

# emotional regulation

the ability to exert control over one's own emotional state



As we move into the holidays, let's keep in mind that it can be an emotional time for many people. It is hard for us, as humans, not to be emotional. Whilst it is generally good to be in touch with our emotions and to not suppress them, there are situations where we must somehow manage our emotions especially well. That's notably the case at work.

Emotional outbursts at work could be due directly to work-related matters or to stressors from our personal life spilling into our work life. Handling our emotions (particularly negative ones) at work is often seen as a measure of our professionalism.

From a certain standpoint, it is never good to repress or suppress emotions, positive or negative. However, our emotions must be managed to allow us to function in various situations. What are some of the strategies you can use to cope with negative emotions?

## STRATEGIES TO MANAGE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AT WORK

- 1. Compartmentalization (when negative emotions from home affect your work)** Try to leave personal matters and issues at home. When you commute to work, use that time as a reminder to let go. You can also compartmentalize work-related stressors so that your emotions at work don't spill over into your personal life too.
- 2. Deep breathing & relaxation techniques** This will help with emotions like anxiety, worry, frustration and anger. Take deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling slowly until you calm down. Slowly count to 10. You can take a walk to cool down, and listen to some relaxing music.
- 3. The 10-second rule** This is especially helpful if you are feeling angry, frustrated or even irate. If you feel your temper rising, try and count to 10 to recompose yourself. If possible, excuse yourself from the situation to get some distance but do reassure the other party that you will come back to deal with the matter.
- 4. Clarify** It is good to clarify before reacting, in the event that it could be a simple misunderstanding or miscommunication.
- 5. Never reply or make a decision when angry** In this day of instant communication, it's easy to just shoot off an email or text that you may regret later. Never let your anger or unhappiness cloud your judgement. Hold off all communication while you are still angry. You can type it first but save it as a draft and sleep on it for a day. Re-read it the next day or even let someone you trust take a look at it before you send it.
- 6. Know your triggers** It helps when you are able to recognize what upsets or angers you. This way, you can prepare yourself to remain calm and plan your reaction should the situation occur. You may even be able to anticipate the other party's reaction.
- 7. Be respectful** Treat your colleagues the same way you would like to be treated yourself. If the person is rude, there's no need to reciprocate. We can stay gracious and just be firm and assertive without being aggressive. Often, rude people will mellow down if they don't get a reaction from you.
- 8. Apologize for any emotional outburst** Sometimes our emotions do get the better of us. If you do have an emotional outburst, apologize immediately to the person and perhaps to those around you who have heard it. You need not explain yourself or be defensive. A simple "I am sorry. I reacted badly" would make a big difference.