

Unregulated Emotions

It's easy to be calm and reasonable when we're calm and reasonable; the trouble comes when we're not at our best and life throws irritating situations our way. Then it's easy to be unreasonable and emotionally unregulated.

Unregulated applies when we're everything from mildly overreacting to just plain out of control. We're unregulated when we allow our "buttons to be pushed," or we "lose it." We're regulated when our emotional response fits the situation and we aren't left with a bad aftertaste from how we reacted.

Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. had just flown in from China and was sleep deprived – "not at his best" – it would have been easy for him to become unregulated when faced with a frustrating situation. Did he have a strategy he usually employed when life started to get to him? Did it fail him or had he just not practiced it enough to be able to use it effectively this time?

Sgt. James Crowley was walking into an unknown situation where he had to be ready for nothing or everything. His adrenaline was up, which pushes our reactions toward the active/aggressive end of the spectrum. Did his strategy for regulating his reactions serve him well? Was he able to appropriately identify frustration vs. provocation?

Life throws situations at us – clients get unexpectedly upset, staff starts to blame us – we get our buttons pushed. That's when we need to bring our best game to the situation, and we can't play at our best unless we've practiced.

Do you have ways to help keep your emotions regulated when life pushes you around? Do you practice so it's second nature to use them, or do they leak out when you least want them to?

Managing Emotions for the Professional Practitioner

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