

3.5.9: Remaining Professional When You're Frustrated

Learning Objectives

- Discuss ways to remain professional when you are feeling frustrated with others or a situation.

Behaving in a professional manner is a key to success in the workplace. Maintaining that demeanor, even in stressful times, can be a challenge. What does it mean to be “professional” at work? The definition varies, but usually includes possessing knowledge and expertise, being in a positive mood, meeting your obligations accurately and on time, respecting all with whom you interact, using proper language, operating ethically, having social and emotional intelligence and maintaining an appropriate appearance. Other terms describing professional conduct in the workplace are soft skills, protocol, business etiquette and polish.

Here is a video with some good advice on professional work characteristics:

A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.

At one point or another, we have all been subjected to negative circumstances and situations in the workplace that can test the patience of even the most professional of us. We are human beings. Our professional demeanor can temporarily be dented—engaging fight or flight mode, berating yourself, and lacking clear thinking can occur. The key is to rely on our emotional intelligence to gauge our thoughts and actions during these trying times.

Here are some techniques that can help you deal with emotional reactions to negative situations at work.

1. Acceptance. It is normal to get mad when things go awry. Our brains are hard-wired to react in certain ways. It is best to step back and acknowledge that your emotions are normal so that you can move on to problem solving.
2. Displacement. While you are experiencing a range of emotions that you may not initially control, it may be best for a change of scenery. Get up from your desk, walk out of your office and take some deep breaths outside. Imagine how you would like to see yourself react while you calm down.
3. Articulation. Once you have spent some time thinking things through, it may be time to talk it out with the source of the issue. Remember your basic communication skills: Remember who you are communicating with and what will be effective in reaching them with your point.
4. Improvement. After recognizing and dealing with your feelings, it is time to understand the true source of the issue so it can be solved going forward. So you were called out on some errors made in your analysis, but you know that you were not given adequate notice to properly prepare the report and double-check it. Address this with your manager and request an appropriate process in the future to allow for more careful work.^[1]

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/melodywilding/2016/06/01/5-ways-to-stay-cool-when-work-is-making-you-angry/#3520ef557865>

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