

YELLOW LIGHT/GREEN LIGHT EMOTIONAL REGULATION TOOL

APPENDIX



Building resilience in ourselves and helping build resilience in others is a lot like building a muscle: If we don't exercise the muscle regularly, it tends to atrophy. So what are some "resilience muscle-building" exercises? We're going to introduce one of them here, and hopefully it is fairly straightforward. Specifically, we're going to introduce an emotional regulation skill. Emotional regulation is a necessary ingredient to resilience. When we can regulate our emotions in the face of adversity, we tend to make better decisions and take wiser action.

While we can't always control what we feel, we can always control how we react to those feelings. As empowering as this truth may be, it doesn't mean it's easy. However, like all things, it becomes easier with practice. Next time you or a teammate experience a strong emotional response to a stressful event, practice this "Yellow Light/Green Light" exercise:

- Imagine you are driving down the road.
- As you approach an intersection, you witness the stressful event (and your intense emotion).
- You are headed straight toward the intersection.
- Your first impulse is to slam on the breaks and turn around.
- However, the light is yellow, and instead, you proceed to slow down.
- As you slow down and approach the intersection, you take a deep breath.
- You ask yourself, "What happened?"

Describe what happened and your emotions:

- After you identified what happened, you ask yourself, “What do I think and feel?”

What are you thinking and feeling about the situation?

- Then you ask yourself, “What thoughts am I justified in thinking?”

List the justifiable thoughts:

- Then, “What emotions am I justified in feeling?”

List the justifiable feelings:

- Then, “What thoughts am I unjustified in thinking?”

List the unjustifiable thoughts (if any):

- Then, “What feelings am I unjustified in feeling?”

List the unjustifiable feelings (if any):

- Finally, you ask yourself, “What can I do to cope with this situation in a healthy way?”

What are some healthy ways to cope with the situation:

- Now, the light turns green and you move safely through the situation and feelings, and leave them in your rearview mirror.

In the face of intense emotions, we just need to slow down, think, and then move forward. When it comes to difficult emotions, the only way around is through. When we go through tough emotions with healthy coping strategies, it is very satisfying to look at what we passed through. When we do this, we build our resilience.