

Self-Regulation Survey

01 What is Self-Regulation in a Leadership & Team Context?

Self-regulation is the ability to **manage your thoughts, emotions, and behaviours** to align with your **values, goals, and standards**, even when faced with stress, provocation, or competing demands.

Academic research (Baumeister, Barkley, Hofmann) shows that self-regulation relies on **executive functions** – the brain’s “control system” – which allows leaders to:

- Pause before reacting.
- Stay goal-focused when distractions or impulses arise.
- Shift perspective to consider alternative viewpoints.
- Monitor and adjust their behaviour to stay aligned with values.

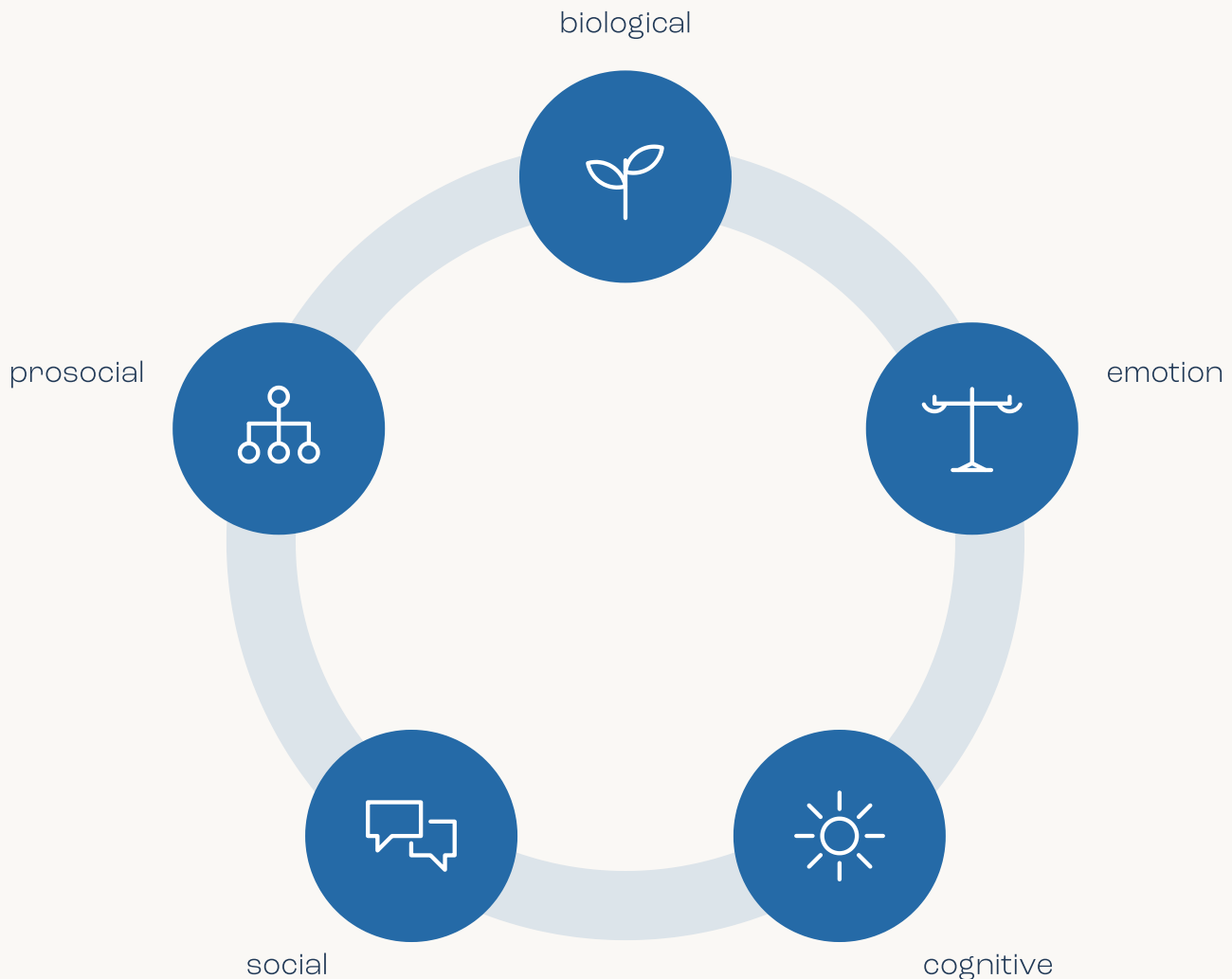
02 Why Does It Matter for Leaders?

- **Sets the Tone for Teams:** A leader’s emotional regulation affects the entire team’s mood and resilience.
- **Supports Better Decisions:** Avoids knee-jerk reactions and keeps decisions anchored to strategy.
- **Builds Trust:** Colleagues trust leaders who stay steady, even under pressure.
- **Enables Adaptability:** Leaders who can “shift gears” when situations change lead to more resilient organisations.

03 Effect on the team

Self-regulation is crucial for effective teamwork as it enables individuals to manage their emotions, impulses, and behaviours to achieve shared goals and maintain positive working relationships. Strong self-regulation skills contribute to enhanced decision-making, improved stress management, consistent productivity, and positive interpersonal relationships within a team.

04 The five domains of Self-Regulation



Please complete this short, 15-question self-assessment covering the five domains of self-regulation. To get the most value from this exercise, approach it with honesty and openness. Self-regulation can be challenging to evaluate in real time – and, naturally, we may not always want to acknowledge behaviours that feel less than ideal. However, genuine self-awareness is the first step to meaningful growth. Your thoughtful and candid responses will help you (and us) better understand where your strengths lie and where there's room for development.

05 Exercise

RESPONSE SCALE

1	2	3	4	5
STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

Section A Biological (Energy & Physiological regulation)

Focus: How well do you manage your physical foundations of self-regulation (energy, rest, sensory overload)

1. I pay attention to my sleep, nutrition, and energy levels so I can bring my best self to work.
2. I can recognise when physical fatigue or stress is affecting how I interact with others.
3. I take steps (breaks, movement, hydration) to maintain focus and composure during long or intense days.

Total section A

Section B Emotional (Manage Feelings)

Focus: How well do you regulate and respond to your own emotions under stress?

4. I can calm myself when I feel intense emotions like frustration or anger at work.
5. I am aware of my emotional triggers and have strategies to manage them.
6. I can separate how I feel in the moment from how I choose to respond.

Total section B

Section C Cognitive (Attention & Impulse Control).

Focus: How well do you manage your thought processes, focus, and decision-making under pressure?

7. I can stay focused on the task at hand even when there are multiple demands on my attention.
8. I pause to think before making important decisions or responding under stress.
9. I can adapt my thinking when new information requires me to change direction.

Total section C

Section D Social (Navigating relationships)

Focus: How well do you manage interactions, conflict, and collaboration?

10. I am skilled at reading the room and adjusting my approach to different personalities.

11. I can manage conflicts without escalating tension or shutting people down.

12. I stay respectful and professional even when conversations become difficult.

Total section D

Section E Pro-Social (Empathy& Helping Behaviours)

Focus: How well do you engage with others' needs, fairness, and moral reasoning?

13. I show genuine interest in others' perspectives, even when they differ from mine.

14. I look for opportunities to support or mentor others without expecting immediate benefit.

15. I consider how my decisions will impact not just my goals, but the well-being of the team and organisation.

Total section E

Ratings score

- Step 1: Calculate [section scores](#) (each section scores between 3 and 15).
- Step 2: Add up all 15 responses for a [total score](#) (range: 15–75)

Section A. [Biological \(Energy & Physiological regulation\)](#)

Section B [Emotional \(Manage Feelings\)](#)

Section C [Cognitive \(Attention & Impulse Control\)](#)

Section D [Social \(Navigating relationships\)](#)

Section E [Pro-Social \(Empathy& Helping Behaviours\)](#)

Total

YOUR RESULT

Overall Score Interpretation

63–75

(Thriving)

– Strong, consistent self-regulation; you manage impulses, adjust thinking, and lead with intention.

48–62

(Developing)

– Generally steady, with some areas needing refinement.

33–47

(Vulnerable)

– Inconsistent; stress or triggers likely derail you at times.

15–32

(At Risk)

– Self-regulation challenges are probably visible to others; likely impacting decision-making and team trust.

Subscale Reading (per section)

12–15:

Strength

– you demonstrate this regularly.

8–11:

Mixed

– opportunities for growth.

3–7:

Focus area

– consider targeted coaching.

Below is a short summary of what gets in the way, how to improve and understanding the difference between self-control and self-awareness. Note also the Self-Regulation Development Worksheet as an aid.

06 What Gets in the Way?

- Stress & fatigue reduce executive function (mental “bandwidth”), making it harder to self-regulate.
- Strong emotions (anger, defensiveness) can hijack behaviour if unacknowledged.
- Rigid thinking or “ego-threat” can block curiosity and openness.

07 How Can Leaders Improve?

- **Pause & Label:** Name the emotion (“I’m feeling defensive”) to create space before responding.
- **Take a Wider View:** Ask, “What would I see if I stepped back?”
- **Practice Curiosity:** Replace judgement with “What’s interesting about this?”
- **Ritualise Self-Monitoring:** Weekly check-ins (“Where did I react vs. respond this week?”).
- **Strengthen the Mental Muscle:** Mindfulness, reflective journaling, and even short EF (Executive function) training (e.g., working memory tasks) improve capacity over time.

EF training refers to [Executive Function training](#) – programs or exercises designed to strengthen the brain’s core control processes:

- Working memory (holding and manipulating information in mind)
- Cognitive flexibility (switching between tasks or perspectives)
- Inhibitory control (resisting impulses and distractions)

These functions are the [mental “air traffic control system”](#) that supports [self-regulation](#), decision-making, and goal-directed behaviour.

08 Self-Regulation, not to be confused with Self-control.

Self-control is the ability to inhibit impulses and manage behaviour to achieve long-term goals. At the same time, self-regulation is a broader process of understanding and managing one's internal states, including stress and emotions, to better respond to situations and potentially reduce the need for self-control. Self-regulation is considered a foundation for self-control, making it possible or even unnecessary in many cases.

Self-Control:

- **Focus:** Inhibiting impulses and managing behaviour to resist temptations or achieve specific goals.
- **Example:** Resisting the urge to eat a sugary snack when you're trying to lose weight or staying focused on a task despite distractions.
- **Emphasis:** On effortful inhibition of a response.
- **Can be:** Tiring and depleting, especially when constantly used

Self-Regulation:

- **Focus:** Understanding and managing internal states (physiological, emotional, cognitive, social) to reduce stress and improve responses to situations.
- **Example:** Recognising when you're becoming stressed and taking steps to calm down (deep breathing, mindfulness), or adjusting your emotional response to a frustrating situation.
- **Emphasis:** On understanding the underlying causes of impulses and proactively managing them.
- **Can be:** Less depleting than self-control, as it addresses the root cause of impulsive behaviours.

Relationship:

- Self-regulation is often seen as a precursor to self-control, creating a foundation for better impulse management and behaviour.
- By effectively managing stress and emotions, self-regulation can reduce the need for constant self-control.
- For example, if someone struggles with anger, self-regulation techniques like mindfulness or stress reduction can help them manage their anger and potentially reduce the need to exert self-control in every situation where they feel anger arising.
- In essence, self-control is about resisting impulses, while self-regulation is about understanding and managing the internal states that lead to those impulses, making self-control easier and sometimes unnecessary.