

An Ounce of Prevention

Complimentary

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Gary J. Meiers, Ph. D., Jo Ann Hammond, Ph. D.,
& Associates, Ltd.

10009 – 85 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T6E 2J9



Website: drsgaryjoannmeierspsychologist.com

Phone: (780) 433-2269

Fax: (780) 431-0463

E-Mail: psychrec@gmail.com

Sometimes when we are struggling, it's hard to see that our reactions may be out of balance. Here are some examples of situations that describe reactions. If you see that some of your common reactions are out of balance, this can give you important information about what might be happening. If this is the case, you may want to find a way for you to regain your balance and well-being.

Is Your Reaction Out Of Balance?

Something happens:

Your manager comments on an error in your work.

Reaction that may be out of balance:

- You feel extreme anger at your manager.
- You feel guilty about the error for days
- You can't sleep that night.
- You call in sick to avoid seeing your manager

Reaction that may indicate a balanced approach:

- You ask questions to understand what happened.
- You discuss strategies with your manager to prevent the error from happening again.
- You discuss with your manager how criticism affects you, and ways that are easier for you to hear feedback.

Something happens:

A co-worker strongly disagrees with a new idea you have put forward at a team meeting.

Reaction that may be out of balance:

- You feel very hurt and angry with the co-worker.
- You cry in the washroom, feeling alone and misunderstood.
- You share gossip about the co-worker.
- You decide not to share your other ideas at team meetings.

Reaction that may indicate a more balanced approach

- You let your co-worker know how you're feeling in a productive way, e.g., "I feel surprised that in the meeting you said my idea wouldn't work."
- You ask questions to get more information from the co-worker about why there is disagreement.
- You look for solutions to the disagreement.
- You remind yourself that your ideas are important, and that disagreement between people is normal.

Something happens:

Your work is piling up and you know you are going to miss an important deadline.

Reaction that may be out of balance:

- You can't eat because you are so tense.
- You are unable to focus on work for long periods of time and do "busy work" such as surfing the internet, going for coffee, or shuffling papers, to pass the time.
- After the deadline has passed, you complain to your manager that you didn't have enough time and that it isn't your fault.
- You feel very anxious and panicky as you think about future deadlines, and the pile of unfinished work.

Reaction that may indicate a more balanced approach

- As your work is piling up, you take a few moments to step back and reorganize.
- You share your concerns with your manager that you don't think you can meet the deadline. You also share possible solutions to the problem.
- If the deadline will still be missed, as soon as you know, you share this information with your manager.
- Together with your manager, you make plans to avoid missed deadlines in future

Here is a list to help you see how you may be able to change difficult thoughts, emotions and behaviours at work by using different strategies.

Constant negative thoughts

Thoughts, emotions, and behaviours:

Having constant negative thoughts about yourself and others

Alternative strategies

- Be aware of the constant thoughts
- Challenge the information in the thoughts. Consider replacing them with more productive thoughts.

Example

From: I'm such an idiot! Why am I so stupid?

To: I feel frustrated. I want to do my part. I will ask for help when I do not know what to do.

From: If I tell that I made a mistake I'll get fired.

To: People rarely get fired for making a mistake. And, by taking responsibility for my mistake, my manager may see that I care about my work and want to improve.

Crying

Thoughts, emotions, and behaviours:

Being unable to control crying at work

Alternative strategies

- Be aware of negative thoughts, or feelings that may trigger the crying.
- Consider alternative responses.
- Consider that crying can be a way of relieving stress, and you can plan for crying time during breaks in your workday.

Example

From: When I hear co-workers laughing together in the kitchen I think that they all hate me and I start to cry.

To: When I hear co-workers laughing together in the kitchen, I realize that I feel lonely at work. I'll consider ways to connect with co-workers so that I can feel included.

From: I just have to keep my tears bottled up inside me all day.

To: Knowing that I can get relief can help me to hold off from crying while I am working. I can find a discrete place for me to cry during my breaks and at lunch if I feel the need to cry.

Panic attacks

Thoughts, emotions, and behaviours:

Having panic attacks at work.

Alternative strategies

- Be aware of how negative thoughts or feelings may lead to panic attacks.
- Consider other ways to respond or plan
- Plan ahead of time what you will do if you are experiencing a panic attack.
- Consider talking to someone you trust at work and seeing if they can support you during or after the attack.

From: When I look at all the emails I haven't answered, my heart pounds and I feel tense.

To: Today I'll organize my day before I open my email. *and*

Plan: I will tell a co-worker whom I trust that I am having panic attacks. I will ask if she could cover the phones for 10 minutes during or after an attack.

Angry or emotional outbursts

Thoughts, emotions, and behaviours:

Having angry or emotional outbursts at work.

Alternative strategies

Be aware of early signs that anger is rising. Learn what physical signs your body gives you that your anger is rising.

Example

From: When I'm angry I can't control what I say, and say things that I wish I could take back.

To: I've learned that when my anger is rising I get a knot in my stomach. When I feel that knot, I force myself to slow down my thoughts and take several deep breaths so that I don't speak in anger.

Confusion

Thoughts, emotions, and behaviours:

Feeling confused and unable to remember details at work

Alternative strategies

Consider other ways of having information given to you.

Example

From: I am having a hard time remembering information when people tell me things verbally.

To: I learned that I do better when people share information with me in a written format. So I carry a notebook with me to write things down, or I ask the person to please send me an email.

Anxiety

Thoughts, emotions, and behaviours:

Feeling anxious

Alternative strategies

Consider alternatives to behaviours at work that could contribute to feeling anxious at work.

From: I'm used to drinking lots of coffee or pop all day, even though it makes me feel jittery.

To: I remind myself that another cup of coffee could make me feel nervous for the rest of the day.

From: I feel overwhelmed with my work and think that I will get in trouble for not getting it done.

To: I will express my concerns to my manager and ask for help to prioritize and manage my workload

Mental Health Works, Great West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace, and Mood Disorders of Ontario. Creating Your Own Workplace Plan. Retrieved from. Retrieved June 21, 2014, from http://workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/WTI_LeadersGuide.pdf (page 31-32)

Parenting Corner

Search: [Commit to Kids – Parent Guide](#)

Search: [This is our youth – Gretchen Reynolds](#)

Search: [Does EMDR Work for Children?](#)

*****Net News*****

Here are some web sites you & your family may find helpful:

Search: [Guided Loving Kindness Meditation with Sharon Salzberg](#)

Search: [Dan Siegel - Connecting to Calm](#)

Search: [Window to an EMDR Session](#)

Self-Help Corner:

City of Edmonton Community Resources: 211

Support Network / Distress Line: 780-482-HELP

Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868