

Are you losing your temper at work?

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Long and hectic work schedules lack of sleep, colleagues you dislike, a domineering boss - these and other factors could lead to one becoming snappy at work. The result - we slam doors, yell at co-workers, pull faces, snap at our boss, and end up saying things we may regret later.

It takes years to build up a reputation, and only seconds to destroy it. No matter what, you shouldn't snap. Replace negative emotions with self-confidence and manage difficult situations with grace. Here's how you can keep your emotions under control at work and maintain an unblemished reputation.

1) Identify your hot buttons

Be alert to the types of situations that put you on the burner. Is it waiting in a long queue at the departmental store or being put on hold by the customer service person from your bank? As far as possible, stay away from situations that trigger an impulsive and unpleasant reaction, especially while you are at work or just before you get to the office. You may realize that the real reason you are angry with traffic is because of your inability to start from home on time. Wake up early instead.

2) Be prepared

Anticipating and planning a positive reaction will help defuse your anger before the situation gets to you. For instance, if you don't like questions interrupting your presentation, plan how you will handle interruptions. You could give out an FAQ leaflet at the start of the presentation or ask the audience to e-mail questions to you for an elaborate response. Create a back-up plan for the possibility of a technical glitch freezing your power point Presentations. For instance, you could have an overhead projector and some transparencies or hand-outs. If it's a performance review meeting you are attending, have some accomplishments ready to offset any negative feedback, so you don't respond in anger. The bottom-line: Be on the offensive.

3) Clarify before reacting

We sometimes misunderstand the other person and react impulsively. Is your boss asking what time you arrived because he's keeping an eye on you or is it because he was also stuck in a traffic jam? Ask a lot of questions before jumping to conclusions. If need be, repeat what the other person just said. This ensures you understand the comment and gives your colleague or client the opportunity to clarify any miscommunication.

4) Don't throw tantrums

In the age of team work, a 'head-heavy' attitude will get you labeled as the spoilt brat in the office. Learn to be more accommodating. The 'my way or the highway' approach will not get you any points. If your idea has been overruled by the boss or ridiculed, talk to him and understand his/her perspective rather than losing your temper. If you are dealing with nasty colleagues who keep shooting you down, smile and behave in a cordial manner.

5) Don't call or e-mail when upset

Wait before writing a strong emotional e-mail or phone call. Never disrespect others, even if you're right. The

angry mail you sent three months ago may make a surprise appearance at the performance appraisal meeting. Hold that strong e-mail or letter until the next day and re-read it. Ask someone to proof-read any correspondence you think may be construed as surly, condescending or rude.

6) Be ready to say "I am sorry"

If you end up erupting in a meeting, criticize a colleague's work or make ill-timed comments that you regret, how can you bounce back? Apologize immediately to the targeted person and to everyone around. Don't offer a long justification about work pressure or the misunderstanding. Just say "I should not have reacted that way and I am sorry". This will show that you are professional and will reflect positively on your character.