

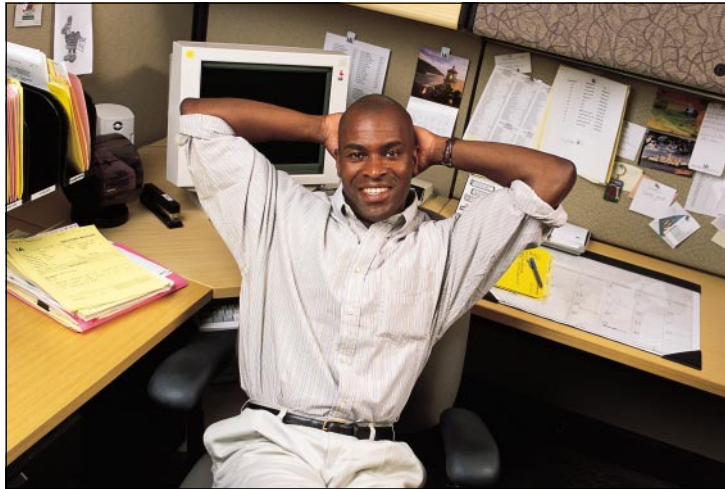
# Controlling Your Emotions Promotes Success

Since your responsibilities involve making decisions, maintaining productivity, and interpreting organizational policy, you may occasionally experience a wave of unpopularity. If you view these occasional disagreements as part of your position rather than as personal attacks, you maintain professional, positive relationships with team members and enjoy personal satisfaction from doing your job well.

Controlling your emotions is easier when you remind yourself that you personally are not usually the cause of a team member's anger. An angry employee is usually upset with an organizational decision, policy, or rule you are required to carry out. You are simply doing your job. Remember that because of your position it is your function to protect the interests of the organization – not to protect yourself from personal dislike. Adopting this rational attitude helps you to think and act in a calm, professional manner without adding the fuel of your own emotions to an already explosive situation. Reacting emotionally to complaints may intensify and prolong the negative situation.

In discussing a complaint with a team member, even if emotions like anger or frustration come to the surface, limit your discussion to the issues and behaviors causing the problem. To keep from becoming defensive when presenting your point of view, use “I” messages. “You” messages often come across as accusing and judgmental. For example, instead of saying, “You need to answer memos more promptly,” it is more effective to state, “I cannot make necessary decisions when you do not respond to memos promptly.” Or instead of, “You are not providing effective leadership for your team,” you might say, “I often see your team members idle when they do not know what you want.”

These “I” messages, as opposed to “you” messages, allow you to point out how an issue affects you, or they explain why the issue is important without attacking the person. When communicating about problems, also avoid judgmental words like should, could, ought, if only, and but. The word but negates whatever the other person is saying, and it conveys to the other person that you are not listening with an open mind.



Addressing problems promptly, rather than procrastinating, is also crucial. One large, nationally-known firm reduced the number of written grievances by 95 percent by implementing a concentrated effort to solve problems where they occurred, at the time they occurred. Promptness in solving problems lowers the production cost of goods and services, improves an organization's competitive position, and enhances customer satisfaction.

Team leaders who adopt a pattern of consistent, positive attitudes and behaviors reduce the confusion and frustration that often give rise to complaints among team members.

**Here are a few practical guidelines:**

- ◆ Treat all employees fairly – that is, make sure all team members receive the positive or negative consequences their performance merits. Being fair with employees does not mean always treating people equally. People who make an outstanding contribution deserve extra rewards and recognition. Enforcing rules is the only area in which every employee must be treated equally.
- ◆ Learn to say exactly what you mean. Don't expect team members to guess or to read your mind. Demonstrating what you want or giving verbal examples can be essential in training and communicating effectively.
- ◆ Deal with specific behavior – not just attitudes. Identify the specific behavior you want team members to develop, train for that behavior, and reinforce it with positive feedback.
- ◆ When you receive two different stories about a situation, get the two people together and ask them to tell you about it.
- ◆ Coach for improvement. Describe behavior you want, not what you do not want.
- ◆ When you give instructions, expect team members to follow them.

Prevention is the most productive strategy to handle problems with people; but no matter how successful you are in establishing good relationships with your team members, you will occasionally face differences of opinion and other unavoidable interpersonal issues.