

Using Self-management and Social Skills

Controlling emotions

Negative emotions – especially from a leader – can have a big impact in the workplace. To avoid negative effects, you need the skills of self-management.

These skills include controlling feelings and impulses, and being able to adapt to changing circumstances. Controlling emotions is the fundamental skill to develop. This ability comes after you can identify your emotions – and the reasons for them.

To help control your emotions, you can use several techniques:

- You can interrupt negative patterns with logic by first identifying a pattern of anticipating the worst thing that can possibly happen. Then you can stop it.
- You can reduce stress through self-care – such as healthy eating, exercise, timeouts, and relaxation techniques – or through more extensive efforts such as getting a new job or leaving a bad relationship.
- You can talk through the problem with a third party, someone you trust.
- You can write a letter or e-mail you don't plan to send. By expressing your emotions in writing, you can release the emotional charge.

Self-control techniques are only part of controlling emotions, however. As a leader, you don't have a solitary work life – you have to deal with other people every day. So you also need interpersonal techniques for controlling emotions. Interpersonal techniques include letting other people explain themselves first in a disagreement; honestly expressing emotions, discussing the reasons for them, and searching for solutions; and taking responsibility for your actions and feelings.

Facilitating

When you can understand and manage your own emotions, you can move on to mastering the fundamental skills in the social domain. Social skills are useful for your interactions as a leader, and they also help you increase the emotional control of those you lead.

In the social skills domain, the fundamental competency is having the ability to recognize how to meet the needs of others and then meeting those needs.

Facilitating involves three main techniques:

- Emotional comments focus on the "why" or "how" of behavior, not on the "what." These comments bring out the reasons behind behaviors and help people understand and deal directly with possible conflict. A leader can ask for observation without judgment. Posing questions such as "What's really going on here?" or "How well are we working together on this?" can open dialog that helps people uncover unproductive behaviors.
- A leader with high emotional control will let people express themselves and participate in what's going on. Then your employees can move beyond anger and worry and work together. When there are problems, brainstorming and solving the problems as a group channels energy and facilitates buy-in. When you share information about why tough choices are needed, employees will cooperate and try to make changes work. Participation builds self-confidence, loyalty, and motivation by empowering people to be part of the solution.
- A leader with good emotional control must also keep people informed about both good and bad news. In this way, you build trust and enhance motivation. Keep them in the loop about how their work fits with the organization's goals, about decisions made by upper management, and of course, about their personal progress. When providing such feedback, make sure it's accurate, positive, clear, and objective.

Emotional intelligence in controlling emotions begins with techniques for self-management. You can interrupt negative patterns with logic, reduce stress, talk things through with a third party, and write down your feelings.

Interpersonal techniques include letting other people explain themselves first, honestly expressing emotions along with the reasons for them, and taking responsibility for your own actions and feelings.

The most important competency of emotional control in the social skills domain is that of facilitating. The three main techniques in facilitating are to use thoughtful comments, let people express themselves and participate, and keep people informed.

SkillSoft Course: Leadership Essentials: Leading with Emotional Intelligence

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