

## **SELF-CONTROL (SCT)**

**Self-Control** is the ability to keep one's emotions under control and restrain negative actions when provoked, faced with opposition or hostility from others, or when working under conditions of stress. It also includes the ability to maintain stamina under continuing stress.

<i>This Means...</i>	<i>This Doesn't Mean...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continuing to perform effectively in stressful and difficult circumstances (i.e., tight deadlines)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>giving up and letting fear take over; letting stressful times get the best of you</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>keeping things in perspective despite fatigue and frustration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>letting events "take control" of you</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coping effectively with ambiguity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>wanting everything to be black and white</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintaining a businesslike approach when unduly annoyed, disturbed, or disrupted by others; remaining calm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>being rude and impolite by "lashing out" and over-reacting</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responding calmly with a sense of empathy and perspective when something happens that makes more work for you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>blaming others and getting angry when something happens that makes work for you</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>remaining polite and in control when speaking with customers and dealing with malfunctioning systems (e.g. downed computer)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>getting angry or flustered when there is a big rush at work and something goes wrong</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>holding your tongue and taking a deep breath to relax when something annoys you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sharply complaining to someone who is getting on your nerves</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>taking steps to calm someone (e.g. a co-worker or client) who is upset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>refusing to get involved in emotionally charged situations, or saying or doing things that make the situation worse</li> </ul>

**Developmental  
Activities**

**Level (1) Activities**

**Think before you react.**

- Take a deep breath, count to three in your head and then re-evaluate the situation.
- If you feel what you want to say or do may be inappropriate then don't do it, wait until you can revisit the situation with a clear head.

**Remove yourself from the situation.**

- If it's a phone call, put the person on hold temporarily or tell them you'll call back.
- If in a meeting, excuse yourself.
- This will allow your emotions to subside before you act.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Ask yourself what triggered your emotional reaction.

**Think twice before placing blame.**

- The next time you are angry with someone or some department pause a moment before placing blame.
- Think about what could be done to prevent these problems and discuss with your peers or team leader.
- Self-Control becomes easier when you direct your thoughts and energy towards solving the problem rather than assigning blame.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Consider the potential impact of your comments.

**Level (2) Activities**

**Keep situations in perspective by leading a balanced life.**

- Write down your preferred picture of work life balance.
- Identify gaps between your current and ideal work life balance.
- Create an action plan to build a more balanced perspective on life.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* What is standing in the way of achieving your ideal work life balance?

**Maintain a healthy lifestyle in order to keep your stress level in check.**

- Eat right, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and drink at least 8 glasses of water a day.
- When experiencing strong emotions, such a lifestyle should facilitate maintaining your composure and continuing your conversation or task.

**Identify techniques that work well for you to effectively cope with negative stresses in your life.**

- These may include things such as exercise, working at hobbies, spending additional leisure time with family and friends, spending more time alone, meditation, knowledge of human development, reducing the amount of caffeine in your diet, etc.
- Find ways to incorporate more of these activities into your routine at times when you find your stress levels rising.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Keep track of which techniques are most effective for you.

**Next time you find yourself in a stressful situation involving interpersonal conflict try practicing one or two of the suggestions below:**

- Recognize that others will not always be willing or capable of understanding or accepting your point of view.
- Present your point of view clearly but diplomatically.
- Remove yourself from the situation. For example, if it's a phone call, put the person on hold temporarily. Allow your emotions to subside before you act.
- Refer to the "Books and Videos" section of this guide. The references in this section contain many helpful techniques for dealing with interpersonal conflict situations.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Evaluate the outcomes of interpersonal conflict situations once you have applied some of these suggestions. Do you feel differently? How are others affected by your new behavior?

**Demonstrate active listening to reduce conflict and stress.**

- Summarize the main points being expressed by others.

- Be sure to communicate the content of what was said as well as the feeling behind the content. This demonstrates to others that you are actively listening.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* How do you feel when you put yourself in someone else's shoes?

**Use humor.**

- The appropriate use of humor can lighten your load and make it easier to maintain diplomacy.
- If you find work is making you angry or you are getting frustrated, chat to your peers to laugh it off.
- Do not use humor with someone who is angry with you or your department -- be serious in helping them.

**Use quick stress relievers.**

- Implement, with the approval of a physician, a regular (i.e. at least three times a week) exercise program, including cardiovascular training, muscular conditioning and stretching exercises.
- Reduce your intake of caffeine, alcohol and, if you smoke, nicotine. All these drugs can significantly decrease your ability to cope with strong emotions such as stress.
- Use a support group of friends, peers and family members. Follow these suggestions:
  - ⇒ list all the people who can support you in work-related and personal stressful situations
  - ⇒ review your list and determine if you are lacking support in any area
- Identify any gaps in your support network. Take specific actions to strengthen your support network (e.g. ask your peers and friends where they have found helpful support).
- If personally criticized, calmly explore reasons for the criticism.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Remember that you will not be able to achieve a completely stress-free state - even positive events can be stressful. You may also not be able to control many of the work-related stresses, so it is vital that you provide yourself with the fundamental preparation to deal with the stress as it arises.

**When faced with a crisis, identify those people required to handle the problem. Have them meet and explain the problem.**

- Assign responsibilities and set up procedures for keeping you informed.
- Work with the group/individual to ensure that a resolution is delivered that meets the needs of the organization and/or client.
- At the conclusion of the crisis ask the group/individual what was learned? How can this type of situation be avoided in the future? Who will take responsibility to ensure that this does not happen again?
- Analyze the results of your discussions.
  - ⇒ Review the initial starting positions of you and the other person. How much closer were both of you at the end of the discussion?
  - ⇒ Review what you thought and felt at the time. Did you experience strong emotions? Think about what you did to control your feelings.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Plan a strategy for incorporating what you have learned to successfully resolve your next difficult negotiating situation.

**Role play a difficult client situation with a colleague.**

- Watch for your own emotional responses and practice responding calmly.
- Discuss the situation with your colleagues.
  - ⇒ Review the initial starting positions of you and the client. How much closer were both of you at the end of the discussion?
  - ⇒ Review what you thought and felt at the time. Did you experience strong emotions? Discuss what you did to control your feelings.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Plan a strategy for incorporating what you have learned to successfully resolve your next difficult client situation.

### **Level (3) Activities**

**Develop a win-win strategy for resolving conflict and minimizing stress.**

- Identify a difficult situation where you have a significant disagreement with someone.
- Categorize your typical negotiating style into one of the categories below (be honest with yourself).

- ⇒ Win-Lose -- where you typically see yourself as winning and the other party losing in the process
- ⇒ Lose-Lose -- where you typically see both yourself and the other party losing
- ⇒ Lose-Win -- where you typically see yourself losing or giving in during the process
- ⇒ Win-Win -- where you see both you and the other party being satisfied with the outcome
- Meet with your manager, review the situation and ask for suggestions on how you and the other person can move closer to a win-win agreement.
- Apply your win-win strategies to resolve the conflict.
  - ⇒ find a goal which both you and the other person can agree and focus on it
  - ⇒ maintain a focus on your common objectives
  - ⇒ monitor your thoughts and feelings throughout the discussion; note the reactions you are having to what the other person says; how does the other person respond to your actions

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Discuss the results of the meeting with your manager or someone you trust.

**Practice calming others.**

- Be on the lookout for situations where you can help others calm down. When there is an opportunity, seize the chance to practice calming others.
- Try a variety of techniques such as:
  - ⇒ calmly listening to the person who is upset
  - ⇒ speaking in a calming tone of voice
  - ⇒ holding yourself in a relaxed, non-threatening way (body language)
- You can be confident that with practice you will become increasingly skillful at calming others.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* After each incident reflect on what worked and what didn't.

**Ask your manager to involve you in resolving difficult or stressful customer situations.**

- Use these situations as opportunities to practice diplomacy.
- Ask your manager to give you feedback on how you managed the situation.

- Take notes on how you thought you did and discuss it with your manager.

**Learn to see things from the customer's point of view.**

- Ask your manager/team leader what kind of complaints they have received from customers over the years.
- Ask for specific stories (without naming any names).
- Try to understand the situation from the customer's point of view.

**Level (4) Activities**

**Write and mentally rehearse a plan for how you will respond in the event of disappointment or challenge.**

**Identify one or two situations in the recent past (home or work) where you demonstrated high levels of self control and one or two situations where you had difficulty maintaining self control.**

- Make notes about the techniques you used in the situations where you demonstrated high levels of self-control.
- Think about whether your previously successful techniques would have helped in the situations where you had difficulty maintaining self-control. Plan to use them the next time a similar situation arises.
- If you feel that the techniques would not have helped, or you tried them and were not successful, identify what it was about the situation that made it different and jot down some ideas or techniques that you might try next time. Keep a record of what happens to further evaluate.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Think about what situations or events make you feel stressed.
- \* Now make a list of situations when you have felt challenged, but saw it as a positive experience. Compare this to your list of stress-inducers – what are the similarities and differences between the two lists?

**Keep a log, over the next month, of situations that are particularly stressful and involve interpersonal conflict and stress.**

- Write down the key points describing the situation.  
⇒ When did it occur, who was involved, what was the outcome?
- Note how you reacted to the situation. What did you think, feel and do at the time? What was the outcome? Were you satisfied with the result of your behavior?

- Review the situations and try to identify any common themes.
- Recognize if there are specific types of situations that cause you to react badly.
- Work on improving your reaction to stress.
- Use the chart below to keep track of these situations.

Stressful Situation	Reaction	Outcome
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**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Think about what you could change in your schedule, priorities or outlook that might make situations less stressful for you, and feel more like positive challenges. Build an action plan for making these changes and follow through.

**Build awareness of what you are feeling in stressful situations.**

- Stop and ask yourself the following questions next time you are in a stressful situation:
- What is happening right now? What am I?
  - ⇒ Doing? (pause)
  - ⇒ Thinking? (pause)
  - ⇒ Feeling? (pause)
- What do I want to do right now? Think about your objectives in the current situation. What do you want to achieve?
- What am I doing that is getting in the way of achieving my objectives? Think about what you want to do next. say to yourself "I choose to . . ."
- Be clear about your choice of action, and then do it.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Pace yourself so you don't wear yourself down. Numerous studies have proven that some stress has a positive impact on individuals' performance. At some point, though, stress becomes a negative force, and will very quickly interfere with your effectiveness. You need to learn where that point is for you, as it is different for everyone.

**Be aware of your general level of stress**

- Set aside some time specifically to review your workload, personal crises, diet, sleep patterns (it doesn't need to be all at once, or very long).
- Be honest with yourself about the facts of your daily/weekly routine - don't interpret them, or make value judgments about them yet.



- Ask yourself which of the constraints you feel on your life are truly fixed and unchangeable.
- Look at the list you have created and then ask the same question again - are there unique ways to introduce some flexibility into some of these areas?
- Create an action plan, set priorities and commit yourself to trying the new solutions you have devised.
- Check back in after a reasonable amount of time - do you need to make further adjustments?

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* You may not feel that you have the time, but taking a breather to evaluate how you are doing with respect to your diet, sleep patterns, etc. will have tremendous payoffs.

**Find ways to manage the stress you experience at work.**

- Prepare for change or stress by collecting as much information as possible. Pay attention to your diet, amount of sleep, exercise, and leisure by keeping track of them for a week or two. These are all well-known factors which contribute to an individual's resilience. Remember that the mental work that you do every day can be just as tiring as physical work.
- Break your "stress solution" down into manageable pieces and concentrate on them one at a time. Think of this as "just-in-time change". Be clear about what your longer term goal is, so that you can ensure that you are working in the right direction, but do not spend a lot of time thinking about all of the steps required to get there, until they become more immediate.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Share this informational approach with your peers – not just for personal feedback, but also to help educate them.

**Investigate the barriers that prevent agreement in conflict situations.**

- Determine the root cause for disagreement. Consider the following categories:
  - ⇒ Facts -- what are the issues? what actually happened? what is the data or information?
  - ⇒ Methods -- how should the situation be resolved? what are the steps?
  - ⇒ Goals -- what needs to be accomplished?
  - ⇒ What outcome would best satisfy everyone involved?
  - ⇒ Values -- what is important to each individual or group involved in the situation?

- Use the above categories to help establish the source of the disagreement or conflict. Discuss these sources with those involved to help clarify assumptions and, in doing so, reduce tension and clear the way for removing barriers to resolution.
- Listen to the viewpoints of others as if you are hearing them for the first time. Be open to new ideas and perspectives.
- Consider how the other person views the situation. Seeing the situation from the other person's perspective may provide new insights to resolving the conflict.

**Identify someone in your organization (e.g. a colleague or employee) who shows excellent Self-Control.**

- Ask your peers for their opinion on the person you have identified. Are there any other people whom your peers might also recommend as good role models?
- Observe how the person you have identified handles situations where Self-Control is especially important.
  - ⇒ Ask the person you have identified to describe the kinds of situations he or she faces that require self-control.
  - ⇒ Observe the person during an actual situation. Note what the person actually says or does.
  - ⇒ Afterwards, ask the person to describe the thoughts and feelings he or she had during the interaction.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Review your findings with your peers. Apply two or three techniques you learned at your next opportunity.

**Ask for your peers to give you feedback on how to handle stressful or difficult situations.**

- Identify the different types of situations that you have had difficulty controlling your emotions (e.g. interacting with a difficult or demanding customer).
- Ask your peers to describe what they have observed you doing or saying (probe your peers for specific examples).
- Ask your peers for suggestions on how you might handle these situations more effectively in the future. Note your peers' suggestions and apply them to the next time you face a stressful situation with a customer or co-worker.
- Meet with your peers periodically to review your progress.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Have discussions with peers to see if there are any common stress themes. Do you have common “stress solutions” identified? If so, can your solutions be implemented together? If not does the other individual also have a solution that might work for you?

**Recognize the need for support.**

- Build support networks of people, activities and interests around yourself to help you maintain perspective and balance when you are facing a stressful period.
- Help your colleagues and team members through the events which they interpret as stressful.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Share your learnings, but remember that dealing with stress is an incredibly individual process and what works for you may not work for someone else.