

SIGMA

Leader Character Series



**Great Leaders
Act with Temperance**



GREAT LEADERS ACT WITH TEMPERANCE

“ One can have no smaller or greater mastery than mastery of oneself.”
— Leonardo da Vinci

Self-control is a helpful skill to have no matter what your role in an organization, but it becomes even more important for leaders, whose actions can affect many others in a company. For instance, leaders who lack self-control may find they do not think through consequences carefully before acting, or may make more risky, impulsive decisions that can harm the organization’s interests. Leaders who have a lower level of self-control may also be more likely to transfer negative emotions to their direct reports. Emotions can be contagious¹, so it’s important for leaders to model strong emotional control, especially in crises or situations where direct reports are likely to feel strained or stressed.

Leaders with temperance conduct themselves in a calm and composed manner. They maintain the ability to think clearly and respond reasonably in tense situations. They complete work and solve problems in a thoughtful and careful manner, and resist tending towards one extreme or another. Leaders with temperance have steady emotions even in high-pressure situations, and they are often perceived as more effective than leaders who “lose their cool” in times of stress². On a day-to-day level, leaders who manage their own emotions well can inspire greater creativity³ and job satisfaction⁴ in their direct reports.

In assessing your level of temperance, ask yourself the following questions:

- Can I recognize my common emotional triggers, such as being hungry or tired?
- Do I tend to ignore distractions like my email and phone notifications at work?
- Do I prepare an action plan to manage my emotions during stressful times?
- Am I comfortable expressing my authentic emotions at work?
- Do I tend to take controlled risks in my work?
- Am I vigilant about double-checking my work before submitting it?

Ways to Improve Your Temperance

Remember to H.A.L.T.: When you feel emotionally unsettled, there’s often a few common problems to look for first. These problems can be summed up with the acronym H.A.L.T: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. You’ve probably noticed that when you haven’t eaten in a while, are feeling irritable, lonely, or haven’t had a good night’s sleep, your emotions are more unstable. Try to identify whether one or more of these emotional or physical needs is unmet,

then pause to resolve it whenever possible. Taking a snack break or chatting with a co-worker before you continue with your workday are both great ways to resolve an unmet need.

Practice exercising self-control: If you typically struggle with self-control, try practicing it in smaller ways through the workday. Over time, you can strengthen your ability to resist temptation and stay focused.⁵ For instance, you can start by challenging yourself not to check your email or other distractions during a 30-minute work meeting. Once you successfully complete that challenge, move the bar up to a 1-hour work meeting, then tackle larger challenges like not checking your phone for the whole morning until your lunch break.

Prepare for triggers: Often we can anticipate when a situation may leave us feeling emotionally strained. For example, when you have to give a progress update about a project that has been stalled, or you have a meeting scheduled with a demanding client. To cultivate greater emotional control, try preparing for the negative emotions you will likely experience in these situations. For example, decide in advance what you will say if the other party begins to make you feel nervous or frustrated. You can also pick a phrase you can repeat to yourself when a difficult situation arises, such as “one thing at a time” or “focus on what I can control.”

Consider These Tips to Moderate Your Temperance

Effective leaders are able to balance the 11 leader character dimensions rather than focusing on just a few. As you develop your leader character, look for places where strengths may need to be moderated. If you scored a 4 or higher on temperance, use the tips below to help you balance the expression of this character dimension.

Express your feelings. Too much self-control can become harmful when people feel uncomfortable expressing any emotions at work. Some employees may be hesitant to express their emotions due to worries about credibility, especially if they are in a high-profile role. Remember that employees are also humans with a full range of emotions and expressing your emotions — both negative and positive — can improve your relationships with others.

Be wary of only working ‘within your wheelhouse’. Often, those who score very highly on temperance can tend to place artificial limits on themselves at work. You may find that you prefer to work on tasks that you feel are already within your skill set and hesitate to take on new challenges that stretch your capabilities. While you may feel comfortable and confident working within your area of expertise, you may procrastinate on tasks you have to get done or miss out on important career growth opportunities because they require you to take controlled risks in areas you unfamiliar with. If this sounds like you, try volunteering to take on some new responsibilities that scare you a little!

Don’t be hyper-vigilant. Being careful and controlled about the way you work is a component of temperance. While it is important to double-check for accuracy, ensure that you don’t spend too much time checking over work that is already good enough, especially if it is not a high-stakes task. Trust that you did it right the first time and deliver the task in a timely manner to get it off your plate.

Resources



[7 Strategies for Managing Stress in the Workplace](#)



[How to Manage Your Anger at Work](#)



Develop your temperance by taking advantage of SIGMA's coaching services.

Contact SIGMA for more information about leader character.

SIGMA Assessment Systems, Inc.

Email: support@SigmaHR.com

Call: 800-265-1285

References

¹ Herrando, C., & Constantinides, E. (2021). Emotional contagion: A brief overview and future directions. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 712606.

² Yusof, H. M., Kadir, H. A., & Mahfar, M. (2014). The role of emotions in leadership. *Asian Social Science, 10*(10), 41-49.

³ Castro, F., Gomes, J., & De Sousa, F. C. (2012). Do intelligent leaders make a difference? The effect of a leader's emotional intelligence on followers' creativity. *Creativity and Innovation Management, 21*(2), 171-182.

⁴ Singh, P. (2013). Influence of leaders' intrapersonal competencies on employee job satisfaction. *International Business & Economics Research Journal, 12*(10), 1289-1302.

⁵ Jha, A. P., Krompinger, J., & Baime, M. J. (2007). Mindfulness training modifies subsystems of attention. *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience, 7*(2), 109-119.