using *The 5 Steps For Self-Regulation*

Self-Regulation is defined as *the act of managing thoughts and feelings to enable goal-directed actions*. Self-Regulation is a skill, and to become more *skillful* takes practice, and ultimately practice can lead to a habit. To develop the skill of Self-Regulation, practice simply identifying — say them to yourself, write them down, or shout them out loud — your feelings at least once during the course of each day. Use the 5-Steps in anticipation of or when powerful feelings arise.

1. Anticipate your feelings in a given situation or environment.

- Ask yourself questions like, “Is this a place my child usually finds stressful?” or “How do usually react when this happens?”
- Pay attention to your *thoughts*, as they will influence how you *feel*. If you *think*, “This is going to be hard,” you may suddenly *feel* guilty, worried, and angry. Or, if you *think* “This will be hard, but I’ve done it before,” you may *feel* excited.

2. Notice & Experience your feelings as they arise, often very quickly.

- Where in your body do you experience those powerful feelings, in your stomach? Does your chest tighten? Your breaths get short?
- Do you go Up into Anger? Down into Shame? Away to Fear?
- Remember, you can experience multiple feelings at once.

3. Create Space by taking pause

- Close your eyes and picture a calm place
- Take 1-3 long, deep breaths
- Go on a 5-Finger Vacation by leaving (in your mind) while you count to 5 on your fingers.
- Do *anything* you can to create just a moment between *what you feel* and *what you do*. In that space, you may discover an insight.

4. Decide, when calm, what options you have for taking action.

- When you can Identify and begin to Manage *how you are feeling* you better able to *choose how you react* instead of just *reacting*.
- Use any support available, depending on the situation that might be another adult with you or a reminder you keep in your wallet.

****If you cannot calm down, give yourself an adult time-out
(see the Takeaway Handout).*

5. Engage or Re-Engage when you are more calm and more centered.

- When you’ve brought yourself down from Anger or Contempt.
- When you’ve come up from Shame or Embarrassment.
- When you’ve released the flood of Anxiety and Fear.