



ADDRESSING EMOTIONS AT WORK

Participant's Manual

Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP)

Sponsored by the Louisiana State Civil Service

ADDRESSING EMOTIONS AT WORK

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this half-day course is to provide strategies to address your own strong emotions and, when appropriate, those of people within your workplace.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the impact of emotions on your own productivity.
- Identify factors that cause your emotions to intensify, so you can manage them more effectively.
- Choose and apply techniques to address your own strong emotions, so you can focus on getting work done.
- Take positive action to help others manage their emotions when appropriate.
- Respond to the strong emotions of others in a constructive and objective way.

JOB OUTCOMES

- Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of all individuals.

THE COST OF RUNAWAY EMOTIONS

Emotions have a powerful impact on a workgroup, either positively or negatively. These emotions can cause the mood of an entire team to change and thus influence the performance of an entire unit. The spread of emotions from person to person is a phenomenon known as _____ (Caruso & Salovey, 2004).

Runaway emotions take on a life of their own and overcome clear thinking. People generally express runaway emotions in one of two ways. Both approaches have costs.



1. _____ **Keep runaway emotions inside.**
2. _____ **Let runaway emotions out, usually without much thought.**



CLASS DISCUSSION: THE COST OF RUNAWAY EMOTIONS

What are the personal and organizational costs of runaway emotions for both imploders and exploders? Write your responses in the chart below.

	PERSONAL COSTS	ORGANIZATIONAL COSTS
IMPLODERS		
EXPLODERS		

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY



INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY: STOP, REFLECT, AND DECIDE

Emotions can tell you a lot about yourself. For example, emotions tell you how you feel, what is happening to you, and what is going on around you. Answer the following questions about your own emotions.

1 What types of things/events set off runaway emotions for you?

2 Do you tend to be more of an imploder or an exploder?

3 What are the costs to you and your level of productivity?

KEY ACTION 2: TAKE POSITIVE ACTIONS FOR YOURSELF

The following three lists contain a variety of both short and long-term actions to help you keep runaway emotions under control.

Step One: _____

- Identify a word to say to yourself when you feel a runaway emotion coming on, the funnier the better.
- Monitor how you talk to yourself. Practice replacing a negative thought with a neutral/positive thought
- Practice taking things less personally.
- Use visualization; see yourself handling situations calmly and reasonably.
- Practice “big picture” thinking, keeping the situation in proportion to other things in life.
- Write down what you are thinking or feeling in a journal.
- Discuss the situation with a trustworthy individual who is removed from the situation.

Step Two: _____

- Give yourself physical and emotional space by removing or excusing yourself from the situation.
- Make a list of what you can control, and plan a course of action.
- Choose to be silent. Do not start an argument or launch a defensive response.
- Do research. Gather facts to fill in information gaps or clear up misunderstandings.
- Make specific request for the help you need.
- Work to stop making assumptions about other people’s intentions. Ask more questions to understand.

Step Three: _____

- Take a deep breath.
- Seek out positive people to be around.
- Pick a stress management or relaxation technique and practice it regularly.
- Take time to distract yourself with something that interest you.
- Do a small, good deed without expecting anything in return.
- Make time for volunteer work.
- Practice positive self-care. Monitor your nutrition, sleep, and exercise.
- Cultivate your sense of humor. Look for and find humor in day-to-day situations.
- Laugh more. Keep funny comics, sayings, CDs, and tapes available for quick “laughter breaks.”

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY



INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY: TAKE POSITIVE ACTION WITH OTHERS SURVEY



Complete the survey to discover some developmental areas of strengths and some areas you would like to address. Be honest. You will not be asked to share your specific responses during the class. For each statement, identify how often you respond in this way when faced with strong emotions from others.

WHEN FACED WITH THE STRONG EMOTIONS OF OTHERS, I MAKE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO...	ALMOST NEVER	SELDOM	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN	ALMOST ALWAYS
Listen quietly without interrupting or offering advice.					
Communicate my desire to understand.					
Avoid patronizing comments like “calm down” or “there is no reason to be so upset.”					
Acknowledge the person’s emotions and express my support.					
Keep my own emotions in check when an emotional reaction is directed at me.					
Avoid responding defensively if the other person starts blaming me or others.					
Ask questions to help the person define his or her concerns.					
Ask questions to help determine the causes of the emotions.					
Determine whether continuing the discussion is appropriate.					
Clarify what the other person expects from me in the conversation and beyond.					
Confirm my understanding of facts and feelings.					
Help the other person focus on the choices he/she does have in the situation.					
Focus the conversation on what the other person can act upon.					
Help the person keep perspective by focusing on the bigger picture and long-term goals.					
Allow ownership of the emotion to remain with the other person.					

INDIVIDUAL/SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY



GROUP ACTIVITY: "ANGER IN THE PIPE ROOM"

As a class, watch the video "Anger in the Pipe Room." As you watch the video, **identify specific actions Wilson uses to calm Mike down.**



INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY/GROUP DISCUSSION: TAKE A POSITIVE ACTION WITH OTHERS: WHY'S AND HOW'S

Individually, think of a situation where you used one or more of the seven (7) techniques for taking positive action with others. Think about whether the person involved may have been an imploder or an exploder. In your group or with your partner, share your situation and why you used which technique. Do not use names.



KEY ACTION 4: LEARN

Addressing strong emotions requires discipline and practice. People who master the capability of addressing emotions pay conscious attention to how they are doing and what they can do to be more effective the next time around. The following tips can assist you with learning how to manage your emotions at work:

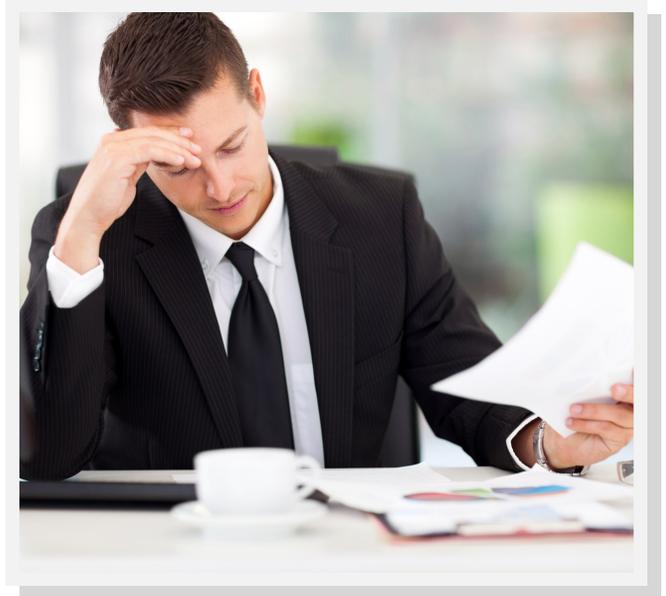


Fill in the blanks below with the appropriate definitions.

- _____ Post the key actions and techniques in your office to remind you of how to manage your runaway emotions.
- _____ Take occasional “self-first” breaks during the workday to lower your stress level. Read something humorous, listen to some relaxing music, whatever helps you to feel good.
- _____ Acknowledge that it is acceptable to express emotions as long as they do not negatively impact productivity or working relationships.
- _____ Ask for feedback from a colleague who has observed you addressing a challenging emotional situation.
- _____ Recognize your body’s signals when you begin to feel that your emotions are taking over. Be aware of things like tense muscles, stomach pains, and a rapid heart rate.
- _____ Identify someone who is particularly effective at addressing emotions and set up a coaching appointment with them.
- _____ Review your answers on the Take Positive Action with Others survey and work on improving your actions when dealing with others.

Avoid the common pitfalls of the learning process. Be aware that these common pitfalls often cause us to lose focus:

- The belief that you should get it right the first time.
- Not knowing your obstacles.
- Not patting yourself on the back for your improvements.
- Trying to change too much at once.
- Having too high an expectation.



REFERENCES

AchieveGlobal (2004). *Addressing Emotions at Work*. Tampa, FL: AchieveGlobal Headquarters, Inc.

Caruso, D. R. & Salovey, P. (2004). *The Emotionally Intelligent Manager: How to develop and use the four key emotional skills of leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

McKeown, G. (2014, July 24). *The Emotional Boundaries You Need at Work*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.hbr.org>.

KEY ACTIONS FOR ADDRESSING EMOTIONS AT WORK

- ✓ **STOP, REFLECT, AND DECIDE:** These three quick steps buy time—a few seconds to avoid a reflexive action, and instead, make a conscious decision. When you experience a strong emotion, catch yourself, reflect on what’s behind the emotion, and make a conscious decision how to respond. These steps help you to avoid actions or words you may regret and to apply your energy in a positive direction.
- ✓ **TAKE POSITIVE ACTION FOR YOURSELF:** Depending on the situation, positive action for yourself can take a number of forms. Maybe you work on how you think about the situation, take steps to change the situation, or manage your overall levels of stress or negativity. Any positive action for yourself helps you take charge of your emotions and makes you more effective in addressing the strong emotions of others.
- ✓ **TAKE POSITIVE ACTION WITH OTHERS:** The strong emotional reactions of co-workers can have a negative impact on your productivity. In those situations, it may not be enough to take positive action for yourself. Helping others manage their runaway emotions can help you head off longer-term tension, resentment, and unproductive conflict.
- ✓ **LEARN:** Learning to manage strong emotions takes practice and reflection. Those who have mastered this skill know that to improve, you need to apply new techniques, observe the results you get, and apply what you learn to new challenges. Ultimately, you decide if any tip or technique is worth the required time and effort.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING KEY ACTIONS

- ✓ Post the key actions and techniques in your office to remind you of how to address emotions at work.
- ✓ Take occasional breaks during the workday to lower your stress level. Read something humorous or listen to some relaxing music—whatever helps you feel good.
- ✓ Acknowledge that it is acceptable to express emotions as long as they do not negatively impact productivity or working relationships.
- ✓ Ask for feedback from a colleague who has observed you addressing a challenging emotional situation.
- ✓ Recognize your body’s signals when you begin to feel that your emotions are taking over. Be aware of things like tense muscles, stomach pains, and a rapid heart rate. Keep a record of how you positively respond to those signals.
- ✓ Identify someone who is particularly effective at addressing emotions and set up a coaching appointment with them.
- ✓ Use the key actions and techniques when handling emotional situations at home.

JOB AIDS

ACTION	WHY	HOW
1. Listen quietly.	Listening helps the other person release some emotional energy and avoids making the situation worse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show interest and/or concern by nodding and making eye contact. • Use short phrases like <i>hmmm</i> or <i>uh-huh</i>. • Steady your breathing and just listen, feeling no pressure to respond.
2. Acknowledge.	Acknowledging shows support and respect, not agreement. It promotes rational discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>That would be frustrating.</i> • <i>I can see how that could be upsetting.</i> • <i>You have had a tough week!</i>
3. Clarify your role.	Clarifying your role lets you respond to the person's actual need, whether it's for advice or for someone to just listen. This also allows responsibility to remain with the other person and helps you avoid a defensive reaction to unwanted advice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How can I help as we talk this through?</i>
4. Determine whether or not continuing the discussion is appropriate.	This action allows you to decide whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deferring discussion would bring a better result. • Discussion is hurting productivity or relationships. • Intense emotions are preventing rational conversation. • You're qualified to handle the situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor your ability to manage your own emotions. • If necessary, gently end the discussion. • <i>Can we talk after we've both had a chance to think this through?</i> • Refer the person to other sources of help.
5. Ask clarifying questions.	Asking clarifying questions promotes objectively and clear thinking, and helps the person better understand the situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What happened exactly?</i> • <i>What is the issue as you see it?</i> • <i>What concerns you the most?</i>
6. Confirm your understanding of facts and feelings.	Confirming your understanding promotes clarity and perspective in the other person. It also starts the shift to decision making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It sounds like the fact that they didn't ask you is more troubling than the decision itself.</i> • <i>So you think he's qualified, but you're angry that Mark didn't get a chance. Is that right?</i>
7. Focus on choices.	Focusing on choices helps the person keep ownership of the issue and take responsibility for the next steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What options do you have?</i> • <i>What would you like to do?</i> • <i>What do you see as the best course of action from here?</i>