



Exercise: Understanding Personal Barriers

Dealing with negative emotions in the workplace can be one of a manager's greatest challenges. Not only are interactions with distressed workers complex and delicate, managers may face personal barriers and emotional triggers that make it especially difficult for them to engage in emotionally charged situations. Understanding these barriers can be an important first step toward being comfortable and effective when dealing with negative emotions in the workplace.

Think of personal barriers that commonly arise for you when called upon to address workers' negative emotions. What parts of dealing with different emotion states are difficult for you? What can you do to overcome these barriers (it may help to think of times you were successful)? The tables below can help you begin to organize your thoughts on personal barriers related to dealing with the main emotion categories that arise in the workplace: anger, fear and sadness. An example appears in italics.

ANGER		
Dealing with Other People's Anger is Hard for Me because....	Examples of Situations in Which I Dealt Effectively with Someone Else's Anger....	Specific Things I Can Do to Overcome My Personal Barriers....
<i>I'm scared I'm going to say something wrong and the situation could turn violent.</i>	<i>When John was upset about his vacation schedule and broke the printer.</i>	<i>Don't imagine worst-case scenarios. Just focus on the moment and stay calm.</i>
FEAR		
Dealing with Other People's Fear is Hard for Me because....	Examples of Situations in Which I Dealt Effectively with Someone Else's Fear....	Specific Things I Can Do to Overcome My Personal Barriers....



SADNESS

Dealing with Other People's Sadness is Hard for Me because....	Examples of Situations in Which I Dealt Effectively with Someone Else's Sadness....	Specific Things I Can Do to Overcome My Personal Barriers....