



HEAL • GROW • THRIVE

The **ASSUAGE INSIGHT**

— A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER —

ASSUAGE THERAPEUTIC COACHING LLC

SEPTEMBER 2026

This Month's Focus

SELF-MANAGEMENT

*Taking Control Without
Making Life Feel Like a Chore*



ORGANIZE
Your Life.

PROTECT
Your Focus.

MANAGE
Yourself.

— Creating Enough Structure to Make Life Easier to Navigate —

The ultimate goal is not control for the sake of control.

The goal is to create enough structure that life becomes easier to navigate.

When we manage ourselves effectively, we can better use our abilities, talents, time, emotional resources, relationships, and opportunities.

This issue should help readers answer three major questions:

- 1 **How do I know when I am no longer managing myself effectively?**
- 2 **How can I regain control without creating rigid routines that make my life miserable?**
- 3 **How can organization, focus, emotional regulation, and intentional decision-making work together to help me reach my potential?**

ORGANIZE YOUR LIFE.

PROTECT YOUR FOCUS.

MANAGE YOURSELF.

The reader should reach the end of this issue understanding that effective self-management is not about perfection or rigidity.

It is about developing enough awareness, structure, focus, flexibility, and accountability to intentionally direct your life toward the things that matter most.

THE ASSUAGE INSIGHT
September 2026

SELF-MANAGEMENT

*Taking Control Without
Making Life Feel Like a Chore*

Organization helps us create structure.

Focus helps us determine where our attention belongs.

Self-management teaches us how to use both to direct our lives intentionally.

SECTION 1 | RECOGNIZE

When Did Life Start Running Me?

Your alarm goes off, and somehow you already feel behind.

Before your feet even touch the floor, you reach for your phone. There are text messages waiting for responses, emails that need attention, notifications from overnight, calendar reminders, social media updates, and perhaps a missed call you forgot to return yesterday.

Your mind immediately starts working.

- *I need to respond to that.*
- *I forgot about that appointment.*
- *I need to pay that.*
- *What are we eating tonight?*
- *I still haven't finished what I was supposed to do yesterday.*



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You get up and start moving.

Breakfast can wait.

You begin one task, remember another, stop what you're doing, and switch to something else. Somewhere in the middle, another responsibility appears and becomes the new priority.

By midday, you've been moving for hours.

You've answered messages. You've handled interruptions. You've started several things. You've solved other people's problems.

But when you ask yourself what you actually accomplished, you're not entirely sure.

You're irritated.

You're mentally tired.

You know there are important things you still need to do, but now you don't feel like doing any of them.

So you tell yourself:

"Tomorrow, I'm going to get it together."

Tomorrow, you'll wake up earlier.

Tomorrow, you'll use the planner.

Tomorrow, you'll stop procrastinating.

Tomorrow, you'll stay focused.

Tomorrow, you'll finally catch up.

But tomorrow keeps becoming today.

When Busy Becomes Reactive

Sometimes losing control of our lives doesn't look dramatic.

There isn't always a crisis or a major event that tells us something is wrong.

Sometimes it looks like constantly reacting.

- The **newest email** gets your attention.
- The **loudest problem** becomes the priority.
- **The person** who needs something from you gets your energy.
- **The notification interrupts** your thought.
- **The responsibility** you've avoided eventually becomes an emergency.

Meanwhile, the things that matter to you keep getting pushed further down the list.

Eventually, you can become incredibly busy while feeling increasingly disconnected from where your time and energy are actually going.

That's where our September conversation begins.



Self-management isn't about controlling every minute of your life.

It is about developing enough awareness and structure to stop allowing every demand around you to determine how you live.





SECTION 2 | UNDERSTAND

Why Is Managing Myself So Difficult Sometimes?

Before you criticize yourself for not being “disciplined enough,” it helps to understand what your brain is being asked to manage.

Every day requires dozens—sometimes hundreds—of small decisions.

- What needs to happen first?
- What can wait?
- What deserves my attention?
- Should I respond now?
- Can I afford this?
- What should I eat?
- When should I rest?
- How should I respond to what that person said?
- Should I say yes?
- Should I say no?
- Do I have enough energy for this?

All of those decisions require cognitive and emotional resources. And those resources are not unlimited.

Stress Changes How We Think

Research helps explain why managing ourselves becomes harder when life becomes stressful.

A meta-analysis by Shields, Sazma, and Yonelinas (2016) examined how acute stress affects executive functioning—the mental abilities involved in working memory, cognitive flexibility, planning, and regulating behavior.

The researchers found that acute stress can impair working memory and cognitive flexibility.

In everyday language, when stress increases, it may become harder to hold information in your mind, shift between demands effectively, think several steps ahead, and respond flexibly when circumstances change.

Instead of thoughtfully directing our behavior, we may become increasingly reactive.



The more overwhelmed you become, the harder it can feel to do the very things that would help you become less overwhelmed.

- You may know you need to organize. But organizing feels exhausting.
- You may know you need to make a decision. But every option feels overwhelming.
- You may know something needs your attention. But your mind keeps jumping somewhere else.

That isn't an excuse to remain stuck.

It is **information**.

And good self-management begins by **using information rather than judgment**.

Emotions Are Part of the System

Self-management also requires emotional regulation. Psychologist James Gross's work on emotion regulation emphasizes the importance of addressing emotional responses earlier in the process rather than waiting until an emotion has fully escalated.

One strategy is **cognitive reappraisal**—changing how we interpret a situation in order to change some of its emotional impact.



Imagine receiving an email saying:
“Can we talk tomorrow?”

Your first thought might be:

“Something is wrong.”

- Your anxiety increases.
- You begin replaying recent interactions.
- Your concentration decreases.
- Your body responds to a problem that hasn't actually occurred yet.

Reappraisal might sound like:

“I don't know what this conversation is about yet. I can respond when I have more information.”



The situation hasn't changed.
Your relationship to the situation has.

That can preserve emotional and cognitive resources for what actually needs your attention.

Goals Need Direction

Research by Locke and Latham demonstrates another important principle: vague intentions are often less effective than clear, specific goals.

VAGUE INTENTIONS

- “Get my life together.”
- “Be more productive.”
- “Stop procrastinating.”
- “Do better.”
- “Get organized.”

SPECIFIC GOALS

“Tonight, I'm going to spend 15 minutes reviewing my calendar for the next seven days.”

One expresses frustration.

The other provides direction.

Specific goals can help direct attention, mobilize effort, encourage persistence, and support strategy development.

Sustainable Change Takes Repetition

And then there are habits.



SECTION 2 | UNDERSTAND

Sustainable Change Takes Repetition

Change is possible. Change takes time.

Lally, van Jaarsveld, Potts, and Wardle (2010) studied how long it takes for a new behavior to become automatic.

Their research found that, on average, it takes approximately 66 days of consistent repetition for a behavior to become automatic.

That isn't a significant finding.

It means change is possible.

It also means change takes time.

Change does not happen overnight.

It happens through steady repetition.

That matters because many people abandon useful systems too quickly.

We create a routine on Sunday.

Struggle with it Wednesday.

Miss it Friday.

And decide:

"See? I can't stick to anything."

But sustainable self-management isn't built by executing a perfect routine immediately. It develops when useful behaviors are repeated consistently enough that they require less effort over time.

Small systems practiced repeatedly can eventually reduce the amount of mental energy required to manage everyday life.

But before we can build a better system, we have to recognize where our current one is breaking down.

SECTION 3 | ASSESS

Where Are You Breaking Down?

Before we can build a better system, we have to recognize where the current one is breaking down.



Take some time to reflect on the areas of your life that feel overwhelming, unbalanced, or out of control.

*This isn't about judgment.
It's about awareness.*

Understanding where you are struggling is the first step toward creating a plan that actually works for you.

SECTION 3 | REFLECT

Reflection Questions

Use these questions to assess what's working, what isn't, and where a small change could make life feel more manageable.



- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 01 | What areas of my life feel most overwhelming right now? | 08 | What do I need less of (distractions, commitments, stress, etc.)? |
| 02 | Where do I feel like I'm constantly reacting instead of responding? | 09 | What would make my days feel more manageable? |
| 03 | What responsibilities am I carrying that may not actually be mine? | 10 | What is one area I can focus on first? |
| 04 | What am I avoiding, and why? | 11 | What do I need to let go of? |
| 05 | What habits or patterns keep me feeling stuck? | 12 | What do I want my life to look like, and what is getting in the way? |
| 06 | Where am I spending the most time and energy but not seeing the results I want? | 13 | What is one small change I can make this week to create more balance? |
| 07 | What do I need more of (rest, support, clarity, structure, etc.)? | | |

*Awareness isn't about finding fault.
It's about finding freedom.*

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SECTION 3 | ASSESS

The Warning Signs We Often Ignore

How do you know when you're no longer managing yourself effectively?

It doesn't always look like a crisis.

Sometimes the warning signs become so familiar that we start treating them as personality traits.

"I'm just always late."

"I'm terrible with money."

"I'm a procrastinator."

"I'm always losing things."

"I'm just scattered."

But behaviors can provide information.

You may need to reassess your current system if you notice yourself:

- Constantly running late
- Forgetting appointments or responsibilities
- Missing deadlines
- Starting tasks without finishing them
- Struggling to make relatively simple decisions
- Frequently losing important items
- Feeling mentally scattered
- Experiencing constant stress or overwhelm
- Finding it difficult to follow through
- Feeling stuck in cycles you want to break
- Neglecting your physical or emotional well-being
- Feeling less in control of your time and attention
- Experiencing racing or crowded thoughts
- Spending impulsively
- Constantly checking your phone
- Reacting emotionally to situations
- Avoiding difficult conversations
- Feeling like everything is urgent





SECTION 3 | ASSESS (CONTINUED)

Signals, Not Character Flaws

These behaviors do not automatically mean you're lazy, irresponsible, incapable, or undisciplined.

They are signals—not character flaws.

Maybe you have too many responsibilities.

Maybe you're operating without clear priorities.

Maybe you're emotionally exhausted.

Maybe your current organizational system is unrealistic.

Maybe you're sleeping poorly.

Maybe you're constantly distracted.

Maybe you're saying yes to responsibilities you don't actually have capacity for.

Maybe your life changed, but your routines never changed with it.

Self-management asks us to become curious about our patterns rather than immediately ashamed of them.

Instead of:

"What's wrong with me?"

Try:

"What isn't working right now?"

Then ask yourself one important question:



REFLECTION

Am I managing my life—or am I spending most of my time responding to whatever demands my attention first?

If the answer makes you uncomfortable, don't rush to build an entirely new life overnight. That's where organization comes in.



SECTION 4 | ORGANIZE

You Don't Need to Schedule Every Minute of Your Life

For some people, the word organization immediately creates resistance.

They imagine:

- 5:00 AM alarms.
- Color-coded calendars.
- Perfect meal-prep containers.
- A spotless house.
- An elaborate morning routine.
- Daily workouts.
- Fifteen-item to-do lists.
- Every hour accounted for.
- No procrastination.
- No unexpected changes.
- No bad days.

That isn't self-management.

That's an unrealistic standard for most human beings.

Structure With Flexibility

A useful system needs enough structure to provide direction and enough flexibility to survive real life.

Think of your routines as anchors rather than prisons.

An anchor provides stability.

A prison removes freedom.

Your systems should help you navigate your life—not punish you whenever your life changes.

Instead of:

"I have to exercise at 6:00 AM every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday."

Try:

"I want to create three opportunities for movement this week."

Now you have a goal without making one scheduling disruption feel like failure.

Instead of:

"My entire house has to be cleaned Saturday morning."

Try:

"What three household tasks would make my home function better this week?"

Maybe it's laundry, dishes, and clearing the kitchen counter. The rest can wait.

Instead of:

"I have to finish everything on my list today."

Ask:

"What are the three things that actually matter today?"

This is the difference between organizing your responsibilities and becoming controlled by them.

Self-management should make your life more functional—not more oppressive.

Once we know what needs to happen, the next challenge becomes deciding what deserves our attention first.





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SECTION 5 | FOCUS

Organization + Focus + Self-Management

If you've been reading The Assuage Insight over the last few months, you may have noticed that these conversations have been building on one another.

In July, we explored Organization & Procrastination.

In August, we explored Concentration & Focus.

Now we're bringing those skills together.



ORGANIZATION

"What needs to happen?"

Organization helps us:

- Identify responsibilities
- Plan ahead
- Set deadlines
- Create systems
- Reduce unnecessary chaos

Organization gives your responsibilities somewhere to live besides your mind.

But organization alone isn't enough.

You can create the perfect to-do list and still spend an hour scrolling through your phone.

That's where focus comes in.



FOCUS

"What deserves my attention right now?"

Focus helps us:

- Reduce distractions
- Prioritize
- Complete tasks
- Protect cognitive energy
- Remain mentally present

Focus determines where your limited attention goes.

But even knowing where your attention belongs doesn't guarantee that you'll consistently direct yourself there.

That's where self-management comes in.



SELF-MANAGEMENT

"How am I going to consistently direct myself toward what matters?"

Self-management brings organization, attention, emotional regulation, decision-making, boundaries, and behavior together.

- You can have an excellent planner and still avoid using it.
- You can know exactly what deserves your attention and still become distracted.
- You can understand your emotional triggers and still react impulsively.
- You can know you need rest and still overcommit.
- You can recognize an unhealthy pattern and continue repeating it.

Knowing Is Not Managing

Information is powerful.



SECTION 6 | MANAGE

Build a Life That Works With You

You don't need another complicated productivity system. Start with a few practices that help you become more aware of yourself and more intentional about where your energy goes.

1 Start With a Morning Check-In

Before you rush into the day, pause and ask:

- How do I feel physically?
- How do I feel mentally?
- What do I need most today?
- What matters most today?

This simple check-in helps you begin your day with awareness instead of reacting to your day.

2 Identify Your Daily "Big Three"

Pick the three tasks that would make today feel successful if nothing else got done.

Not ten things.

Not five things.

Just the three that matter most.

This helps you stay focused without feeling overwhelmed.

3 Brain Dump Before You Organize

Write everything on your mind.

Every task.

Every worry.

Every reminder.

Every responsibility.

Every thought.

Get it out of your head and onto paper.

You can't organize what you haven't acknowledged.

This reduces mental clutter and helps you prioritize with more clarity.

Start small.

Stay consistent.

Adjust as needed.

You are building a life that works with you—not against you.

That is self-management in action.



4 BUILD INTERMISSIONS INTO YOUR DAY

Don't wait until exhaustion forces you to stop.

Schedule intentional pauses.

Examples:

- Five minutes outside
- Deep breathing
- Stretching
- Drinking water
- Healthy snack
- Brief walk
- Music
- Silence
- Mindfulness

Rest should be part of the system—not what happens when the system collapses.

5 CREATE FLEXIBLE ROUTINES

Identify a few anchors:

- Morning.
- Midday.
- Evening.

Ask:

What helps me function well during each part of my day?

Build around those answers.

6 COMPLETE A WEEKLY RESET

Once each week, review:

- What worked?
- What didn't?
- What am I avoiding?
- What's coming?
- What needs to change?
- What can I remove?
- What deserves more attention?

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5

CREATE FLEXIBLE ROUTINES

Instead of scheduling every hour, identify a few anchors.

MORNING

What helps me begin the day well?

Maybe it's water, medication, breakfast, prayer, journaling, stretching, reviewing your calendar, or simply getting dressed before opening social media.

MIDDAY

What helps me reset?

Maybe it's lunch away from your desk, stepping outside, checking your priorities, drinking water, or taking ten quiet minutes.

EVENING

What helps tomorrow become easier?

Maybe it's preparing clothes, checking your calendar, charging devices, cleaning one surface, packing lunch, or writing tomorrow's Big Three.

Your routine doesn't need to look impressive.
It needs to work.



6

COMPLETE A WEEKLY RESET

Once each week, give yourself an opportunity to adjust.

Ask:

- What worked?
- What didn't?
- What am I avoiding?
- What's coming next week?
- What needs to change?
- What can I remove?
- What deserves more attention?

Your weekly reset isn't a performance review.
It is information gathering.

Maybe your routine worked beautifully.

Keep it.

Maybe something consistently failed.

Change it.

Maybe your week became unexpectedly difficult.

Adapt.

Self-management requires adjustment.

A system that worked during one season of your life may not work during another.
You are allowed to redesign your systems as your life changes.





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SECTION 7 | THERAPIST INSIGHT



A Note From Charlisa Watson, LCSW

I think sometimes we make managing ourselves harder than it needs to be because we're trying to create a perfect life instead of a functional one.

Focus isn't about being in control all the time. It's about learning how to care for yourself in a way that keeps your mind clear enough to handle the important things.

You don't have to do more to get more done. You have to be intentional about what you allow in, what you complete, and what you let go of.

Give yourself grace for the days that feel heavy. Give yourself credit for showing up anyway.

When you protect your rest, set boundaries, and celebrate progress—no matter how small—you build a life that supports your peace, your purpose, and your wellbeing.

You are not behind. You are becoming.

Keep choosing you.

Charlisa Watson, LCSW, CCTP

Founder & Clinical Director

Assuage Therapeutic Coaching LLC



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SECTION 8 | LIVE

ATLANTA & METRO ATLANTA

Wellness + Culture Spotlight



Explore this month's featured events that promote wellness, connection, and cultural enrichment across the Atlanta community.

SEP
05



Sunset Yoga at Piedmont Park

🕒 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM 📍 Piedmont Park, 400 Park Dr NE, Atlanta, GA 30306

Unwind with a peaceful outdoor yoga session as the sun sets over the city. All levels welcome. Bring your mat and water.

SEP
12



East Point Farmers Market

🕒 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM 📍 2757 East Point St, East Point, GA 30344

Shop fresh produce, herbs, baked goods, and handmade items from local vendors while supporting community wellness.

SEP
14



High Museum of Art – Free Second Sundays

🕒 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM 📍 1280 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, GA 30309

Enjoy free general admission to one of Atlanta's premier art museums every second Sunday of the month.

SEP
19



Wellness Tea & Talk: Mindful Living

🕒 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM 📍 The Wren's Nest, 1050 Howell Mill Rd, Atlanta, GA 30318

An evening of herbal tea, guided conversation, and mindfulness strategies to help you slow down and reset.

SEP
21



Atlanta Jazz Festival

🕒 12:00 PM – 10:00 PM 📍 Piedmont Park, 400 Park Dr NE, Atlanta, GA 30306

Celebrate the sounds of jazz with live performances, food vendors, and an inspiring community atmosphere.

SEP
26



Hike & Heal: Sweetwater Creek State Park

🕒 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM 📍 1750 Mount Vernon Rd, Lithia Springs, GA 30122

Connect with nature and community on this guided hike. All fitness levels welcome. Wear comfortable shoes and bring water.

SEP
28



Black Authors Book Fair

🕒 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM 📍 Cascade Library, 3665 Cascade Rd SW, Atlanta, GA 30331

Meet local Black authors, enjoy book readings, signings, and celebrate powerful storytelling.



*Healing creates stronger families, empowered communities, and lasting change—
one conversation, one connection, and one life at a time.*



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SECTION 9 | PRACTICE

YOUR PERSONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT

Take a few quiet minutes to reflect on how you are managing yourself.

Use the four areas below to guide your thoughts.

Your answers will help you identify one meaningful change to make this week.



ORGANIZE

What currently
feels chaotic?

What currently feels chaotic?



FOCUS

What deserves my
attention most?

What deserves my attention most?



MANAGE

What behavior or
habit needs
adjustment?

What behavior or habit needs adjustment?



RELEASE

What am I carrying
that no longer
deserves my time
or energy?

What am I carrying that no longer deserves my time or energy?



*Healing creates stronger families, empowered communities,
and lasting change—one conversation, one connection, and one life at a time.*



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SECTION 9 | PRACTICE

What is ONE change I can make this week that would make my life easier to manage?

Write your one change here:



EXAMPLES:

- I will prepare my breakfast before I go to bed.
- I will decline an unnecessary commitment.
- I will put my phone in another room for 30 minutes.
- I will choose my Big Three every morning.
- I will schedule rest like I schedule appointments.
- I will ask for help when I need it.

Because self-management isn't about becoming a person who never struggles. It is about recognizing when something isn't working, understanding what you need, making an intentional adjustment, and keeping moving.

You won't get it right every time, and that is okay.
The goal is progress, not perfection.

When you manage yourself well, life feels less reactive and more intentional. You stop feeling like everything is happening to you, and you start feeling like you are leading your life with purpose.

You do not have to change everything.
You just have to start somewhere.
The key is to keep showing up for yourself.

Organization gives us structure.
Focus directs our attention.
Self-management turns both into intentional action.

The goal is to create enough structure that life becomes easier to navigate.



*Healing creates stronger families, empowered communities,
and lasting change—one conversation, one connection, and one life at a time.*



SECTION 10 | FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

**Managing Yourself Is an Investment
in Your Potential**

Over the past few months, we have talked about organization, procrastination, concentration, and focus. While these may seem like separate conversations, they have been leading us to something much bigger: learning how to manage ourselves.

Self-management is not about controlling every moment of your day. It is not about becoming so structured that your life feels like another job. It is about understanding yourself well enough to know what you need, recognizing when something isn't working, and having the courage and discipline to make adjustments.

There will always be responsibilities. There will always be distractions. There will always be days when the plan doesn't go according to plan. The goal isn't to eliminate those things. The goal is to become better equipped to navigate them.

Organization gives you somewhere to put the pieces.

Focus helps you determine which piece deserves your attention.

Self-management teaches you how to put those pieces together in a way that makes sense for your life.

And that matters because there is tremendous potential inside of you that becomes much harder to access when your life is constantly operating in chaos.

Your talents deserve structure.

Your goals deserve attention.

Your health deserves consideration.

Your time deserves protection.

And your future deserves intentionality.

Sometimes the greatest thing you can do for yourself is stop asking, "How can I fit more into my life?" and begin asking, "How can I manage what matters better?"

You do not have to become a different person to become more effective. You simply have to learn yourself, build systems that support you, protect your focus, and remain willing to adjust.

When you manage yourself well, you create space for your abilities to work for you instead of constantly fighting against overwhelm.

That is how we begin to streamline life.

That is how the picture becomes clearer.

And that is how potential becomes progress.

Charlisa Watson, LCSW, CCTP

Founder & Clinical Director

Assuage Therapeutic Coaching LLC



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