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SELF-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Self-management is your ability to use awareness of your emotions to actively choose what you say and do. On the surface, it may seem that self-management is simply a matter of taking a deep breath and keeping yourself in check when emotions come on strong, and while it's true that self-control in these situations is a sizeable piece of the pie, there's far more to self-management than putting a cork in it when you're about to blow up. Your eruptions are no different from a volcano—there is all sorts of rumbling happening beneath the surface before the lava starts flowing.

Unlike a volcano, there are subtle things you can do each and every day to influence what is happening beneath the surface. You just need to learn how to pick up on the rumbling and respond to it. Self-management builds upon a foundational skill—self-awareness. Ample self-awareness

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is necessary for effective self-management because you can only choose how to respond to an emotion actively when you're aware of it. Since we're hard-wired to experience emotions before we can respond to them, it's the one-two punch of reading emotions effectively and then reacting to them that sets the best self-managers apart. A high level of self-management ensures you aren't getting in your own way and doing things that limit your success. It also ensures you aren't frustrating other people to the point that they resent or dislike you. When you understand your own emotions and can respond the way you choose to them, you have the power to take control of difficult situations, react nimbly to change, and take the initiative needed to achieve your goals.

When you develop the ability to size yourself up quickly and grab the reins before you head in the wrong direction, it keeps you flexible and allows you to choose positively and productively how to react to different situations. When you don't stop to think about your feelings—including how they are influencing your behavior now, and will continue to do so in the future—you set yourself up to be a frequent victim of emotional hijackings. Whether you're aware of it or not, your emotions will control you, and

you'll move through your day reacting to your feelings with little choice in what you say and do.

The remainder of this chapter presents 17 specific strategies—things you can start doing today—that will help you manage your emotions to your benefit. Each simple strategy is targeted to an important element of the self-management skill. This carefully crafted set has been honed through many years of testing with people just like you, and are proven methods for increasing your self-management skill.

As you master each of the strategies and incorporate them into your daily routine, you will develop an increased capacity to respond effectively to your emotions. Of course no matter how skilled you become in managing your emotions there are always going to be situations that push your buttons. Your life won't morph into a fairy tale devoid of obstacles, but you *will* equip yourself with everything you need to take the wheel and drive.

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1. Breathe Right
2. Create an Emotion vs. Reason List
3. Make Your Goals Public
4. Count to Ten
5. Sleep On It
6. Talk To a Skilled Self-Manager
7. Smile and Laugh More
8. Set Aside Some Time in Your Day for Problem Solving
9. Take Control of Your Self-Talk
10. Visualize Yourself Succeeding
11. Clean Up Your Sleep Hygiene
12. Focus Your Attention on Your Freedoms Rather than Your Limitations
13. Stay Synchronized
14. Speak to Someone Who is *Not* Emotionally Invested in Your Problem
15. Learn a Valuable Lesson from Everyone You Encounter
16. Put a Mental Recharge into Your Schedule
17. Accept That Change is Just around the Corner

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Breathe Right

If you're like most people, you breathe in short, shallow breaths throughout the day that don't fully contract your diaphragm to fill your lungs—and you don't even know it. What's to stop you? It's not like you are suffering from the lack of oxygen . . . or so you think. Your lungs are built to provide *precisely* the amount of air your body needs for *all* of your organs to function effectively. When you take shallow breaths—which is any breath that fails to make your stomach protrude outward from the influx of air—you aren't giving your body the full amount of oxygen it needs.

Your brain demands a full 20 percent of your body's oxygen supply, which it needs to control basic functions like breathing and sight and complex functions like thinking and managing your mood. Your brain dedicates oxygen first to the basic functions, because they keep you alive. Whatever oxygen remains is used for the complex functions, which keep you alert, focused, and calm. Shallow

breaths deprive your brain of oxygen, which can lead to poor concentration, forgetfulness, mood swings, restlessness, depressed and anxious thoughts, and a lack of energy. Shallow breathing handicaps your ability to self-manage.

The next time you are in a stressful or emotional situation, focus on taking slow deep breaths, inhaling through your nose until you can feel your stomach swell outward and grow tight, and then exhaling gently and completely through your mouth. As you exhale, go ahead and push that breath out until you have completely emptied your lungs. If you want to make sure that you are breathing correctly, place one hand upon your sternum (the long, flat bone located in the center of your chest) and the other hand upon your stomach as you take in breaths. If the hand on your stomach is moving more than the hand on your sternum as you exhale, then you know that you're getting enough oxygen and fully inflating your lungs. If you practice this proper breathing technique, it will grow comfortable enough that you can do it in the presence of other people without them noticing, which is handy for when you find yourself in the middle of a difficult conversation.

Anytime you choose to breathe right and flood your brain with oxygen, you'll notice the effects immediately.

Many people describe the sensation as one of entering a calmer, more relaxed state where they have a clear head. This makes breathing right one of the simplest yet most powerful techniques that you have at your disposal to manage your emotions. In addition to engaging your rational brain on the spot, breathing right is a great tool for shifting your focus away from intruding, uncomfortable thoughts that are hard to shake. Whether you are overcome by anxiety and stress because of a looming deadline, or fixated on negative thoughts and feelings about something that happened in the past, making yourself breathe right calms you down and makes you feel better by powering up your rational brain.

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Emotional Intelligence 2.0 is a new book with a single purpose—increasing your EQ. Inside you'll find:

- 66 proven strategies that show exactly what you can do *right now* to increase your EQ.
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