

Staying Calm, Focused, and Adaptable When It Matters Most



EQ in Aerospace – Part 2: Self-Management

In our last newsletter, we explored the foundation of Emotional Intelligence (EQ): **Self-Awareness**—the ability to recognize our emotions as they arise and understand their impact on how we think and act. But awareness is just the beginning.

The next step is what we do with that awareness.

Welcome to **Self-Management**, the second domain of EQ and the one most visible to others. It's your ability to regulate your emotional reactions—especially under pressure—and to act with intention instead of impulse. In aerospace, where conditions can shift rapidly and decisively, this skill isn't optional. It's essential.

When Pressure Mounts, Behavior Matters

According to psychologist and author Daniel Goleman, Self-Management includes qualities like **emotional self-control, adaptability, initiative, optimism**, and a drive to achieve. Leaders who possess these traits are not only more resilient in times of turbulence—they create stability for those around them.

Aerospace professionals routinely encounter high-pressure situations: unexpected weather, mechanical issues, air traffic delays, crew scheduling conflicts, time-critical

maintenance, tense conversations. Each of these moments invites a choice: react emotionally or respond professionally.

Reacting might look like snapping at a colleague, shutting down communication, or rushing a checklist. Responding, by contrast, means pausing, assessing the situation, and taking deliberate action.

The difference often comes down to a split second—and the mindset behind it.

From Awareness to Action

You can't manage what you don't notice. That's why Self-Awareness (discussed in Part 1) is a prerequisite for Self-Management. Once we're conscious of what we're feeling—whether it's frustration, anxiety, or defensiveness—we have the opportunity to **choose a different course**.

Self-Management means:

- Taking a breath before replying.
- Sticking to SOPs when tempted to cut corners.
- Admitting a mistake instead of covering it.
- Maintaining an even tone when others escalate.
- Staying focused when things get loud, busy, or emotionally charged.

In his *Harvard Business Review* article, Goleman notes that effective leaders "remain calm and clear-headed under high stress, and they maintain control over their own emotional reactions." That kind of poise builds trust, models discipline, and reduces the emotional contagion that can ripple through a flight crew or team.

Small Habits That Strengthen Self-Management

Self-Management isn't a personality trait—it's a trainable skill. In fact, many of the most composed professionals weren't born that way. They developed strategies to recognize stress triggers and regulate their response. In aerospace, this might include:

- **Mental rehearsal:** Pre-briefing challenging scenarios and visualizing how you'll respond

- **Internal dialogue:** Replacing reactive thoughts ("This always happens!") with constructive ones ("Let's handle this step by step.")
- **Micro-pauses:** Taking a single breath before speaking or deciding
- **Grounding techniques:** Using a routine or checklist to bring focus back in a chaotic moment

These aren't "soft" skills—they're **safety** skills.

Leading Yourself First

In emotionally intelligent teams, regulation starts at the individual level and radiates outward. A calm leader steadies the team. A regulated technician notices more. A composed dispatcher communicates more clearly. A pilot with self-control sets the tone in the flight deck—and helps others do the same.

And let's be honest—none of us gets it right every time. We all have moments when stress gets the better of us. The goal isn't perfection, but **progress**. As with any safety-related discipline, Self-Management improves with feedback, reflection, and practice.

Next Up: Social Awareness

In Part 3 of our EQ in Aerospace series, we'll explore the power of perceiving what others are feeling—even when they don't say it out loud. Whether you're in the flight deck, the hangar, or the boardroom, your ability to understand others' emotional states is the key to collaboration, influence, and trust.

Until then—breathe, pause, and lead by example.

If you are not subscribed to our weekly newsletters, subscribe now at the bottom of this page. For further resources and guidance on implementing Safety Management Systems, contact WYVERN, THE industry expert. Attend our [SMS Training Workshops](#) or ask about our SMS software. [Contact us for a FREE SMS demo!](#) Together, we can elevate aerospace safety and create a safer future.

References

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books.

Goleman, D. (2002). *The Emotional Intelligence of Leaders*. Harvard Business Review.