

How To Prevent Your Emotions From Ruining Your Career

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ALTON - There are two ways that your emotions can derail your career track. One way is to let your emotions run amuck in your work life. The other way is to try to suppress them all. Emotions are a natural part of the human existence, even when we are at work. But many careers have been shipwrecked by unbridled emotions. How can you prevent this from happening to you? Below are 12 tips.

1. **Learn appropriate ways to express what you feel** — In all areas of your life, even when you're at work, you are a human being and you will have emotional reactions to certain things from time to time. This is normal. You may have received misguided advice in the past that there is no place for emotions in your work life. But we don't have the ability to simply flip a switch and turn our emotions off. What we can do is learn how to better process and express them. Research has shown that we are more innovative and productive when we work in an environment where it is safe to express our fears, concerns, and other emotions. However, this does not mean that we should allow powerful emotions to go unchecked in the workplace. How we express what we feel within a workplace setting is key — communication should always be respectful, even when we're frustrated.
2. **Realize that you can sometimes choose your emotions** — Many people think that they have no control over what they feel. But this isn't always true. The emotions we feel are generated by our thoughts first. How we choose to look at something determines how we feel about it. When we are able to shrug something off and let it go, we are also able to avoid a strong emotional reaction. In other words, we don't have to have feelings about everything. We can pick our battles. We can choose not to take offense at certain things by:
 3. Assuming positive intent on the other person's part
 4. Offering a bit of grace (maybe by understanding where they're coming from)
 5. Chalking it up to the basic nature of the other person (perhaps they're always a bit too blunt?).
 6. Truly letting it go or, if that's not possible, addressing it respectfully once you've calmed down enough to communicate professionally. Don't just pretend to let it go while inwardly seething.
7. **Be self-aware** — Be mindful that your own mood, stress level, personal circumstances, and health affect your emotional reactions to things. When you don't feel well physically or are stressed to the max, it is more likely that you may easily become emotionally overwhelmed. If you've not had enough sleep or you haven't taken time to eat, you will find that it is more difficult to keep your emotions in check (you might be "hangry"). If you want to perform well at work, it's vitally important that you take care of yourself so that you will be at your best. None of us want the last-straw meltdown to occur at work.
8. **Maintain a healthy work/life balance** — We have all been told not to drag our personal problems into our work, and likewise, not to bring our work home with us. It is ideal to try to maintain a distinction between your personal life and your professional life. But in all reality, there will be times when this line will be blurred. Just do the best you can with it. Create some healthy boundaries for yourself, and understand that you have a limited amount of mental and emotional

energy each day. If you spend all your emotional energy being upset about work-related situations, you may not have any emotional energy left for your family when you get home.

9. **Remember QTIP: Quit Taking it Personal** — In any social setting, including a workplace environment, there will be differences of opinion. There will be times when someone disagrees with you. There will be times when someone shirks their duties and tasks get dumped on you. There will be times when a policy changes and you don't like it. Perhaps someone points out that you made an error. Or maybe someone offered you some constructive criticism. How you react emotionally to all of these things depends on whether or not you took it as a personal attack. Give pause long enough to consider that perhaps that wasn't the case at all. And if a colleague seems to be in a foul mood, don't automatically assume they are upset with you.
10. **Limit the amount of time you hold onto negative emotions** — In addition to sometimes being able to choose whether or not you get upset about something, you can also choose how long you stay upset. Think back to a time when you were perturbed about a work-related issue — how much time did you spend thinking about it, venting about it, ruminating on it, and rehashing it in your mind? This probably affected your productivity, creativity, and ability to get things accomplished. In other words, it became a roadblock for you. If this happens often, it will hinder your ability to advance in your career. When you become upset, do what you can to resolve it as quickly as possible so that you can move past it. Intentionally get your mind on something else. Don't nurse hurt feelings or grudges — nothing good will come from this.
11. **Give yourself a safe space for emotional release** — Again, it's not feasible to try to suck up all your feelings. Bottling everything up can lead to an accumulation of suppressed anger and frustration that could result in a blow-up that you might regret. You need a safe space and a healthy way to work through what you feel. Take a break, take a walk, pause for lunch, call a friend, take some deep breaths. Let the tears fall, if necessary. Perhaps talking with your supervisor or a trusted colleague would help — just be mindful of the difference in sharing and over-sharing. Do whatever helps you to sort yourself out and get your head back in the game. If you're not comfortable with processing your emotions during work hours, that's fine — just make sure that you give yourself a space to do so later on.
12. **Don't make hasty retorts** — One of the deadliest career killers is a quick temper. When angry, we often say and do things that we regret later. The key is to take a few seconds to carefully choose your words. Pause. Take a breath. Think about what you need to communicate. What is the goal here? If you want to make things worse, go ahead and unleash that string of expletives and accusations that are on the tip of your tongue. But if you want to make things better, choose your words more carefully. Communicate with respect and assertiveness (not aggression). Tackle issues, not people. And if you're responding via email, always re-read what you

wrote before you send it. Read it from the perspective of the recipient — is this really what you want to convey?

13. **Don't make emotional decisions** — Powerful emotions sometimes cloud our ability to make good logical decisions. Don't allow your anger or frustration to lead you to make hasty decisions that you might later regret. Instead, give yourself time to calm down first. Once you've de-escalated, if you still want to resign or back out of something, you still can.
14. **Don't catch other people's bad attitudes** — People emit either positive or negative energy. Catching someone else's positive energy can be a great thing. For example, we've all gotten excited about something because someone else's enthusiasm was simply irresistible. But we've also all fallen prey to that negative energy that can suck the soul right out of a room when it walks through the door. You will need to make a conscious effort to guard your own energy. Just because someone else is in a crabby mood doesn't mean that you have to join them in their misery. Negative moods and rudeness can be as contagious as COVID — stop the spread!
15. **Learn to move on** — When a problem gets resolved, let it be. Bury the hatchet and move on. Don't keep bringing it up over and over in the future. This will profit you nothing and will keep you stuck in a vicious cycle of unresolved negativity, grudges, distrust, drama, and suspicion. Don't get bogged down in what's behind you. If you're able to resolve it, do so, bury it, and keep your focus on what's ahead instead of what's in the past.
16. **Master the art of having difficult conversations** — Learn to resolve conflict instead of avoiding it. Don't go around intentionally creating problems, but when one arises that must be dealt with, don't be afraid to tackle it. Do so with an honest, respectful approach, with the goal being a resolution.

If you want to succeed or perhaps advance in your career, it's in your best interest to learn the art of managing your emotions in the workplace. Be emotionally sensitive but also emotionally controlled. This doesn't mean that you should function like a robot void of any feelings. Not at all! It just means that you have developed the ability to discern what is appropriate to express. And when you do so, it is always in an appropriate, respectful manner. Become the kind of leader who can demonstrate stability, consistency, and calmness, even when under pressure.

Develop the art of keeping your cool in stressful situations as much as possible, while also granting yourself the safe space you need to process your feelings. Accept and embrace your emotions, but don't let them run amuck and destroy your career. Instead, harness your emotional intelligence and utilize it to be sensitive to others and to promote personal and professional growth for yourself and your colleagues.

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About Centerstone

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