

Unit 1.4 Self-Regulation

OVERVIEW

Have you ever driven in a car with cruise control? Cruise control, of course, is a system that maintains your car's speed at a given rate, regardless of the slope or curve of the road. And so, if you begin descending a steep hill—an event that normally would cause the car to speed up—you will feel the cruise control engage, slowing the car until you're on level ground again.

Your beliefs operate in much the same way. If you start achieving an unexpected degree of success, your beliefs kick in, reminding you that you're really not that good, that you're not that successful, and that you're not that capable. And so—sometimes without even knowing it—you begin holding back. Your performance slows until it is back at its accustomed level.

The process of restraining ourselves in this way is called “self-regulation,” and it operates within us in a number of ways. Some of those ways are very useful: for instance, the pain that you feel when lifting a heavy object can warn you to stop before you permanently damage your muscles. But in other cases, self-regulation often forces you to stay within the bounds of beliefs that are not a reflection of your actual abilities.

We can't eliminate our self-regulatory tendencies—they're a natural part of who we are as humans. But just as we can set a higher cruise control speed on a car, we can change the beliefs that define what we regulate to, and that can open a whole new world of possibilities.

UNIT QUESTIONS / EXERCISES

1. Think of some cases in which your beliefs caused you to restrain your behavior in ways that benefited you. Share your answers with your coach and/or the group.

2. Now, think of some examples in which your beliefs prompted you to hold back in ways that were not particularly helpful. Discuss your answers with your coach and/or the group.

3. Think about how this applies to your work relationship at John L. Scott. Consider a time when the organization faced a challenging opportunity. What beliefs could have caused the organization to hold back from pursuing that opportunity? What different beliefs could have prompted you and your colleagues to pursue it?
