

SIGMA

EI Series



Great Leaders
Regulate Others' Emotions



GREAT LEADERS REGULATE OTHERS' EMOTIONS

“ Before you're a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.”

- Jack Welch

There is no denying that coworkers can sometimes be sources of stress, but they can also be sources of encouragement and support. As a leader, it's important to consider not only how you manage your own emotions, but how you influence the emotional state of those around you. Take a moment to think of someone who excels at inspiring others – what qualities do you admire most in this individual? It's likely their willingness to help others, to lift people's spirits, or to lighten the mood, that makes them stand out. In other words, they positively influence those around them by acknowledging others' feelings and motivate them into action.

Regulating emotions in others involves noticing how someone is feeling and making a choice to provide support in a way that best fits the circumstance, whether that be helping to ease a stressful situation, offering encouragement when motivation is lacking, or inspiring others to action. Regulating emotions in others not only benefits the individuals you support, but it can also improve your relationships with colleagues and increase the productivity and engagement level of your team.

In assessing your tendency to regulate emotions in others, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I start emails, meetings, and conversations in a positive and productive way?
- When I notice when someone is struggling, do I take time to provide encouragement?
- Do I adapt my framing of problems depending on who I'm speaking with?
- Am I comfortable providing words of support to my colleagues and direct reports?
- Do I create an environment for others to discuss issues/ideas/solutions with me?

Improve Your Regulation of Emotions in Others

Understand the impact: Did you know that the emotional centres of our brains are tightly connected with areas governing motivation and decision making? As a result, emotions impact our behavior in many ways and can influence motivation, engagement, and decision making.¹ It's important for leaders to be in tune to how employees are feeling and what can be done to “work” with these emotions. Whether you acknowledge them or not, emotions are impacting the decisions your team makes. By regulating others' emotions, you can encourage better decision making and keep your team engaged.

Reflect on your comfort zone: Engaging with others' emotions at work can be an uncomfortable experience for some leaders. While it may be tempting to avoid these situations altogether, doing so can lead to greater issues down the line. Take a moment to reflect on your comfort level around regulating others' emotions. Are some types of situations easier than others? If so, start here until you get more comfortable and familiar with regulating others' emotions. As you build these skills you can begin to take on more challenging situations.

Practice self care: Remember that you can't pour from an empty cup. It's important to take care of yourself so that you're able to effectively engage with the people around you. Consider what helps you be at your best. Most people benefit from getting enough sleep, engaging in regular physical activity, eating a balanced diet, and spending leisure time away from work. Taking this time for yourself can help ensure that you have the mental resources necessary to undertake the emotional work required to lead others.

Start Doing These 3 Things Now to Better Regulate Others' Emotions

The following steps can help you improve your tendency to support and encourage others:

1. **Begin positively.** The way we start an interaction sets the tone for what follows, and it can either encourage optimism and creativity or increase stress and anxiety. Begin even challenging meetings and conversations with something positive to set a more helpful, solutions-oriented tone. This could mean sharing something good that happened, something you're grateful for, or a simple thanks to whoever you're speaking with.²
2. **Listen deeply.** Actively listening to others is a powerful step in regulating emotions. This is because the process of explaining a situation and circumstances aloud to a patient and supportive listener is often enough to help calm emotions and begin generating solutions. That's because putting our thoughts into words activates the language centers of our brain and decreases activation in the brain's emotional centers.³ This helps people to problem-solve more effectively. So, the next time someone shares a concern or issue with you, take the time to listen before you jump in with ideas about how they should tackle their problem. Try to just listen, reflect back what they're saying, and encourage them to talk through the issue themselves. This might feel strange at first but gets easier with practice.
3. **Provide an environment that encourages motivation.** Research suggests that most people are motivated by three things at work: autonomy, mastery, and purpose.⁴ That means people like having control over how they work, they want to feel competent in their work, and they need to feel good about what they do. As a leader, it's important to pay attention to these factors and consider what need isn't being met when issues arise at work. Burnout, lack of motivation, conflict with others, and performance issues can all be traced back to a lack of fulfillment in one of these areas. Try to identify what needs are not being met and use this as the foundation for a conversation to help motivate others.

Resources



[Social Intelligence and Leadership](#)



[How to Work with Someone Who is Always Stressed Out](#)



Develop your ability to regulate others' emotions by taking advantage of SIGMA's coaching services.

Contact SIGMA for coaching on developing your skills as a leader.

SIGMA Assessment Systems, Inc.

Email: support@SigmaHR.com

Call: 800-265-1285

References

¹ Bechara, A., Damasio, H., & Damasio, A. R. (2000). Emotion, decision making and the orbitofrontal cortex. *Cerebral cortex*, 10(3), 295-307.

² Gielan, M. (2015). *Broadcasting Happiness: The Science of Igniting and Sustaining Positive Change*. BenBella Books, Inc.

³ Lieberman, M. D., Eisenberger, N. I., Crockett, M. J., Tom, S. M., Pfeifer, J. H., & Way, B. M. (2007). Affect labeling disrupts amygdala activity in response to affective stimuli. *Psychological Science*, 18(5), 421-428.

⁴ Pink, D. (2009). The puzzle of motivation. *TEDGlobal 2009*.