



Managing your emotions

“In a Nutshell”

‘It is how you choose to react to situations – think before you react’

Be that in your personal or work life your reaction to stressful situations might be to start shouting, go and hide, feel sorry for yourself or go off work sick for a while. The types of behaviour could seriously harm you.

Stressful situations are all too common in a workplace that is facing budget cuts or departmental changes. It may become harder and harder to manage your emotions under these circumstances, but it is even more important for you to do so.

No matter what the situation is, you are always free to choose how you react to it. So, how can you become better at handling your emotions, and choosing your reactions to bad situations?

Negative emotions at work

The most common negative emotions experienced in the workplace are as follows:

- Frustration
- Irritation
- Worry
- Nervousness
- Anger
- Aggravation
- Dislike
- Disappointment
- Unhappiness

There are different strategies you can use to help you deal with each of these the above that have become automatic negative emotions.

Frustration / Irritation

Frustration usually occurs when you feel stuck or trapped e.g. cancelled meetings or having to complete a task that you know will not work. Whatever the reason, it is important to deal with feelings of frustration quickly, because they can very easily lead to more negative emotions, such as anger or aggravation.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with frustration:

- Stop and evaluate – One of the best things you can do is mentally stop yourself, and look at the situation. Ask yourself why you feel the way you feel, have a think about how you can reframe the situation - it could be that if someone is late for a meeting it gives you the opportunity to have a coffee or catch up with something. A change in the way you think about something makes you physically feel different which will help your mood



Anxiety / Worry

If your job comes with fear, anxiety and worry your emotions easily get out of control, this can impact on your mental health.

Try these tips to deal with anxiety:

- Be aware of people who make you feel anxious try not to spend too much time with them.
- Try deep-breathing exercises - This helps slow your breathing and your heart rate. Breathe in slowly for five seconds, and then breathe out slowly for five seconds. Focus on your breathing, and nothing else. Do this at least five times.
- Focus on how to improve the situation. If you get anxious or fear something those feelings are not going to make the situation go away. You need to do something, something different. Be proactive about making the situation better be it something as simple as getting some extra training or something more drastic like finding a new job.

Anger / Aggravation

Anger is perhaps the most destructive emotion that people experience in the workplace. It is also the emotion that most of us do not handle very well. If you have trouble managing your temper at work, then learning to control it is one of the best things you can do

Try these suggestions to control your anger:

- What are the early signs of you becoming angry? Once you know that you can then start to think of ways to avoid anger.
- Remember, you can choose how you react in a situation. Just because your first instinct is to become angry does not mean it is the correct response.
- If you start to get frustrated / angry, stop what you are doing – Close your eyes, and practice the deep-breathing exercise.

Dislike

We have all had to work with someone we do not like at some point in our lives however you have to be professional, no matter what.

Here are some ideas for working with people you dislike:

- Be respectful – treat the person with courtesy and respect, no matter how they treat you just concentrate on choosing how you react.
- Be appropriately assertive – if the other person is rude and unprofessional, then firmly explain that you refuse to be treated that way, and calmly leave the situation. Remember, set the example.

Disappointment / Unhappiness

Dealing with disappointment or unhappiness at work can be difficult. If you have just suffered a major disappointment, your energy will probably be low, and that is when it becomes hard, that is when you can start to think about things in a different way.

For example: it might have served your best interests to get the job you applied for – however if you knew that they were going to be asked to move to a different office miles from where you work now you may have thought otherwise and then you would be smiling with relief!

In a nutshell

We all have to deal with negative emotions at work sometimes, and learning how to cope with these feelings is now more important than ever. After all, negative emotions can spread, and no one wants to be around a person who adds negativity to a group.

Know what causes your negative emotions, and which types of feelings you face most often. When those emotions begin to appear, immediately start your strategy to interrupt the cycle. The longer you wait, the harder it will be to pull yourself away from negative thinking.