

Inspire COACHING

Impulse Control - Look or Leap?

Lately, I've been doing a lot of reading and research on emotional intelligence along with strategies and tactics to make your emotions work for you. One element that doesn't get much limelight, but I think is critical, is emotions and impulse control. While it's hard to resist the temptation to correct a wrong, to not being first to the finish line, or to stay cool when your passion project heats up. Especially in the heat of the moment or when the stakes are high. Leaders who manage their emotions well, prevent disruptive outbursts that negatively affect decision making, collaboration, delivery of results, and team harmony.

From the book *The EQ Edge*, "impulse control is the ability to resist or delay an impulse, drive, or temptation to act. Impulse control entails avoiding rash behaviours and decision making, being composed, and able to put the brakes on angry, aggressive, hostile and irresponsible behaviour".

Think about a situation where you were impatient and reacted hastily vs. which situations were beneficial for you to act quickly. How do you want your impulsiveness to come into play - to help or to hinder? Are you looking or leaping first?

If emotions, especially negative ones, escalate too quickly, you may lose the capacity to deal with self talk, self regulation, self control in the midst of a stressful moment. The best decisions under stress are often made when you can remain "cool under fire" and not pressured into taking unnecessary, and even hasty, action.

Balancing your coping strategies with deliberate and controlled tactics under stress can improve your overall performance. Here are a few of my strategies that you might try to stay calm and avoid the eruption:

- **Put a pause on the situation.** If you can take a break in a meeting or if you don't have to hit send immediately on an email, then take a beat to regroup and come back to the situation with a clearer mind and perspective.
- **Take a breath.** If you can't take a pause, take a breath. Even for 5 seconds...that's a long time for you to reframe the moment in your brain.
- **Make your thinking visible.** There are many times when you and a colleague might talk by each other. Verbally explaining your thinking or your process helps bring down the heat and the emotion from a conversation. It also helps open more common ground that settles emotions all around. There is power in why; it allows for clarity and prevents impulsive decisions.
- **Share the wins and the knowledge.** It's great and wonderful that you might think 5 times faster than those in the room, but consider when you can share being the "smartest person in the room", the attention, and the "always first" outbursts with others.



Our approach to Stromboli, an active volcano in Sicily. Calm before the eruption...

Be Inspired. Be Inspiring.
Stacie

Client Story

Operations Manager at a Cosmetics Manufacturer

My client was a very experienced process engineer, now leading a large team in troubleshooting and optimizing a manufacturing facility. He was having a challenge letting go and empowering his team members to step up to solve the problems and build their expertise.

He was assertive and had a low tolerance for stress and uncertainty. He also acknowledged his ego ;) He burst in with solutions, not giving team members an opportunity to learn, grow, and develop. His inability to control impulses and "jump into to save the day" became a very dominating and overbearing style.

Over time, he implemented a strategy of taking a pause, taking a breath when he was triggered to respond. This allowed my client the mental space to think first rather than responding immediately and alienating his staff. He used his breath to not speak and this let the others use the space to collaborate and problem solve.

His intent was always good. He wanted to develop the skills of his team members and share his knowledge. Slowly and surely, as he implemented his pause-for-a-breath strategy, he saw that his team were growing together, solving complex problems, asking for help or approval when required. He found himself in a position to support the team even more than before. The big aha moment - as a leader, you don't always need to speak first.

*"DON'T DO SOMETHING PERMANENTLY FOOLISH JUST
BECAUSE YOU ARE TEMPORARILY UPSET."*