

Managing Negative Emotions in the Workplace

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AGENDA

- ▶ Understanding emotions and why they matter
- ▶ Common negative emotions at work
- ▶ Perceptions of emotional reactivity
- ▶ Managing negative emotions at work
- ▶ Positive approaches for communicating with others

Emotions – what are they?

- ▶ “Emotion is a complex psychological phenomenon which occurs as animals or people live their lives. Emotion is associated with feeling, mood, temperament, personality, disposition, and motivation.”
- ▶ Emotions produce conscious experience (feelings), expressions seen by others, and actions (physiological and behavioral)

Frijda 1992: *The Laws of Emotions*

Emotions – why do they matter?

- ▶ Emotions are part of who we are and how we work
- ▶ We experience multiple emotions every day and these feelings can spread easily
- ▶ Dealing with emotions at work is unavoidable
- ▶ Not addressing negative emotions in the workplace will lead to poor results

Most Common Negative Emotions at Work

1. Frustration: lack of resources, co-worker's poor performance, limited opportunities, difficult manager who ignores suggestions for improvement
2. Worry/Insecurity: rumors, change in manager, new work assignments, department mergers
3. Anger: excessive criticism, berating or belittling others, being cynical and sarcastic

Cynthia Fisher, 1997 Bond University

Most Common Negative Emotions at Work

4. Dislike: demanding leadership without showing appreciation, rude customers or co-workers, co-workers not pulling their weight

5. Disappointment/Unhappiness: lack of energy, sadness, feeling distracted, despair

Others???

Cynthia Fisher, 1997 Bond University



- ▶ Burnout: state of chronic stress that leads to:
 - *physical and emotional exhaustion
 - *cynicism and detachment
 - *feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment
 - *increased risk of drug and alcohol use
 - *negative impact on co-workers

The Tell Tale Signs of Burnout...do you have them? Sherrie Bourg Carter PsyD
Nov. 26, 2013

Burnout Continued

About two-thirds of full-time workers experience burnout!!

Results: increase in sick days, more likely to be looking for a different job, increase in conflict with others, depression, anxiety, anger, less confidence in job performance

Employee Burnout Part 1 Wigert and Agrawal

ACTIVITY:

What do you think of when you imagine or remember a negative co-worker? What labels are used to describe these people?



PERCEPTIONS OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

- ▶ Unprofessional
- ▶ Hard to work with
 - ▶ Uncooperative
 - ▶ Incompetent
- ▶ Not a team player
 - ▶ Rude
 - ▶ “Crazy”

PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS

- ▶ Avoidance
- ▶ Resentment
- ▶ Lack of communication
- ▶ Distrust
- ▶ Conflict
- ▶ Complaints – customer service
- ▶ Turnover
- ▶ Corrective action

RESULTS:

*Productivity

*Engagement

*Conflict

*Trust

*Culture/environment

*Motivation

*Effectiveness

*Morale

Positivity Benefits and Negativity Costs

- ▶ Positive work environments outperform negative work environments
- ▶ Positive people maintain a broader perspective while negative people maintain a narrower perspective and focus on problems
- ▶ Positive people have more friends which is a key factor of happiness and longevity
- ▶ Negativity affects the morale, performance, and productivity of teams

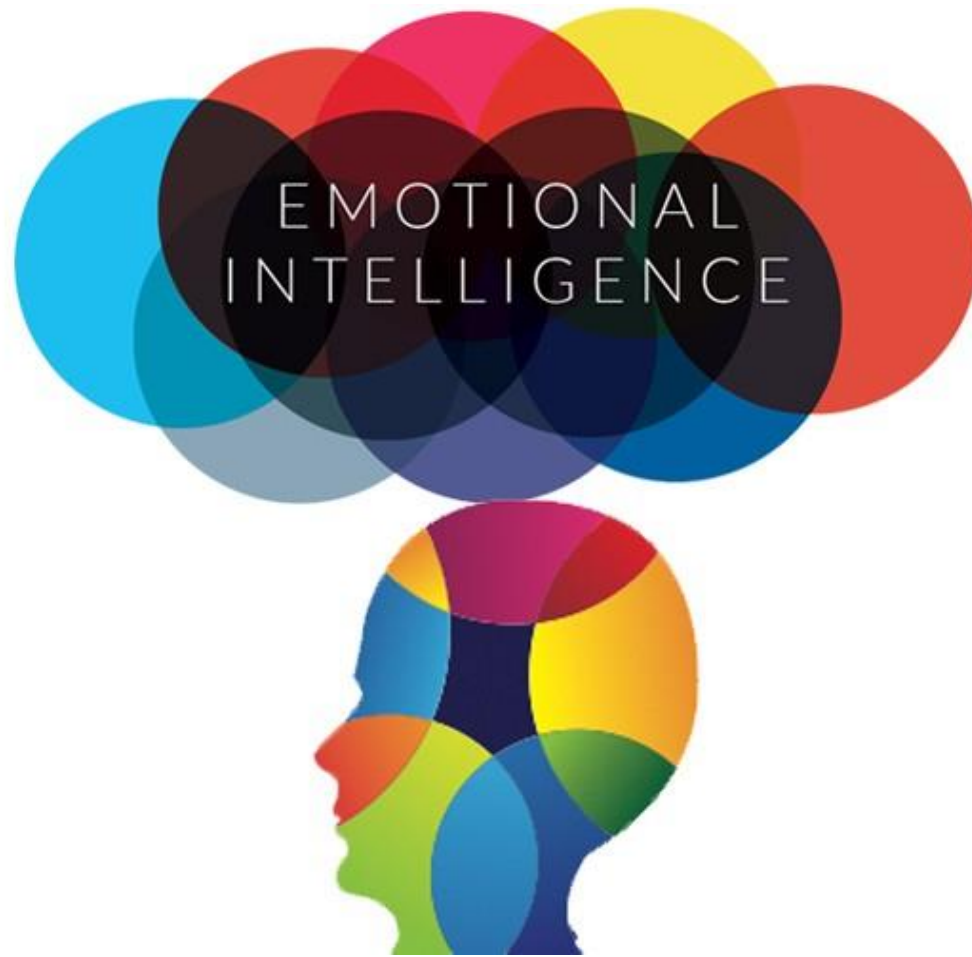
Jon Gordon, [The Positive Dog](#)

Positivity Benefits and Negativity Costs

- ▶ Negative emotions are associated with:
 - Decreased life span
 - Greater stress
 - Fewer friends
 - Health related problems (stroke, heart attack)

People who start and end their day in a negative mood are 10% less productive than their positive colleagues

Joe Robinson, The Hidden Connection Between Mood and Productivity



Emotional Intelligence Skills

1. Self-awareness

Reflect on your own emotional reactions, strengths, and weaknesses

- What triggered those feelings?
- Ask someone you trust for feedback
- Engage in journaling to help identify emotions and trends
- Admit what you need to learn/take responsibility for mistakes
- Ask yourself: how am I perceived by others?

Emotional Intelligence Skills

2. Self-management

Think about your ability to remain calm and in control during stressful situations

- *Do people see you as trustworthy?
- *Consider your flexibility and adaptability to change and events
- *Reflect on situations where you displayed initiative
- *Degree of optimism

Emotional Intelligence Skills

3. Social Awareness

Genuine display of empathy, understanding power relationships in the organization, and meeting other people's needs

*Practice reading non-verbal cues, messages conveyed by facial gestures, posture, eye movement, and body language

*Awareness of who influences policies and decisions

*Be aware of the needs of others in your organization

Emotional Intelligence Skills

4. Social Skills

Developing other's potential, rewarding good work, leading by example, inspiring, skilled in communication

- *Promoting a friendly, open environment to build rapport and trust
- *Managing and not avoiding conflict
- *Adaptable to changes needed

Managing Emotions

- ▶ Stop, identify the emotion/physical response, and evaluate
 1. Why do you feel this way?
 2. Remember the last time you felt this way, what helped?
 3. Remember, this time will pass. In a year, will this matter to you?
 4. Picture how you may look to others. Would you want to work with someone like that? Consider other's perceptions and reactions.

Managing Emotions

5. Evaluate your self-talk: predicting future outcomes, assumptions, black/white thinking, “should” statements
6. Focus on what is going well to improve mood
7. Engage in deep breathing to slow heart rate and reduce muscle tension
8. Journal – what is making you unhappy? Themes?
9. You are in control of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors

Respond don't React!

- ▶ Emotional triggers activate the amygdala (do we run? Fight? Freeze?)
- ▶ Slow down, breathe to activate the prefrontal cortex and calm the amygdala to promote rational thought
- ▶ Practice mindfulness and reflection
- ▶ Decide how to proceed with more awareness



Positive Approaches for Communicating with Others

1. Stay connected to your own emotional experience.
 - Thoughtful Responses Vs Emotional Reactions
2. Realize when you are stressed and do something about it!
3. Be aware of your pet peeves, your HOT buttons, and manage your feelings.

Positive Approaches for Communicating with Others

4. Recognize and effectively use nonverbal cues and body language both for yourself and in your interactions with others.

- Non-verbals should complement verbal communication.
- What you say is often less important than how you say it.

Positive Approaches for Communicating with Others

5. Be empathic and nonjudgmental

- Focus on feelings–Ask, “How are you doing?”
- Squash negative self–talk.



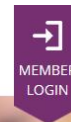
Resources To Consider

1. Mindfulness practice
2. Start your day with positive daily affirmations and goal setting
3. Move/exercise for 15 minutes a day
4. Provide random acts of kindness
5. Be kind to yourself
6. Books: 10% Happier by Dan Harris
Unlocking Happiness at Work by Jennifer Moss

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