

Everybody needs self-management skills

Self-management is the ability to plan, direct, monitor and modify our behaviour – with the aim of smooth work and wellbeing at work. It is also the ability to control our thoughts and emotions. Everybody needs self-management skills – regardless of their job or position in the work community.

Self-management is a parallel phenomenon to external leadership. Both are necessary. Everybody should know, for instance, who will decide what to do when people disagree on things.

What does self-management mean in practice?

Self-management means being **goal-oriented and methodical**. A person who manages themselves sets personal goals at work while considering the fundamental task and common goals of their work community. They plan their working days or shifts, on a weekly level or over a longer time range. Attention should be paid for instance to setting reasonable goals, anticipating peak times and supporting recovery both during working hours and outside of work.

Weekly planning can follow the “1+1+1” principle, for instance, where the aim is to

- reserve enough time to work on something bigger and important
- complete one thing every day and
- do something every day that supports personal wellbeing and the ability to cope.

Self-management means **making choices and prioritizing**. This requires everyone to be clear on their powers and responsibilities, in addition to the goals. Self-management also includes the ability to accept the boundaries within which you can decide on the methods and order of your work.

Self-management means **managing interruptions**. Eliminating unnecessary interruptions and focusing on one thing at a time facilitates smooth work. Workplaces should agree on ways to reduce interruptions together. Keeping the work environment free from distractions and having functional tools to work with is also important.



Self-management means **recognizing progress and making it visible**. A person who manages themselves regularly stops to assess their progress and recognize their successes. In addition to their strengths, they can identify areas of development. They are able and willing to request, receive and act on feedback. They also have the courage to seek help.

It is easier to make progress visible if work packages are divided into smaller elements. In addition to a to-do list, you could write a “done list” at the end of the week.

Self-management means **making sure you recover from work**. Recovery is difficult to store up, so you should recover

your strength every day. It is up to the employer to provide opportunities to recover during working days and shifts and to make sure that busy times at work are followed by quieter periods. It is everyone's own responsibility to make use of these opportunities, to ensure recovery and revival also outside work and to identify any signs of inadequate recovery in themselves.

Self-management means **managing your thoughts and emotions**. It means the ability to motivate yourself even when you are working on routine tasks or something less enjoyable. It also means patience, because sometimes things progress more slowly than you would like. Self-management also includes resilience skills, such as the ability to tolerate uncertainty and to persistently start over after a change of course or a failure.

Self-management means **looking after all the elements of your personal wellbeing**. A person who manages themselves knows their personal limits and respects

them. As soon as they notice even early signs of stress that may be harmful, they inform their supervisor of the issue.

Self-management does not mean doing things alone. It means **cooperation**, where the supervisor divides responsibility and demonstrates their trust in the employees in practice. Peers allow each other to work in peace, trusting that the others will do their job and helping each other.

Postscript

Every workplace should have a discussion about what kind of self-management is needed there. When and how would you address the topic? The Turvatuokio (Safety Moment) material of The Centre for Occupational Safety can help you in this.

Further information

The Centre for Occupational Safety
Specialist Seija Moilanen
seija.moilanen@ttk.fi
Tel. 050 3310 719



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