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Three key strategies for managing emotions at work

"If you don't manage your emotions, then your emotions will manage you," wrote Doc Childre and Deborah Rozman, authors of the book, "Transforming Anxiety." Since emotions are part of being human, they are certainly a part of how we work and definitely need to be managed in order to achieve an efficient, effective and productive workplace.

As an individual with a diverse professional background, I have observed how easy it is for situations to become emotionally charged in

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the workplace. With the instability and uncertainty of today's world of work — budget cuts, organizational restructuring, pressure to do more with less, perform at higher levels, take on new roles — these challenges can lead to feelings of being overworked, overwhelmed and completely stressed out. So, as you might imagine, a bad mood, harsh words, negative body language or tone can easily send your emotions spiraling out of control.

As we move toward the end of this year and the beginning of the

new, perhaps it is a good time to evaluate how you have managed your emotions in 2011; then, develop a vision for setting goals and taking steps to enhance your skill set for managing those emotional struggles during 2012.

Here are three strategies I suggest you try to effectively manage your emotions while still maintaining your overall high level of professionalism and productivity:

1. Stop and evaluate. When you discover you're struggling with a challenging situation, don't ignore your emotions hoping the situation, anger, frustration and stress will go away. You know they won't.

One of the best strategies you can implement is to "mentally stop yourself" and evaluate the situation. For example, ask yourself why you just used an extremely negative, sarcastic tone with your co-worker. Attempt to discover what triggered the fit of temper, then begin to try and develop actions to deal with the issue. You might want to assess what you could have done differently, consider what you should stop doing, then start to do something in another way.

2. Take a time-out. Yes, this strategy can work for adults as well. Close your eyes. Breathe. Take a quick walk. Regroup emotionally and reflect. Removing yourself from the situation can go a long way

in helping to interrupt your negative thoughts and put you back on a positive path.

3. Focus on improving the situation. Many times just thinking about a positive aspect of your challenge can sometimes improve your mood and enable you to look at the issue from a different perspective. Start working forward from there. Once again, ask yourself what you could have done differently and make the decision as to what you will do next time.

It is my hope this column has provided food for thought as to how you can become better at handling your emotions not only in the workplace, but in life as well.

Best wishes to you all for a beautiful, blessed holiday season. And, in sending you a happy New Year cheer, I leave you with the words of a poem by William Arthur Ward:

"Another fresh new year is here ... another year to live! To banish worry, doubt and fear, to love and laugh and give! This bright new year is given me to live each day with zest ... to daily grow and try to be my highest and my best! ..."

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Managing your emotions at work

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