

Managing Your Emotions in the Workplace

Everyone experiences emotions at work. We get frustrated with bosses giving more work when they don't understand how much we already have. We get upset with co-workers who don't do their jobs so we can't do ours. We get angry with irate customers who don't realize we are only trying to help. We worry about an uncertain future, especially in times like these.

But with all these emotions, most people don't think they have anything to do with how they are feeling. They believe their emotions are a result of an external cause, i.e., the circumstances or situations of their lives or the behavior of others. It looks that way because that's how you have been taught to think about emotions. It just isn't true.

The first key to handling your emotions in the workplace is to recognize that you have something to do with it! Remember, the root word of emotions is emote – which implies an action or moving energy. So, emotions are an attempt to express outwardly what we believe.

How you feel is a reflection of how you think. Negative thoughts produce negative emotions and behaviors. Positive thoughts produce positive emotions and behaviors. So emotion is not something that happens to you, it's actually something you are doing.

Mastering our Emotions

Managing Thoughts

Identify Facts vs. Beliefs

Our thoughts about what is true in our lives cause our emotional responses. Thoughts are our perceptions and are comprised of attitudes, prejudices, judgments and beliefs that we think are true. When faced with a situation, ascertain the exact facts about the incidents in your life; separate your beliefs about these facts right from the beginning.

Identify Beliefs About Yourself

A primary influence on our abilities to deal successfully with life's challenges is our own belief about us. If you believe yourself to be a loving and kind person, yet you are always feeling sad, tired or angry, work to uncover the true facts from your irrational and unproductive beliefs so you can begin to change.

Accept Responsibility for Your Thoughts

Having discovered negative self-beliefs, you need to ask yourself whether it is good to hold such beliefs. Of course, your answer should be "no." Recognize that, for whatever reason, you have chosen to accept irrational self-defeating beliefs in the past and you are going to choose to believe something more positive in the future. Your thoughts are not determined by others or by what happens around you; your thoughts result from your own choice. Change and growth occur by taking responsibility for what you are choosing to believe within yourself.

Managing Emotions

Be Aware of "Doing" an Emotion

There is a moment when you decide that a particular emotional response is the action to take in a situation. In many cases that moment is unconscious, but often it is a conscious decision. Although it requires much practice, become more aware at the onset of an emotion and you will realize you have the ability to choose a better more productive emotional response in the future.

Accept Responsibility for Your Emotions

You feel what you choose to feel and express what you want to express. What "they" did may be very wrong, but that does not obligate you to feel a particular way in response. You can give yourself the ability to respond in new and more caring ways for yourself and others. You can always clean up your act!

Managing Behaviors

Identify Your Desired Behavioral Goals

How do you want to come across in a situation? What is the desired outcome for the situation you are in? Behavior is motivated by conscious and unconscious desires, so become aware of the conscious desires of a situation.

Identify the Relationship to Your Present Behavior and Your Desired Goals

The way you behave is often counterproductive to your goals. So recognize the difference between the ways you are responding and what the outcome is and you will increase the possibility of choosing the most appropriate behavior.

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