



Dealing with Emotional People

Preview Points

- “Emotional” people are those who are in the grip of high emotion in the moment.
- There are some strategies for dealing with emotional people that may make the encounter more productive and less stressful.

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HINTS FOR DEALING WITH EMOTIONAL PEOPLE:

1. Pay attention to what the person is saying and particularly to what he / she seems to be feeling. Notice non-verbal cues such as tone of voice, facial expression, and body posture.
2. Listen closely to the person and his / her concerns. Listen and show that you are listening and showing genuine interest. You can be interested and “empathetic” regardless of whether or not you agree with what the person is saying.
3. If the person is angry or tearful, don’t run away from or avoid the emotion. Rather than avoid or ignore the feelings, let the person know that you know he / she is upset. Give him / her the feeling that you acknowledge and respect his / her feelings. Most of us really care more that we are acknowledged, that our feelings matter to someone, than we do about getting our own way.
4. Don’t try to calm the other person down just to make you feel more comfortable. Remember that he / she has some good reason for being upset. Instead of saying, ‘Now, now. Just calm down,’ you might try: ‘Gee, that really seems like a problem. I don’t know if we can solve it, but let’s try to figure it out.’ Then, get the facts and the whole story.
5. Don’t get defensive. Problems or mix-ups are not necessarily your fault and are inevitable in large systems. Acknowledge the problem, and work with the person to help them make the system work for them. If at all possible, don’t pass the buck.
6. Use your active listening skills. Get all the information you need to figure out the situation. Ask questions. Get clarification about things that seem confusing. Do not be afraid to structure the situation more or explain your role.

7. Work to keep things focused on the problem at hand. Demonstrate good problem-solving attitudes and skills. These skills may help you win the person's respect and trust. Then, you will be more likely to be able to help.

Concluding Points

- It helps to deal with an emotional person with calm and respect.
- Work respectfully with the other person to arrive at understanding and a mutually agreed-upon solution.