



ASSUAGE

HEAL • GROW • THRIVE

The ASSUAGE INSIGHT

— A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER —
ASSUAGE THERAPEUTIC COACHING, LLC

OCTOBER 2026

This Month's Focus

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

FEEL IT. RECOGNIZE IT.
UNDERSTAND IT.
MANAGE IT. THEN RESPOND.



RECOGNIZE



PAUSE



REGULATE



RESPOND

SECTION 1

IT ONLY TOOK 30 SECONDS

Opening Scenario

You've already had a difficult morning.

You didn't sleep well. You're running late. You skipped breakfast. Traffic was terrible. Your phone keeps ringing.

Then someone says the wrong thing.

Suddenly, you're arguing. Your voice is raised. You're saying things you normally wouldn't say.

Maybe you send the text. Maybe you hang up. Maybe you walk out. Maybe you make a decision simply because, in that moment, you want the feeling to stop.

Thirty minutes later, your body has calmed down. Now you're looking at the consequences.

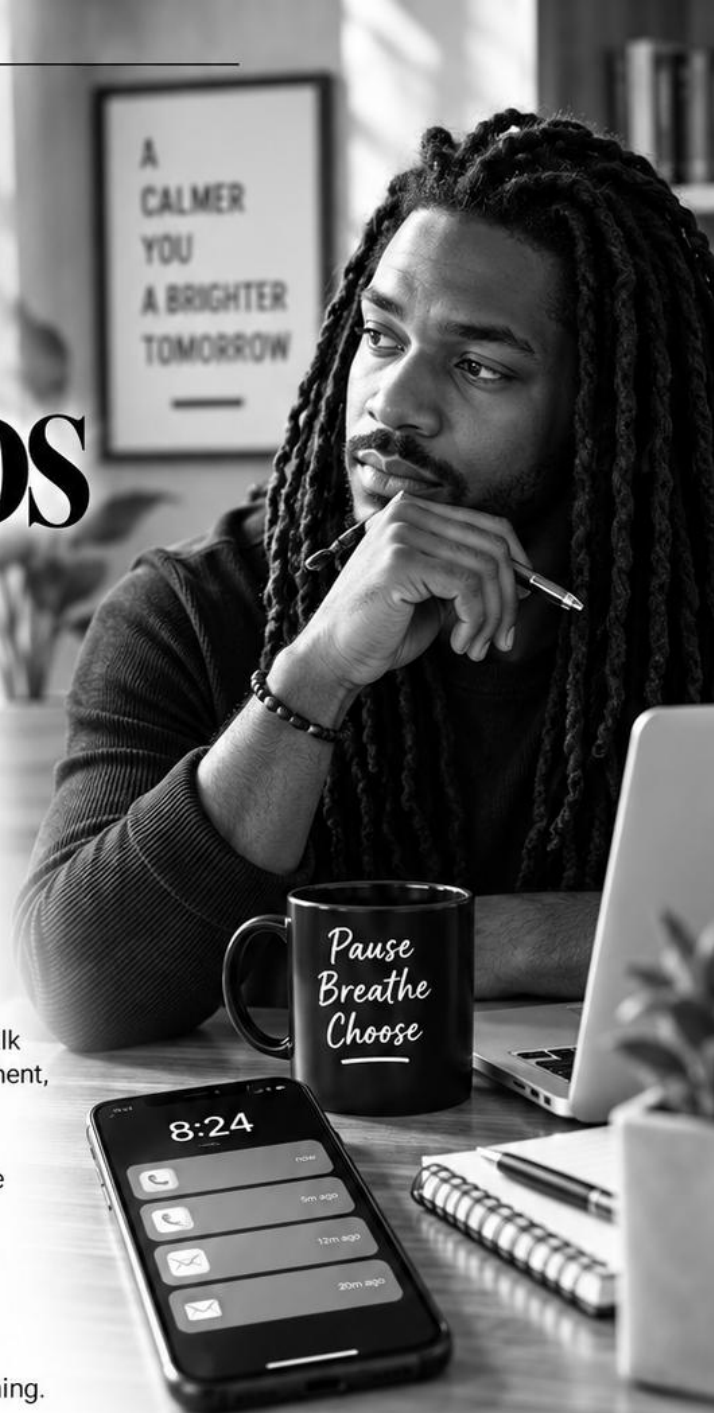
And you are thinking: **"Why did I do that?"**

But the truth is, the reaction did not begin with that final conversation. Your warning signs had been building all morning.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION BEGINS LONG BEFORE THE EXPLOSION.

The question is:

DO YOU KNOW YOURSELF WELL ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE
WHEN YOU ARE GETTING THERE?



SECTION 2

What Is Emotional Regulation?

Emotions are part of being human.

Feelings such as anger, anxiety, sadness, and frustration can tell us that something important needs our attention. They can alert us to potential danger, help us recognize a need, signal that a boundary has been crossed, or motivate us to take action.

Emotional regulation is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage your emotions in healthy and constructive ways. It does not mean you never feel upset, anxious, or overwhelmed. It means you have the tools to respond intentionally instead of reacting automatically.

The goal of emotional regulation is not to get rid of our emotions, but to learn how to navigate them so they do not control our thoughts, our behavior, or our relationships.



THE SKILLS INVOLVED IN EMOTIONAL REGULATION

-  **1 Recognizing the feeling**
Noticing and naming what you are feeling.
-  **2 Identifying the trigger**
Understanding what sparked the feeling.
-  **3 Noticing physiological changes**
Paying attention to what happens in your body.
-  **4 Pausing**
Taking a moment before you react.
-  **5 Choosing a coping strategy**
Using a healthy tool to manage the feeling.
-  **6 Tolerating uncomfortable feelings**
Allowing yourself to feel without immediately trying to escape or avoid the emotion.
-  **7 Adjusting behavior**
Making choices that align with your goals and values.
-  **8 Recovering after emotional activation**
Finding your balance once the intensity decreases.
-  **9 Separating facts from assumptions**
Getting clear about what is actually happening.
-  **10 Communicating emotions effectively**
Expressing what you feel in healthy and respectful ways.
-  **11 Making decisions consistent with your values and long-term goals**
Responding in a way that supports the future you want.

Emotional regulation does not require us to deny, minimize, or suppress what we feel. It asks us to acknowledge the emotion without automatically allowing it to control our behavior.

SECTION 2

The Difference Between Suppression and Regulation



SUPPRESSION



"I shouldn't be angry."



"I need to stop being so emotional."



"I have to be strong."



"I cannot let anyone know that I am struggling."

VS.

REGULATION



"I am angry, and I understand why."



"My body is telling me that I am becoming overwhelmed."



"I need time to calm down before I respond."



"I can acknowledge this feeling without making a decision from it."



"I am allowed to feel this, but what I do next still matters."

Suppression attempts to hide or silence the emotion. Regulation recognizes the emotion, identifies what it may be communicating, and helps us choose a response that protects our well-being, relationships, responsibilities, and future.

SECTION 2

When Strength Becomes Emotional Suppression

“
Strength helped
us survive, but
emotional regulation
helps us live.”

For many of us, being strong has always been celebrated. We hear messages like “be tough,” “keep it together,” and “don’t show weakness.” While these messages may be meant to encourage resilience, they can also teach us to hide our emotions instead of processing them.

In many cultures and communities, especially in the Black community, strength is seen as a necessity. We have had to be strong in the face of adversity, discrimination, and generational trauma. Being strong has helped us survive. However, when strength becomes about never showing emotion or always pushing through, it can lead to emotional suppression.

Emotional suppression often shows up as holding in feelings, avoiding difficult conversations, or convincing ourselves that “it’s not that serious.” Over time, this can affect our mental health, physical health, and relationships. What begins as a way to cope can eventually keep us from truly healing.

COMMON EXAMPLES OF EMOTIONAL SUPPRESSION



Pretending
everything is fine
when you are
upset



Avoiding
conversations
about how
you feel



Keeping busy
to distract yourself
from difficult
emotions



Feeling like you
always have to be
the strong one
for others

SECTION 2

Scholarly Research Support



Woods-Giscombé (2010)

Woods-Giscombé (2010) examined the Superwoman Schema and the ways Black American women experience and respond to stress. The research identified several characteristics associated with this framework, including the obligation to appear strong, suppress emotions, resist vulnerability or dependence, succeed despite limited resources, and prioritize caregiving for others.

These expectations can carry psychological and physical consequences. The findings help explain why emotional regulation should not be confused with emotional suppression. Appearing strong while carrying unaddressed stress, unmet needs, and intense emotions can create additional emotional strain. Recognizing and understanding our emotions allows us to acknowledge what we are experiencing rather than automatically dismissing it.

Source: Woods-Giscombé, C. L. (2010). Superwoman schema: African American women's views on stress, strength, and health. Qualitative Health Research, 20(5), 668–683.



Watson & Hunter (2016)

Watson and Hunter (2016) explored the relationship between the Strong Black Woman role and the ways Black American women cope with emotional challenges. Their research examined how cultural expectations surrounding strength, endurance, and self-sufficiency can influence emotional expression and the willingness to seek support.

The findings reinforce an important distinction: being strong does not require remaining silent about emotional distress. When strength becomes an expectation rather than a choice, individuals may find themselves continuing through difficult experiences without recognizing when they need rest, support, or healthier coping strategies.

Emotional regulation allows us to acknowledge our feelings without surrendering our ability to respond thoughtfully. Enduring stress does not mean we should ignore what that stress is doing to us.

Source: Watson, N. N., & Hunter, C. D. (2016). "I had to be strong": Tensions in the Strong Black Woman schema. Journal of Black Psychology, 42(5), 424–452.

SECTION 2

Scholarly Research Support

3



Adams, Hill & Awaad (2009)

Adams, Hill, and Awaad (2009) examined how emotional suppression influences mental and physical health outcomes among Black women. Their research found that consistently suppressing emotions is associated with increased psychological distress, higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms, and greater risk for physical health problems such as hypertension.

The study emphasized that cultural expectations often encourage Black women to manage stress by keeping emotions private, which can lead to long-term health consequences. The authors highlight the importance of acknowledging and expressing emotions as a healthier alternative to chronic suppression.

Source: Adams, R. L., Hill, M. N., & Awaad, R. (2009). Emotional suppression and health outcomes in African American women. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 32(4), 310–318.

4



Bryant-Davis & Ocampo (2006)

Bryant-Davis and Ocampo (2006) explored the impact of racial discrimination and gendered expectations on the mental health of Black women. Their research identified a strong connection between chronic stress, emotional suppression, and increased risk for anxiety, depression, and other stress-related health issues.

The authors note that societal messages often pressure Black women to remain strong and resilient at all times, which can make it difficult to express vulnerability or seek support. They emphasize the importance of creating safe spaces for emotional expression and culturally responsive support systems to promote mental and physical well-being.

Source: Bryant-Davis, T., & Ocampo, C. (2006). Racial trauma and the mental health of Black women: A literature review. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53(1), 123–135.

SECTION 2

Scholarly Research Support



Culturally Responsive Mindfulness and Regulation

Watson-Singleton, Black, and Spivey (2019) explain that mindfulness-based interventions can reduce harmful stress-related outcomes. However, these approaches may require cultural adaptation to reflect Black Americans' experiences, values, communication styles, spirituality, community relationships, and exposure to racial stress.

Mindfulness can support emotional regulation by helping people notice their thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations without responding automatically. Grounding, breathing, pausing, and reducing stimulation provide opportunities to recognize what is happening internally before choosing a response.

These strategies are most useful when they feel culturally meaningful and realistic. A pause creates space to notice what is happening before an emotion becomes the decision-maker.

Source: Watson-Singleton, N. N., Black, A. R., & Spivey, B. N. (2019). Recommendations for a culturally responsive mindfulness-based intervention for African Americans. Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice, 34, 132–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctcp.2018.11.013>



Connecting the Research to Everyday Life

Together, these studies demonstrate that emotional regulation is more complex than simply calming down. Our emotional responses can be influenced by current stress, previous trauma, racial and gender-related experiences, cultural expectations, pressure to appear strong, emotional suppression, self-silencing, lack of rest, unmet physical needs, limited support, and available coping strategies.

Emotional regulation begins with curiosity rather than judgment. Consider these questions:

1. What am I feeling?
2. What happened before I started feeling this way?
3. What is happening in my body?
4. Is this emotion connected only to the present moment, or is something older being activated?
5. What do I need to do before I respond?

Emotions provide information. Self-awareness helps us interpret that information. Emotional regulation helps us decide what happens next.

SECTION 3

What Gets You There

KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

A trigger is not necessarily an excuse for behavior. It is information.

1 Interpersonal Triggers

These are triggered by interactions with other people and may include:

- Feeling disrespected
- Feeling ignored
- Criticism
- Rejection
- Conflict
- Feeling misunderstood
- Being interrupted
- Feeling controlled
- Broken trust



2 Environmental Triggers

These are triggered by our surroundings and may include:

- Crowds
- Noise
- Traffic
- Clutter
- Excessive stimulation
- Workplace stress
- Social media
- Constant notifications



3 Internal Triggers

These are triggered by our thoughts, emotions, and past experiences and may include:

- Fear
- Shame
- Insecurity
- Grief
- Trauma memories
- Feeling inadequate
- Feeling powerless
- Unmet expectations



4 Physical Vulnerabilities

These are triggered by physical conditions and may include:

- Hunger
- Poor sleep
- Pain
- Illness
- Exhaustion
- Dehydration
- Hormonal changes
- Excessive caffeine
- Substance use



Sometimes the person standing in front of you is not responsible for the intensity of everything you are feeling. They may simply be the final stressor added to an already overloaded system.

SECTION 4

Your Body Usually Knows Before You Act

KNOW YOUR WARNING SIGNS



Physical Signs

- Increased heart rate
- Shallow breathing
- Tight chest
- Clenched jaw
- Fists tightening
- Muscle tension
- Feeling hot
- Shaking
- Restlessness
- Headache
- Stomach discomfort



Mental Signs

- Racing thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Catastrophic thinking
- Replaying an offense
- Assuming someone's intentions
- "They always ..."
- "They never ..."
- "I don't care anymore."
- Feeling an urgent need to respond



Behavioral Signs

- Raising your voice
- Interrupting
- Pacing
- Rapid texting
- Becoming sarcastic
- Shutting down
- Withdrawing
- Crying
- Slamming objects
- Impulsive spending
- Reaching for substances
- Doomscrolling
- Driving aggressively

*What does "I'm getting there" look like for you?
Because that is when the coping strategy needs to begin.*

SECTION 5

Do Not Wait Until You Are at a 10

KNOW WHEN TO USE THE TOOL



Do not wait until you are emotionally drowning to reach for the life jacket.

Coping strategies work best when we recognize the warning signs early enough to use them.



SECTION 6

Build Your Personal Regulation Toolkit

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR REAL LIFE

Readers need practical options rather than a generic instruction to “calm down.”

1



For Racing Thoughts

- Brain dumping
- Journaling
- Writing down the actual problem
- Identifying facts versus assumptions

2



For Physical Activation

- Slow breathing
- Walking
- Stretching
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Temperature change
- Grounding

3



For Anger

- Pause the conversation
- Step away temporarily
- Avoid texting while activated
- Move the body
- Write the response without sending it
- Return to the conversation after regulation

4



For Anxiety

- Grounding exercises
- Controlled breathing
- Reduce stimulation
- Challenge catastrophic thoughts
- Focus on the immediate next step

5



For Overstimulation

- Silence
- Reduce screen exposure
- Leave the environment temporarily when appropriate
- Lower sensory input
- Take a short intermission

6



For Emotional Exhaustion

- Rest
- Nourishment
- Hydration
- Sleep
- Boundaries
- Delegating responsibilities

SECTION 6

Build Your Personal Regulation Toolkit PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR REAL LIFE



The same coping strategy will not work in every situation. Self-management means knowing which tool you need and when you need it.

SECTION 7

Your Power Lives in the Pause

THE PAUSE BETWEEN FEELING AND ACTION

The pause between feeling and action is where awareness becomes accountability. Before responding, ask yourself:

- 1 What am I feeling?
- 2 What triggered this?
- 3 How activated am I?
- 4 What do I want to do right now?
- 5 What will happen if I do it?
- 6 Will this response help or hurt what I ultimately want?
- 7 Do I need to respond now?



That final question matters. Not every message requires an immediate response. Not every disagreement must be resolved immediately. Not every emotion requires an action.

“

*Sometimes emotional regulation looks like saying:
“I need some time before I respond to this.”*

SECTION 8



Therapist Insight

From the Desk of
Charlisa Watson
LCSW, CCTP

Emotional regulation is not about becoming emotionless. It is not about avoiding conflict, never getting angry, or staying calm at all times.

It is about learning what your emotions are communicating, recognizing when they are beginning to escalate, and developing tools to help you respond intentionally rather than impulsively.

Your emotions are valid. They provide important information about your experiences, your needs, and what matters to you. The goal is not to suppress or ignore difficult emotions, but to manage them in healthy ways so they do not negatively impact your well-being, your relationships, or your progress.

When you pause, take a breath, and choose how you want to respond, you create space for clarity, better decisions, and stronger outcomes. Emotional regulation is a skill, and like any skill, it takes practice. Some days will be easier than others, and that is okay. What matters is your willingness to keep learning and trying.

This month, we have explored practical tools to help you manage intense emotions in real-life situations. I encourage you to continue using these tools and to reflect on how emotional regulation can support the life you want to build — a life that is healthier, more stable, and more fulfilling.

You are allowed to feel deeply and still respond wisely.

Charlisa Watson
LCSW, CCTP

SECTION 9

Atlanta & Metro Atlanta Wellness + Culture Spotlight

OCTOBER 2026 • GET OUT. CONNECT. EXPERIENCE.



01 ATLANTA ART FAIR

October 1 – 4, 2026
Public hours: Friday, Oct. 2: 11 AM – 7 PM
Saturday, Oct. 3: 11 AM – 7 PM
Sunday, Oct. 4: 11 AM – 6 PM

Pullman Yards
225 Rogers Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30317

Ticketed event. Children under 12 are free.

Atlanta Art Fair returns to Pullman Yards with galleries, installations, talks, performances and programming. The event brings together contemporary art and cultural exchange in Atlanta.

<https://tickets.theatlantaartfair.com/e/atlanta-art-fair-2026>



02 ATLANTA HISPANIC YOGA FESTIVAL

October 4, 2026
Doors open 8:30 AM
Programming continues through 5 PM

Westside Warehouse, Atlanta

Ages 16+; ticketed event.

A day of yoga, relaxation, cultural connection and community, with classes for multiple levels and a relaxation area. The program also includes a market, closing ceremony and Latin dance celebration.

<https://www.atlantahispanicyogafestival.com/en>



03 FALL FESTIVAL ON PONCE

October 10 – 11, 2026
Saturday: 10 AM – 5 PM
Sunday: 11 AM – 5 PM

Olmsted Linear Park
Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta
Best GPS address: 1451 Ponce de Leon Ave, Atlanta, GA 30307

FREE admission.

This outdoor arts and crafts festival features more than 125 displays of fine arts, crafts, folk and outsider art. Visitors can also enjoy a children's area and local food and beverage in the historic park.

<https://www.affps.com/fall-festival-on-ponce>



04 WHAT'S GOOD ATLANTA: LIVE AT THE ALLIANCE

October 20, 2026
7:30 PM

Hertz Stage, Alliance Theatre
1280 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, GA

FREE.

Atlanta comedians Mark Kendall and David Perdue host a live event spotlighting the Alliance Theatre world-premiere musical LIKE FATHER. Special guests include members of the cast and director Tinashe Kajese-Bolden.

<https://www.alliancetheatre.org/offstage/>



05 OCTOBER FRIDAY JAZZ

October 16, 2026
6:00 PM – 10:00 PM
 High Museum of Art
1280 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, GA 30309

Members: \$10
Not-yet-members: \$30

Enjoy live jazz throughout the High alongside gallery access, light bites and docent-led tours. Musicians perform in multiple areas throughout the evening.

<https://high.org/event/friday-jazz-october-2026/>



06 GREAT PUMPKIN-CARVING FESTIVAL

October 22, 2026
5:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Atlanta Botanical Garden
1345 Piedmont Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30309

\$10 – \$65.

Watch amateur carvers create pumpkins live during this seasonal Garden festival, with winners chosen during the evening. The event combines autumn atmosphere, entertainment, food and creative competition.

<https://atlantabg.org/calendar/great-pumpkin-carving-fest/>

SECTION 10

Create Your Emotional Warning System

READER EXERCISE



1. MY COMMON TRIGGERS

What situations tend to activate me?



2. MY EARLY WARNING SIGNS

How does my body tell me I am becoming overwhelmed?



3. MY THOUGHT WARNING SIGNS

What thoughts usually appear when I am becoming emotionally activated?



4. MY BEHAVIOR WARNING SIGNS

What do I start doing differently?



5. MY INTERVENTION POINT

At what point do I need to stop and use a coping strategy?



6. MY GO TO TOOLS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



7. MY PAUSE STATEMENT

When I need time before responding, I can say:

“ _____ ”

SECTION 11



FOUNDER'S MESSAGE - PART 1

From Charlisa Watson

LCSW, CCTP

Your Emotions Deserve Acknowledgment. Your Decisions Require Discipline.

Emotional regulation is one of the clearest examples of where self-awareness has to become self-management.

It is not enough to know that you are angry. It is not enough to know that you are overwhelmed. It is not enough to know that certain people, situations, memories, or environments trigger something in you.

At some point, awareness has to become action.

You have to know what happens next.

What happens to your breathing when you are getting upset? What happens to your thoughts? Do they start racing? Do you become defensive? Do you shut down? Do you feel the need to respond immediately? Do you start assuming the worst? Do you become more impulsive, more reactive, or less willing to listen?

Those are not insignificant details.

Those are warning signs.

And once you know your warning signs, you have a responsibility to respond to them.

That is where emotional regulation becomes powerful.

Your emotions are real. They deserve to be acknowledged. But they do not deserve unlimited authority over your behavior.

You can be angry and still choose not to say something destructive.

You can be hurt and still choose not to make a permanent decision in a temporary emotional state.

You can be anxious and still slow yourself down long enough to separate fear from fact.

You can be overwhelmed and still recognize that you need a break before you need a breakthrough.

SECTION 11

FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

— CONTINUED —

There is nothing weak about recognizing when you are becoming emotionally overloaded. In fact, that recognition is evidence of growth.

The real danger comes when we repeatedly ignore what our minds and bodies are telling us, continue pushing ourselves past our limits, and then act surprised when we react in ways that do not reflect who we want to be.

That is why coping skills cannot simply be things you know.

They have to become things you use.

Breathing exercises mean very little if you only remember them after the argument is over.

Grounding skills are not useful if you refuse to pause long enough to practice them.

Taking space is not avoidance when the purpose is to regulate yourself so you can return to the situation more effectively.

Writing your thoughts down instead of immediately sending them can save relationships.

Walking away for ten minutes can prevent a conversation from becoming something you regret.

Eating, resting, hydrating, sleeping, reducing stimulation, and protecting your mental space are not small things. These are strategies that directly affect your capacity to think clearly and respond intentionally.

And sometimes accountability sounds like this:

I know what happens to me when I get to this point, so I am going to do something different before I get there.

That is emotional maturity.

You will not always be able to control what happens around you. You will not control how other people behave. You will not control every disappointment, betrayal, inconvenience, loss, rejection, or stressful moment.

But you can continue developing the ability to manage what happens inside of you.

That is your work.

Learn your triggers.

Respect your warning signs.

Know your threshold.

Use your tools early.

Create space before reacting.

And when you do make a mistake, do not waste the lesson. Examine what happened. Identify where you missed the warning signs. Repair what needs to be repaired. Then build a better strategy for next time.

Growth is not proven by never becoming emotional.

Growth is proven by becoming increasingly intentional about what you do with those emotions.

Your feelings deserve compassion.

Your behavior requires accountability.

Your future deserves both.

*They
have to
become
things
you use.*

Charlisa Watson

LCSW, CCTP

Founder & Clinical Director,

Assuage Therapeutic Coaching, LLC



SECTION 11

NARRATIVE FLOW

FOR EMOTIONAL REGULATION



FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

EMOTIONAL REGULATION IS NOT ABOUT CONTROLLING YOUR FEELINGS.

IT IS ABOUT REFUSING TO LET A TEMPORARY FEELING MAKE A PERMANENT DECISION.