

## What Is Self-Regulation? (Secondary)

Have you ever wanted to learn something new or improve your ability to do something? Maybe you needed to write a research paper or improve your grade in Algebra, but you weren't sure how to get started. When you want to learn something new or improve your ability to do something, you can focus on self-regulation!

Self-regulation is a proactive, self-directed process where you plan what you will do, monitor your actions along the way, adjust your actions if needed, and reflect on how things are going. You can use self-regulation to improve in school, extracurricular activities, or your job.

Learning and practicing Self-Regulation Strategies helps you avoid distractions and manage emotions like frustration and anxiety. To better self-regulate, I use strategies like ***imagine the path to my success***, ***track my effort***, and ***predict obstacles***. I also think about what actions I should ***keep doing*** or ***stop doing*** as I am making progress toward my goals. Practicing these strategies when I have something challenging to learn or a big task to complete helps keep me focused. Self-Regulation Strategies will help you too!

## Imagine the Path to My Success (Secondary)

Have you ever imagined yourself accomplishing something? When you ***imagine the path to your success***, you think about meeting your goal, how you will get there, and what you will do if you experience setbacks. Remember that what you tell yourself, think about, and imagine affects your ability to actually do something.

To ***imagine the path to your success***, think about what it will look like, feel like, and sound like both as you make progress and when you succeed. Imagine the positive outcomes of achieving your goal. Then think about possible setbacks and what you will do when you experience a setback.

I used the strategy ***imagine the path to my success*** when I was struggling in Geometry class. I needed to keep my grade up to be eligible for sports, but I kept getting all the formulas confused. To ***imagine the path to my success***, I started by visualizing myself writing out each of the formulas and memorizing them. Then I imagined myself taking a Geometry quiz and being confident about choosing the correct formula. I thought about what I would do if I missed a problem on the quiz and imagined myself reworking the problem. I imagined myself asking my teacher for help. I even imagined my teacher saying, "You've been putting in a lot more effort, and your grade has improved!"

Using the strategy ***imagine the path to my success*** helped me think positively about a challenge I was experiencing and know what to do when I had setbacks.

The next time you want to learn something new or get better at something, start by ***imagining the path to your success*** by taking these steps:

- Step 1. Think about your goal.
- Step 2. Imagine all the good things that will come from achieving your goal.
- Step 3. Think about all the hurdles you might encounter on the way toward your goal.
- Step 4. Imagine overcoming the hurdles.

## Break It Down (Secondary)

Have you ever become so overwhelmed or anxious about the things you needed to do that you felt like giving up?

When you have something challenging you want to do or a project you need to complete, use the strategy **break it down** to help you get started! When you **break it down**, you identify small actions you can take to make progress toward your goal.

To **break it down**, I think about the tasks that are needed to complete a project. There are many types of tasks, such as creating a timeline, gathering materials, learning the content, writing, editing and revising, creating illustrations, and checking my work against a rubric. I write each task down in order of how they need to be completed so that I know exactly what I need to do.

I used the strategy **break it down** when I was working on a research paper which was due in three weeks. I wanted to avoid getting frustrated and procrastinating, so I **broke it down** by determining the actions I needed to complete.

I wrote down several small action steps, like “Work on the paper each day for 30 minutes,” “Read one research article per night,” and “Summarize key findings in my own words.” I tracked my progress by timing myself each night I worked on the paper and by marking off each action step as I completed it. I also asked for feedback from my teacher on my outline and rough draft to stay motivated. I didn’t get overwhelmed, because I knew that I just had to complete a few tasks each night. I completed my paper on time, and the quality of my work was improved because I didn’t wait until the last minute and rush through it.

Using the strategy **break it down** helped me get started, make progress, and keep my emotions in check while I was working on the research paper. The next time you’re having trouble getting started or feel like a task is overwhelming, **break it down** and get started with one small task.

## Manage Big Feelings (Secondary)

Have you ever felt really anxious or frustrated? Maybe you had a test coming up, and just thinking about it made you nervous. Or maybe you've experienced times when it was hard to concentrate because you were tired and overwhelmed. When you have strong emotions, like frustration, anxiety, worry, or discouragement, you can use the strategy **manage big feelings**.

**Managing big feelings** is like driving a car. Imagine that you're driving too slowly. It will take forever to get to where you're going. If you're driving too fast, you might lose control or even wreck. You want to drive at just the right speed. **Managing big feelings** is like that; you want to be aware of how your body and mind react to emotions so that you can go just the right speed to focus on learning.

When you **manage big feelings**, you notice the signals your body is sending you. If your body and mind are going too fast, you might notice a racing heart, sweaty palms, shortness of breath, or butterflies in your stomach. Taking a few deep breaths or saying positive things to yourself, like "You can do this. Stay focused," can help you when you notice that your mind and body seem fast. When your body and mind are moving too slowly, you might have low energy and feel tired. Taking a brisk walk or putting away things that distract you can help when your body and mind seem slow. Sometimes when we have feelings like sadness or hurt, it's best to talk to an adult or friend. Learning to recognize the signals your body is sending you and choosing techniques to help you focus means that you are **managing big feelings**.

I used the strategy **manage big feelings** when I was working on my lifeguard certification. I wanted to get a summer job as a lifeguard, but to become certified, I had to go through training and pass a written exam and a water-safety exam. I passed the written exam easily, but during the water-safety portion, it was difficult for me to keep the training manikin's head above water. I got nervous each time I practiced, and that made it difficult to position the rescue tube correctly under the manikin's shoulders. On the day of the exam, I felt my stomach flutter and my knees shake. I knew that if I didn't **manage my big feelings**, it would be harder to pass the exam. As I was stretching, I visualized myself calmly positioning the manikin, and I reminded myself that I had practiced many times. Then, before I jumped in the pool, I closed my eyes and took three deep breaths. I was able to **manage my big feelings**, pass the exam, and get a job as a lifeguard.

The next time your reaction to emotions gets in the way of your learning or progress, use the strategy **manage big feelings** to get your body and mind to go just the right speed. When you use the strategy **manage big feelings**, you'll stay focused and make progress even when learning or doing something challenging.

## Predict Obstacles (Secondary)

Have you ever had a goal you wanted to accomplish, but things just weren't going your way? Maybe you kept making mistakes, became frustrated, and felt like giving up. Obstacles can be physical things, like your car breaking down and causing you to be late for practice, or mental things, like losing your confidence or having negative self-talk.

You can minimize obstacles by using the strategy **predict obstacles**. When you think about possible obstacles that are likely to happen, and plan for how you will overcome these obstacles, you are less likely to give up!

I used the strategy **predict obstacles** to help me meet my goal of making it to the state music festival. To qualify for state, I would need to score a 1 on my solo. Even though I had been in choir for three years, I hadn't been able to score a 1. Each time I tried, I got nervous and said negative things to myself, like "You're never going to be good at singing." When I listened to other singers, I felt intimidated and doubted myself even more.

I knew I needed to get past these obstacles to improve, so I wrote if-then statements:

- "IF I'm not feeling confident, THEN I'll think about three things I'm doing well in my solo."
- "IF I'm nervous, THEN I'll take three deep breaths and visualize myself singing confidently."
- "IF I am intimidated by the skills of others, THEN I'll stop listening to other performances until after mine."

I practiced my solo for weeks. Each day, I reminded myself that I was improving, and I visualized singing confidently at the competition. On the day of my solo, I remembered to close my eyes and visualize myself singing confidently. I waited in the hall until it was my turn so that I wouldn't compare myself to the other singers. **Predicting obstacles** helped me reach my goal of scoring a 1 and making it to the state music festival.

When you have something challenging you want to do or learn, think about the things that could get in your way both physically and mentally. Then plan how you will overcome each obstacle.

## Track My Effort & Notice My Progress (Secondary)

What is something challenging you learned to do? It probably took you a while and required many attempts before you were successful. When you stick with something, stay focused, and don't give up, it means that you're making effort to improve your skills. You can use the strategy **track my effort** to determine if you're using enough effort and the strategy **notice my progress** to periodically determine if you're improving.

Let's say you want to run a mile without stopping. You decide to **track your effort** by marking your calendar every day you run. You think about how hard you ran. At the end of each run, can you sing? If you can't sing, you clearly put in substantial effort. If you can sing, you likely didn't put in much effort. You note the amount of effort on your calendar for each time you run.

In addition to **tracking your effort**, you **notice your progress** by timing yourself each week. If you run frequently and put in effort, you will decrease the time it takes you to complete a mile, and eventually you'll be able to run the entire mile without stopping.

When you want to get better at something, use the strategies **track my effort** and **notice my progress** by asking yourself:

- What effort do I need to make to reach my goal? How will I **track my effort** as I work toward my goal?
- How will I **notice my progress**? What will I focus on to see my growth?

**Tracking your effort** and **noticing your progress** will help you improve your self-regulation skills and meet your goals. When you use these two strategies, you'll see how your effort can impact your growth.

## Brainstorm My Options & Choose My Response (Secondary)

Have you ever said or done something that you wish you hadn't? Maybe you overslept, and now you have another tardy. Or you forgot you had a test, didn't study for it, and got a bad grade.

We've all made choices at times that keep us from making progress. When you have something you're working on or want to learn, you'll have to make choices along the way. Some choices will help you make progress, and some won't.

To make choices that will keep you on track, use the strategies **brainstorm my options** and **choose my response**. When you're not sure what to do, stop and think about each option and its effect on your progress. Then choose the option that is best for you.

I used the strategies **brainstorm my options** and **choose my response** when I needed to get better at remembering when my assignments for each class were due. I started by **brainstorming my options**:

1. I could keep a notebook where I wrote down all my assignments and checked them off as I completed them. I had tried this option before, but I ended up losing the notebook.
2. Each evening before I started my homework, I could review what I had done in each class and make a list of my assignments. That option was better, but I wasn't sure I would remember each of my assignments.
3. I could set a calendar reminder on my phone for each assignment after the teacher had given the due date. I liked this option because I always had my phone with me, but I needed to make sure I knew my school's cell phone policy.

I considered each of the three options carefully, thinking about my strengths, preferences, and what would be the best for me. I explained my goal to my teacher, and she reminded me that students were allowed to have their cell phones out between classes, so I decided that setting a calendar reminder on my phone would be the best. After class was dismissed, I would stay at my desk for a few minutes and set the reminder before I went to my next class.

When you need to improve or learn something new, remember to **brainstorm your options**, think carefully about which one will work best for you, and then **choose your response**.

## Keep Doing ... Stop Doing ... (Secondary)

When you have a plan for meeting a goal or improving your ability to do something, it's important to reflect on how well your plan is working. You can use the strategy **keep doing ... stop doing ...** by asking yourself questions like "Is this action helping me?" and "How do I know?" You know an action is working when you make progress or improve over time.

I used the strategy **keep doing ... stop doing ...** when I wanted to get better at managing my anxiety before math tests. Right before I take a test, I usually get really nervous. My heart beats fast, and I feel short of breath. I knew my emotions were keeping me from doing well on tests, so I made a plan to help reduce my nervousness.

Before I started a test, I would read through each problem, then close my eyes, take a deep breath, and remind myself that I was prepared. If I came to a problem I didn't know, I would skip it and go back to it later.

After a few tests, I knew taking a deep breath before the test had helped me because I felt less nervous, but when I reviewed my tests, I realized that I had missed several problems because I hadn't done them. I was forgetting to go back and do the problems I skipped. I decided I would stop skipping a problem if I didn't know the answer. Instead, I would give it my best guess and complete each problem.

By deciding to stop skipping problems, I scored higher because I completed more of the test. Learning to reflect on what I should **keep doing** and what I should **stop doing** helped me to continue improving my scores.

Use the strategy **keep doing ... stop doing ...** when you want to identify which action steps are helping you make progress and which ones are NOT. Ask yourself:

- Is this action helping?
- How do I know?

If you can say exactly how the action has helped you, it's something you should **keep doing**. If you aren't sure, it might be something you should **stop doing**. The strategy **keep doing ... stop doing ...** will help you make progress more quickly!

## Regulate Even Better (Secondary)

Think about a goal that you have successfully achieved. It could be turning homework in on time, improving your free throw percentage, or getting your learner's permit. Self-Regulation Strategies likely helped you meet that goal. It's important to think about **how you self-regulated to meet a goal**, using the strategy ***regulate even better***.

Think about the entire process of self-regulation. What did you do that helped you meet your goal? When you determine the things that went well and then reflect on the challenges you experienced, you can use that information the next time you need to ***regulate even better***.

When I start planning to learn something new, I use the strategy ***regulate even better*** to think about the strategies I do well and the strategies that I find challenging. The easiest part of self-regulation for me is ***breaking it down***. I always start by breaking a big task into smaller pieces. I'm good at understanding how to get started on a goal I want to achieve.

The hardest part of self-regulation for me is ***predicting obstacles***. I forget to think through all of the things that could go wrong and what I will do when I experience obstacles, and that usually derails my plan. I know that if I remember to ***predict obstacles***, I'll be ready to overcome them.

In my art class, I had to draw a futuristic city. I immediately saw how I could use the strategy ***break it down*** to focus on one part of the project at a time: skyscrapers, homes, parks, and transportation. I was excited to get started. Then I remembered to use the strategy ***regulate even better***. While working on my last art project, I had forgotten to ***predict obstacles***. When an obstacle occurred, I had a hard time finishing that project by the due date. When thinking about my future city, I couldn't think of any obstacles that might keep me from finishing. I asked my friend, who pointed out that I hadn't considered the major assignments due in other classes. I was so excited about drawing a future city that it would be easy for me to work on that without thinking about my other assignments. Thanks to my friend, I ***predicted the obstacle*** of finding time to work on everything during the week and was able to stay on track.

Now that you've used self-regulation to reach a goal, use the strategy ***regulate even better***. By reflecting on what you find easy and difficult, you will improve your ability to self-regulate.