

How to Manage Emotional Reactions in a Conversation

From time to time, we can all be faced with strong reactions from those around us, particularly if we're trying to support someone who is struggling. Here are some things you can do to minimize awkwardness and reduce the pressure in these situations:

- Be prepared.
- Recognize their reaction may be in response to a range of circumstances—both personal and work-related—many of which you might not know about.
- Allow the person to express their emotions fully (i.e., let off steam) and show them you're interested by actively listening to all they say.
- Deal with the emotions first; once emotions have been addressed, then you can discuss the issues more rationally.
- Be a good listener—this is one of the best things you can do for someone when they are distressed.
- Manage your own emotions by staying calm and not taking things personally.
- Validate their response but keep the focus on the issue at hand.