

Skills for Success

The Personal Development Planning Handbook

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palgrave
macmillan

Successful self-management

To conquer others is strong; to conquer oneself is mighty.

Lao-Tzu

Learning outcomes

This chapter offers opportunities to:

- identify tools and resources for successful self-management
- understand the importance of constructive attitudes to success in any field
- evaluate and develop your emotional intelligence
- identify factors that prevent you from achieving excellence.

Introduction

Self-management encompasses a very broad range of skills, qualities, attitudes and experience. It can include some or all of the following:

- being able to analyse your situation, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
- identifying resources and sources of support;
- managing your time;
- adopting attitudes that support your aims;
- taking a solution-focused approach to managing problems;
- managing your own emotions;
- coping when in distress;
- managing change, uncertainty and confusion.

These are usually demanded of students whilst at university or in their first jobs, and are addressed in this chapter. There are associated skills and strategies covered in other chapters. For example:

- being a self-starter (Chapter 4);
- being able to motivate yourself to finish what you start (Chapter 4);

- taking steps to improve your own performance (all chapters);
- being assertive (Chapter 5).

Intra-personal skills

'*Intra-personal*' refers to your own inner world, in contrast to '*inter-personal*', which refers to how you relate to other people. Intra-personal skills help us to manage our feelings, responses and actions, so that we are able to function at our best. Some branches of psychology have long recognised the importance of our emotional well-being to our capacity to perform well. You may have noticed this on occasions such as exams, if anxiety or personal matters prevented you from concentrating or remembering.

The world of emotions

The '*intra-personal*' world has the most profound effect upon our responses, our thinking, our behaviour, our views of ourselves, our feelings and our achievement. It touches upon what is closest to our hearts and being. It is, especially, the arena of the emotions. When we work with emotions, we can expect to feel emotional at

times. Most of us can find this quite challenging, and so there is a temptation to shy away from developing intra-personal skills. If we try to avoid any issue where emotions may be involved, it can mean we do not get to the heart of the issue, and so do not achieve all we could. On the other hand, when we understand more about ourselves, know our own triggers, and develop our emotional intelligence, we are more able to manage every situation we enter.

This chapter forms a brief introduction to a very wide-ranging subject. It does not go into detail about sensitive subjects. However, our life histories are very different and it is to be expected that some activities may raise a range of emotions for some people. If you feel you need to talk something through as a result of any activities, it is worth noting that student counselling services were set up to deal with all kinds of matters, small issues as well as major ones. You do not need to be in a crisis to see them. Services are confidential and they may also be able to find support for you away from the university if you prefer.

Activity: Focus

For this chapter, identify a personal goal or a situation that you wish to think about more deeply, in order to give focus to your responses.

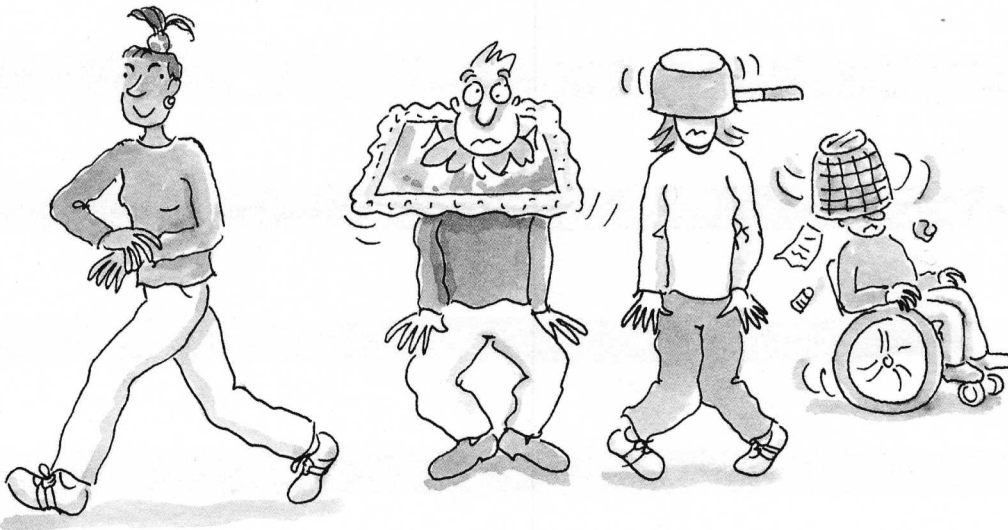
SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is a useful, quick tool for taking stock of your situation. It is a simple way of analysing your level of readiness for a new task. It can take you to the core of an issue very quickly. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

Activity: SWOT Analysis

- For the focus you selected in the previous activity, use the resource sheet on p. 62 to jot down as many examples of strengths and weaknesses as you can under each heading. Include personal qualities, skills, experiences, knowledge, resources and support.
- Under 'Opportunities', jot down any opportunities that could arise from achieving this goal. Include short- and long-term benefits.
- Under 'Threats', jot down the things that seem threatening, worrying, very challenging, or which are causing you some anxiety.

The Activities in this book, and especially those in this chapter should help you to manage some of the 'threats'.



Emily prided herself on her emotional detachment.

SWOT Analysis Resource Sheet

Goal:

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats



Personal resources

Very few of us have the ideal resources, but none of us is without any resources. This is especially true for students, as there is usually a wide range of services offered through the university and the local community. These sources of support are listed in various leaflets, books and directories.

Activity: Finding information

- Brainstorm types of information available to you about sources of support. Who could tell you about other sources of information?
- Make a list of all the sources of support available through the Student Union and Student Services that are likely to be useful to you.

Activity: Sources of support

In the boxes below, list the sources of support available to you for each item. Put a tick in the box by those that you need to pursue in the next few weeks.

Academic advice and guidance

Financial

Careers/finding a job

Meeting people

Finding somewhere to live

Emotional questions, needs and support

Health issues

Other resource needs:

