



Lead Positively or Go Home

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For years, I've preached to leaders: "You can't afford a bad attitude. Your people will follow your state of mind whether you are positive or negative."

As a leader, you cannot complain to your team about the economy or belittle them for not making their quotas and then expect them to turn around and be positive to one another or to your customers.

Scientific proof now exists that your people take on your emotions through 'mirror neurons' in their brains. While these mirror neurons help with empathy and decision making, they also control emotions.

Mirror neurons react more intensely to negative than to positive cues. For example, when you are angry, stressed, impatient or defensive, your people 'catch' your emotions.

Their brain will actually mimic your emotion of anger, stress, impatience or defensiveness. It will then likely switch to the highly unproductive 'fight or flight' mode.

Thus *you* have changed the group dynamics of your team, not the economy or anything else you might blame.

As a leader, I am not asking you to be emotionless. Emotions are a vital part of who you are. Highly effective leaders understand the power of their emotions and what to do when they become potentially damaging.

Here are my top '7' tips to help you manage your emotions when they feel intense or out of control.

1. **Notice Physical Indicators.** Where in your body do you feel this emotion? Is your chest tight; voice elevated? Do you feel flushed; have a headache? Has your breathing become shallow? These physical indicators tell you to pay attention.
2. **Name the emotion.** Actually naming the emotion you're experiencing oftentimes lessens the intensity. It feels good to say out loud: "This makes me angry!"
3. **Ask what other emotions might be at play.** Emotions like to mask one another. For example, you may be very sad about the loss of a pet when someone at work makes you angry. It's easier to feel angry than sad, so your anger intensifies beyond what is called for in this situation.
4. **Ask yourself what is behind this emotion.** Did you have a fight with your teenager prior to leaving home this morning? Now you find yourself uncontrollably impatient with each interaction. Take a quick break to gain clarity and perspective.
5. **Reframe your situation.** Are you seeing all angles? What aren't you seeing? Might there be some aspect you've not considered?

6. **Talk with trusted advisors.** Leaders often think that they need to be the know-all and be-all. This is a fatal belief. The more you depend on your team to come up with solutions, the more you grow them. The key is to present the problem and then be quiet and listen to them. Seek trusted peers as well.
7. **Leave the situation.** If your emotion is too intense to control with one of the above tips, separate yourself physically before you cause irreparable damage. Go for a walk or to the gym; spend a few hours in suspended reality with a comedy, or drive to your favorite lake or mountain retreat.

Leaders, I challenge you to remember that you are not managing projects; you are leading people. Your people will mimic your emotions through their 'mirror neurons.'

It's up to you to positively guide them to higher levels of self esteem and productivity, not destroy the former which will diminish the latter. To learn more about this concept, read Positivity by Barbara Fredrickson.

Read all of Ann's Writing and Wisdom at: <http://gvasuccess.com/writing-and-wisdom.htm>

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