

Becoming an Authentic Leader

Taking Action (The ABC of Self-Managing)

Actions are the steps that you take both internally and externally. By managing the former, you will be more effective at the latter.

Action takes place first internally, as you self-manage, and then externally as you choose the right response in the moment.

Being able to choose in the moment, particularly when you are triggered or startled by a situation or personality type, is an advanced skill of an authentic leader. What is your automatic pattern when triggered?



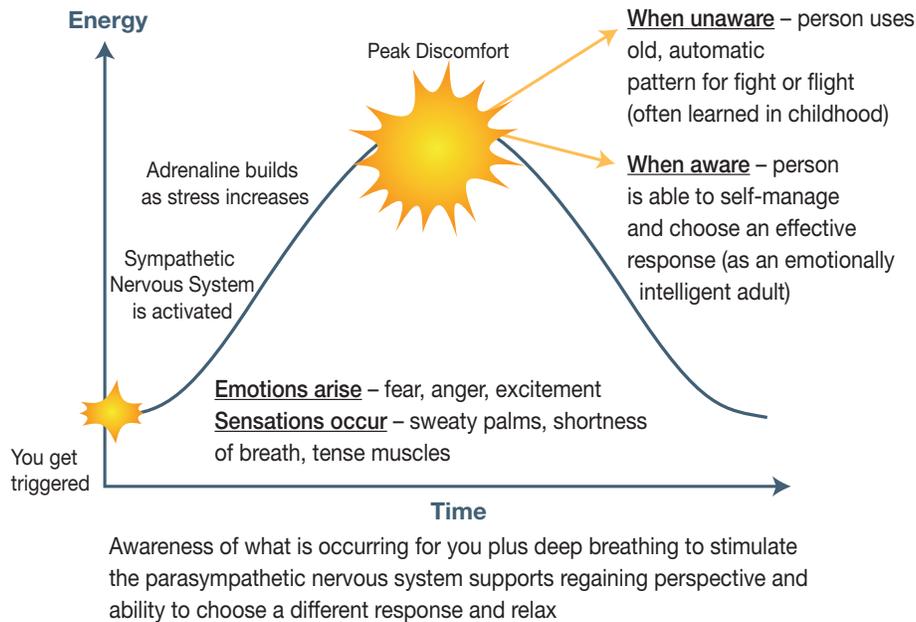
The Arc of Intense Energy:

The arc of intense energy is a mental model for thinking about what occurs as you self-manage. It can be difficult to stay present in each moment and particularly in uncomfortable situations.

Your emotions and sensations may feel like a wave of intense energy that builds, peaks and then eventually dissipates—this experience is depicted as an arc.



How do you self-manage?



©2012 Authentic Leadership Global, Inc.

You will see two axes—the horizontal axis represents time in seconds as this all occurs very quickly. The vertical axis shows the intensity of energy that builds and dissipates in the body after you are triggered - caught off-guard or startled by something or someone.

The peak of the arc is a heightened level of discomfort as opposed to peak performance. This is an important distinction.

Once you are caught off guard by, for example, a comment someone makes about a problem with a product you have just produced, your mind goes into action and interprets the situation. Your body goes into a fight-or-flight like state as your brain sends a message of a threat, and your sympathetic nervous system kicks in. Your breathing becomes shallow, your palms sweat and your ability to interact effectively and make decisions declines.

Self-managing requires the ability to be aware of both the inner experience and how it is impacting your external one—your behaviours, at the same time as noticing your impact on others. As you develop this simultaneous awareness, internally you may begin to notice the emotions that are arising, the sensations as you enter fight, flight or freeze responses, and the energy intensifying in your body.

When you are unaware, conversely, at the peak of the arc where the energy is most intense, you will think and behave using old, automatic patterns of reacting. These behaviours may be appropriate, or they may be self-limiting and unhelpful. They are based on the unique content of your personality. For example, one person's pattern may be to get defensive and yell; another's may be to shut down and withdraw; yet another's may be to get confused and cry. None of which may be helpful in the situation.

What can you do?

When you are triggered, you can practice the ABC's of self-managing.

A **A for Awareness** – Practice awareness by paying attention to 3 things at one time - first, to what is going on internally - what are your thoughts, judgements and/ or assumptions that are arising? What emotions and sensations are you experiencing? Is your body going into fight, flight or freeze? Do you recognize when it is? If you notice your palms are sweaty, your breathe is shallow, or you are going to snap and react badly, this is your radar signal to now move to the next step - B for Breathing.

B **B for Breathing** – Self-managing requires the ability to intentionally bring about the relaxation response. Relaxation requires being able to focus your attention on your breath and to change it from shallow to a deep and consistent level of breathing. As you do this it provides oxygen for the brain as well as a distraction for the mind for just long enough to regain your composure and perspective.

As you practice deep breathing you can also learn to recognize emotions as they arise, to hear the guidance from the heart centre of intelligence, as well as to listen to your body centre and intuition.

You will also learn to check objectively whether it is your Authentic Self shining through to guide you, or unhelpful aspects of your Personality that are showing up. Remember the switch—Personality or Authentic Self. You get to choose in each moment, which one you will align your behaviours with.

C **C for Choose (or Curious)** – When you are able to stay alert and aware, you can objectively choose the behaviour that is aligned with who you are, and that will be the most effective in the current situation. One simple behaviour to choose is to ask a question of the other person using the word curious. When you ask a question, you trick the brain and buy a few precious seconds where you can regain your perspective.

Practice the ABCs of self managing as much as you can over the next weeks and months to come. Self-managing takes lots of practice and time to develop the skill to do it in the moment, particularly in a higher risk situation.