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Early in your career, you believe long-term success is all about technical competence. You're wrong.

Sustained, long-term success hinges on your ability to manage yourself, something I refer to as emotional competence.

Developing competence in anything comes down to habits.

Here are five habits to strengthen **emotional competence**:

**1. Spend time with your past.**

- a. A quarter, if held at the right angle, can block out your view of the sun.
  - i. Obviously, a quarter isn't bigger than the sun.
  - ii. Your perspective is distorted.
- b. In the struggles of life and career, perspective is the first thing to go.
  - i. Small problems become overwhelming.
  - ii. Setbacks become crushing defeats.
- c. Your past experiences hold the key to putting things back in proper perspective.
  - i. Pause and ask yourself: Have you faced something like this before?
  - ii. Did it kill you or make you better?
- d. I read a book where the author spoke of how she began distance running as a constant reminder to herself of one truth: "I can do hard things."
- e. So can you. I bet you've got the scars to prove it. Spend time with them. It will strengthen your resolve.

**2. Cultivate curiosity**

- a. Unless you're literally running for your life, panic is an unproductive emotional state.
  - i. It lights up the emotional center of the brain which takes control over the rational part.
  - ii. Living in reactive mode takes its toll on you over time.
- b. The simple hack to shortcutting this emotional takeover is to cultivate your natural curiosity.
  - i. Why am I reacting this way?
  - ii. What else could be going on here?
- c. Adopting a curiosity mindset keeps your brain in neutral. It will strengthen your mind.

**3. Laugh** (especially at yourself)

- a. Those of us who are driven and goal-oriented tend to take ourselves way too seriously. I'm guilty of this. Are you?
- b. Pause each day and laugh. It will strengthen your spirit.

**4. Engage with people two steps ahead**

- a. My oldest child started college this year. She's figuring out that the world's a much bigger place than she thought. And she's asking for help navigating it.
- b. We need the wisdom of those older than us, the ones who have been there before.
- c. Something tends to happen as we get a little experience under our belt. We start thinking we've got it figured out.
  - i. We isolate ourselves.
  - ii. We look down on people from generations ahead of us, rule them out as "out of touch."
  - iii. This is a mistake.
- d. In critical moments, it was the wisdom of people 20 years older than me that saved me.
  - i. If you have these relationships, nurture them.
  - ii. If you don't, develop them.
- e. Adopt a teachable spirit.
  - i. Open yourself up to be influenced.
  - ii. It will strengthen your compass.

**5. Apologize and forgive**

- a. Broken relationships and bitterness rot you from the inside out.
- b. No amount of success is worth leaving a trail of bodies behind you.
- c. Apologize frequently.
- d. Forgive freely.
- e. It will strengthen your heart.
- f. It's the work people see that puts you in the limelight.
- g. It's the things they don't see that keep you there for the long haul.