



# Think Like a Thermostat

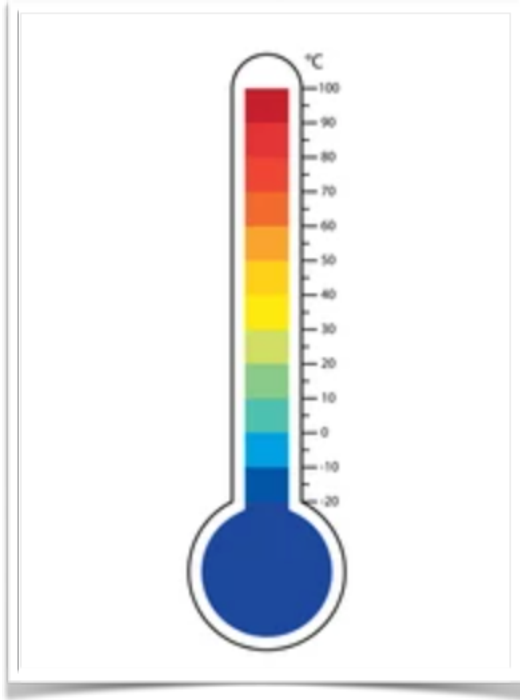
Involves self control and the ability to regulate the environment versus the environment and behaviors of others regulating you.

*Don't be a slave to your emotions.  
Control them.*

“The biggest challenge to self control is self-regulation. Successful people know how to make their emotions their servants rather than their master”, shares Dr. Paul TP Wong.<sup>(1)</sup> “When you react, you let others control you. When you respond, you are in control.”<sup>(2)</sup> Bohdi Sanders

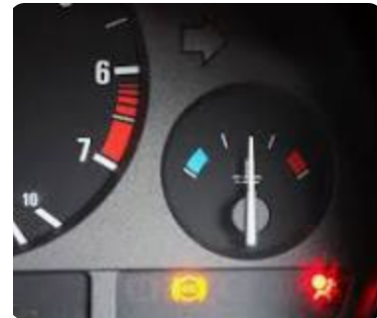
## Thermostat versus a Thermometer

A thermostat can regulate and control an environment but by contrast a thermometer responds to the environment. The hotter a room, the higher the number indicating temperature will be. Similar to our emotions, when we enter into an environment that is heated our emotions can rise based on what is perceived. This response is not under control but just like a thermometer easily detected.



A thermostat has the ability to regulate the environment and control the temperature of a room. It can also set the desired temperature. Thermostats can also detect how warm or cool the environment is and regulate the temperature using a bimetallic strip (3), which bends depending on the temperature change. Similarly we have the ability to remain positive when others choose to be negative. In the midst of stress and conflict we can bring resolve by tapping into a kind word or compassionate statement. Instead of allowing our emotions to drive us we can shift the gears in our thought process just like regulating the desired setting in a thermostat.

Cars also regulate heat by allowing the thermostat valve to open which allows coolant to circulate and keeps the engine cool. “As it functions as a valve, the thermostat has 2 positions: open and closed.



When the valve is in the open position, coolant is able to flow through it, which lowers the engine's temperature(4)”. We have the same ability to keep calm when a situation gets heated; simply open up our mental valves and share with others when we feel frustrated about issues that overheat us. Remember the danger lies when we keep it bottled up inside which allows pressure to build up.

In contrast a thermometer can only respond and make us aware of what is happening in the environment or setting. It doesn't have the ability to change what is happening but responds. As the temperature of the room rises the thermometer will also rise. In essence, it has no control over the environment but simply rises and falls based on the environment or atmosphere. Just like a thermometer we can quickly get frustrated when problems arise based on the environment. For example if someone cuts us off, we quickly respond with crude remarks and insults. The negative choice of someone else has caused us to respond back in a negative way just like a thermometer.

## Don't Blow Your Engine

Your emotions are a warning sign that something is wrong and if we don't respond to them it can result in a catastrophe. For example, a simple check engine light



Pull over before you blow your engine.

that flashes the temperature is advising us to pull over because the car is about to over heat. Yet in certain instances we refuse to pull over because it is more important to make it to our destination. Our emotions react this way by overriding logic,

common sense and consequences in order to achieve self desires and pride. Unfortunately, the result is a blown engine and a car that will go to the junkyard. How many relationships will we allow to be severed because we refuse to acknowledge the temperature light of emotions. Are we willing to pull over to stop and think of the consequences?

## Tools to develop into a Thermostat

1. **Diffuse the Conflict** by building a bridge to connect with the other person who hurt you. Don't wait because as you allow time to pass by regret ensues. Jesus shares, "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over." (Mathew 18:5 NIV) A thermostat brings comfort to the offense and brings healing.
2. **Bear and Forgive**, because just like a bimetallic strip we have to bend to the heat to keep the atmosphere at the desired temperature. In life the punches will come but if you learn to roll with the punch you can absorb the damage. Jesus exemplified this on the cross when He gave His life for us. We were undeserved yet he was willing to die for us. (1 John 3:16) Paul shared, "Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.(Colossians 3:13 NIV) This isn't simply a request but a command. Forgiveness allows you to go home when your prison shift is over. Simply set the keys down and say goodbye to the prisoner.
3. **Listen** to the other person. Before you jump to conclusion and judge be intentional to ask probing questions and listen to the response. Try as best as you can to listen to their perspective by placing yourself in their shoes. James shares, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;"(James 1:19) Learn to

count 1-10 backward when you know you are about to say something based from a thermometers perspective. In other words if the temperature is rising release the valve by stopping and thinking first.

- 4. Pack it Away** by folding it up and closing the suit case. Ask yourself is it even worth my time and energy? Does it build me up in order to hold on to it? Remember since you are a person of worth and value, only retain things that add to your worth. Simply put, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you.” (Ephesians 4:31) Place the anger in a box, chances are you will forget that it’s even there.
- 5. Me! Me!** No it’s not about you. The more you serve and love others even when they don’t deserve it only creates a path of peace. The more we strip others down and prune every imperfection in them, we are eventually left with a bare tree not worth displaying. Thermometers live to remind everyone of the temperature that can’t be changed but thermostats change it. “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?” (James 4:1 NIV) If you are constantly heated consider the root cause which only takes an observation in the mirror.
- 6. Stay cool, God has Got You!** Wants you set the thermostat let it do its job. Learn to walk away and enjoy the regulated comfort it supplies in your life. God wants to regulate your fear if you let Him. Enjoy life by trusting He is going to regulate the heat, problems and trials that may come your way. ““Fear

of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.” (Proverbs 29:25 NIV)

7. **Don't live life temperature** checking because the God that we serve will keep you at the desired temperature. I can testify to this when I experienced a recent trip to Sarasota with my wife. After an enjoyable trip to the beach my wife suggested we pick up some ice cream at her favorite ice cream parlor. The lines were long and I felt stuffy underneath my mask as we ever so gently inched up the line like caterpillars. Finally the moment of truth as the butter pecan ice cream glistened in the warm moon light. “Um delicious”, I shared with the love of my life. The trip back was even better as my wife and I decompressed about the pressures of life as we reflected on the gratefulness of how God has been in control. You know those moments you feel everything aligns such as the moon and stars....but then it happened! My thermostat experience turned into a thermometer nightmare.

You might be thinking, “so what went wrong?” I could not find my phone! I checked every where, every crevice of the car and nothing. No light, no sounds just the sensation of my temperature rising as the moments passed and minutes ticked away. My mind started playing games until I realized what is it that I can control? I would have to wait until the morning and all I could do is trust that God was going to work it out. As the sun began to rise I knew that this was my last chance of hope. We called the Apple store but didn't have my personal identification number. We tried calling the ice cream parlor and nothing! Finally I gave up, but my wife

looked at me with radiant hope and said, “honey I guarantee we will get it back!” “But how?” I thought to myself as inspiration quickly vanished to perspiration and hopelessness. For hours we remained on the phone trying to create a new password and rehearsing what could have happened. I actually convinced myself how I left the phone on the counter. “Remain cool Ben, you can do it”, trying to coach myself through it. Finally I resorted to the one who could bring me hope and stability just like a thermostat. “Regardless if the phone comes up or not, Lord you still have a plan”, as I knew He would be my great thermostat.

Finally the 20 hour journey ended up surprisingly how it began. My daughter was instrumental in locating the phone which was passing our near by highway Interstate 4 and headed to Lakeland. “Dad your phone is stolen, what are you going to do about?” expressed my daughter with enthusiasm and hope. I hopped in the shower and scrubbed as quickly as you could count ten to one backwards. My heart raced as the Philly inner city kid came out of me moving from desperation to hope then finally to the unknown. How would I react as a thermostat or thermometer? Before I could decide my daughter said, “dad I was able to enable the phone to make a noise and received a call back.” “Woo! it’s about that time to throw down”, I thought to myself. As quickly as the the last drop of water could cascade of my body we found who the thief was. The suspect was headed to my in-laws house and realized my wife was headed in the same direction. Finally we get the call, “hey it’s mom let dad know I found his phone?” Talk about a journey of emotional waves that hit me. I could

feel the resurgent pain and exhilarating joy as the phone was almost in my grasp.

## Reflect and Fuel Up

1. So how about you? What experience could you journal or share that swayed you from thermometer to thermostat or vice or versa?
2. When have you experienced God being a thermostat in your life?
3. Which tool in this section do you need to apply to keep you as a thermostat?
4. Who will you share this principal with?

resources:

1 <https://paultpwong.wordpress.com/2014/10/20/emotional-regulation/>

2 <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/bohdi-sanders>

3. <https://www.hometree.co.uk/energy-advice/central-heating/how-does-a-thermostat-work.html#:~:text=Mechanical%20thermostats%20regulate%20heat%20thanks,heating,%20cooling%20the%20room%20down.>

4. <https://autochimps.com/car-thermostat/>



