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Practicing Self Control

What is Self-Control?

- Self control is the ability to Stop, Think, and then Act
- Self control helps us manage impulsive emotions so we can make positive choices and avoid doing things that we may regret
- Example: Self Control is similar to a stoplight in your brain. When you feel like doing something quickly – the stop light turns red, reminding you to stop and think first.

Why is Self - Control important?

- Staying Calm when things don't go your way
- Improving your social interactions
- Completing challenging tasks with perseverance



PAUSE and REFLECT:

- Have you ever gotten upset and done something that made things even worse? How could self - control have helped?

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What are three ways to practice Self - Control?

a) Taking Deep Breaths when Upset

- When we feel angry or frustrated, our body often reacts as well (i.e. faster heartbeat, slight sweating)
- Deep breathing can help calm these physical responses, so we can focus on our emotional responses.

b) Counting to 10 Before Reacting:

- Counting can give your brain time to calm down before deciding what to do
- Example: “If someone said something to you that made you angry or hurt, instead of reacting right away, count slowly to 10 in your head.”

c) Thinking about Consequences

- Thinking about the consequences (positive and negative) of a decision can help us tailor our actions to more desirable outcomes.
- In general, thinking ahead allows you to reduce impulsivity and future regret.

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Exercise #1: Self-Control Reflection

Step 1: Identify Your Triggers

Take a few minutes to reflect on recent moments where you felt reactive or emotionally overwhelmed.

Prompt:

Write down 2–3 situations that tend to challenge your self-control. These might involve:

- Conflicts with others
- Frustration at work or during routines
- Impulses like interrupting, walking away, or saying something you later regret

Example:

- When I feel like someone is ignoring my opinion
- When I make a mistake and feel embarrassed

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- When I'm asked to do something I don't want to do

Step 2: Create a “PAUSE PLAN” for Each Situation



Use the following structure to guide your thinking.

Template:

- **Trigger:**
What situation pushes your buttons?
- **Emotion:**
What emotion usually comes up (anger, shame, anxiety, etc.)?
- **Physical Signal:**
What does your body feel like? (heart racing, jaw tight, clenching hands)
- **Your Stoplight Moment – What Will You Do Instead?**
Choose one or more strategies:
 - Deep breathing
 - Counting to 10
 - Walking away and returning later
 - Reframing the thought
 - Writing down what you want to say before saying it

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- Asking for a break or support

Example:

- **Trigger:** Someone criticizes how I do something at work
- **Emotion:** Frustration
- **Physical Signal:** My face gets hot, and I want to argue
- **PAUSE PLAN:** I will count to 10 and remind myself, “This is not personal. I can respond calmly.” If I still feel upset, I’ll step away and come back when I’m ready.

Step 3: Creative Practice – “Rewind & Rewrite”

Pick a past moment when you lost your self-control and rewrite the moment with your new plan in place.

Prompt:

Describe the situation, what happened, and how things could have gone differently if you had used your PAUSE PLAN.

- What might the outcome have been?
- How would you have felt afterward?