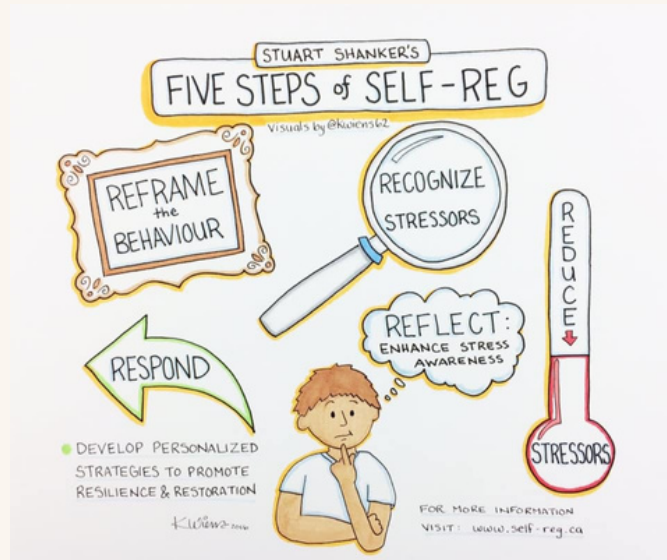


# 5 steps to Self-Regulation



We're beginning to stitch together all of what we've been doing since day 1. Although I didn't set out with a clear plan at the start and instead took a freer approach to share what seems like a sensible way of building on each day, all that we've explored so far has culminated quite nicely into Dr Shanker's 5 steps of Self-Reg.

These steps do not indicate a progression. That's to say we need not start from step 1 and move towards step 5. We can start at any step, and move organically between steps depending on what feels right to you.

- Step 1: Reframe
  - We tune into our existing lens and our stories.
  - We practice observing behaviour objectively and non-judgementally.
  - To support our reframe, we ask ourselves, 'why?' and 'why now?'
- Step 2: Recognise
  - Understand that a stressor is anything that depletes our energy and increases tension, such that our bodies have to burn more energy to return to stability.
  - Learn about the stressors in 5 domains and how they interact as well as have a multiplying effect on one another.
  - Some stressors may be hidden and so requires us to observe, reflect and find patterns in order to uncover.
- Step 3: Reduce/ Remove
  - Actively take steps to reduce or remove certain stressors if possible.
  - Some stressors may feel daunting to remove because perhaps they've been a coping mechanism for a long time. Suddenly removing them may add to the stress load. If so, give yourself time and compassion, and allow for readiness.
- Step 4: Reflect
  - Build awareness of what stress/calm feels like in the body.
  - Notice, without judgment, how you tend to react when under stress.
- Step 5: Respond
  - Build your own toolkit for finding calm. What activities restore you?
  - What's restorative for some people may be draining to others.

# 5 steps to Self-Regulation



Here's an example of how Li Ling used the Self-Reg process recently:

When making a banana cake with my 5yo the other day, I misread the instructions and made a mistake. I immediately had an urge to find blame ('I needed to concentrate but you kept talking to me!') and...

Step 1: I recognized that this urge to blame is a stress behaviour. I was under stress having made a mistake and in order to ease the uncomfortable feelings that were flooding my system, my limbic brain's (feeling brain) strategy was to blame another person for the mistake.

Step 2: Making mistakes (cognitive domain) is a stressor, but I was already managing stress prior to that- trying something new and unfamiliar to me, as well as multi-tasking gave me some amount of stress. When I explored my discomfort further, I realised that I was feeling guilt and shame and those feelings were creating a lot of stress in me (emotion domain). It occurred to me that as a child, it was common for me to be blamed, scolded, shamed and also punished for making mistakes (social domain). Even though nobody was doing these things to me, my limbic brain was wired to prime itself for these threats.

Step 3: To reduce or remove these stressors in future, I could do the following: read the recipe well beforehand and prepare and lay out the ingredients needed before starting. We baked again the next day and these two strategies helped to reduce my stress load significantly.

Step 4: After making the mistake, my head started to feel very heavy and my thoughts started to swirl. My chest felt congested and tight. I could not focus nor make sense of the words on the recipe despite reading it multiple times.

Step 5: When I became flooded by stress, stepping away and taking time to tune in helped. I also did a quick grounding exercise as a way of coming back to the present moment to let my limbic brain know that there's no real threat. After baking, I shared my experience and observations with my husband and that helped to relieve the residual tension I still had in me.

Having practiced Self-Reg for a while now, I was able to go through the 5 steps during the incident. But when I first started learning Self-Reg, I often only used it as a way of processing an incident after it has passed. There were also certain steps that stood out more than others at different times.

If you are interested in learning more about Self-Reg, here are some resources:

1. Dr Shanker's book

<https://www.bookdepository.com/Self-Reg-Dr.../9780143110415>

2. Parent's guide

[https://self-reg.ca/.../2017/10/PARENTS\\_printable.pdf...](https://self-reg.ca/.../2017/10/PARENTS_printable.pdf...)

3. Other resources

<https://self-reg.ca/resources/>