Welcome

Dealing with Irritability in Uncertain Times

Office of the Ombudsman and the Staff Counsellor’s Office, HRMS at UN Geneva
Session Objectives

• Learn how best to manage our internal dynamics to dampen tempers and soothe irritability.

• Learn how to manage our external relationships after frustrations have gotten the better of us.
Speakers

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Dealing with irritability in uncertain times

The Office of the Ombudsman & the Staff Counsellor’s Office in collaboration with the UN Knowledge & Learning Commons
The Office of the Ombudsman

The Staff Counsellor’s Office
Overview of today’s webinar dialogue

- Irritability quotient scale
- Internal dynamics: presented by the Staff Counsellors Office
- External dynamics: presented by the Office of the Ombudsman
How and What are you Feeling Today?

1. Using the below scale of 0 to 4, please rate how each event would make you feel:

You get up extra early to go to work at 7am so you can have some peace and quiet to work on a project, but you get interrupted by your team and asked to deal with something important.

- 0 – you would feel very little or no annoyance
- 1 – you would feel a little irritated
- 2 – you would feel moderately upset
- 3 – you would feel quite angry
- 4 – you would feel very angry

...
The Link Between Irritability, Anger and Clogged Arteries
What are the consequences of being irritable?

- Impact of my irritable mood on others
- Impact of my irritable mood on myself
- My reaction to others
What are the signs?
How can I recognise I’m getting irritable?

- Physical
- Behavioral
- Cognitive
How irritability affects our brain and body?
How irritability can affect our brain?

**PREFRONTAL CORTEX**

Elevated cortisol causes a loss of neurons in the prefrontal cortex (PFC). Suppressed activity in the PFC prevents you from using your best judgment - it keeps you from making good decisions and planning for the future.

**HIPPOCAMPUS**

Elevated cortisol kills neurons in the hippocampus and disrupts the creation of new ones. Suppressed activity in the hippocampus weakens short-term memory. It also prevents you from forming new memories properly. (This is why you might not remember what you want to say in an argument.)
How stress hormones affect your body

**CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM**
- Heart rate ↑
- Blood pressure ↑
- Arterial tension ↑
- Blood glucose level ↑
- Blood fatty acid level ↑

When these symptoms become chronic, blood vessels become clogged and damaged. This can lead to stroke and heart attack.

**IMMUNE SYSTEM**
- Thyroid function ↓
- The number of natural killer cells ↓
- The number of virus-infected cells ↑
- Incidence of cancer ↑

**DIGESTIVE SYSTEM**
- Blood flow ↓
- Metabolism ↓
- Dry mouth ↑
- Intraocular pressure ↑
- Eye sight ↓

- Migraines ↑
- Headaches ↑

- Bone density ↓
How to calm down when you are feeling irritable?

- Acknowledge your feelings
- Keep a diary to recognise the situations and triggers
- Find out the source and address it
- Breath
- Grounding exercises
- Helicopter view: gain perspective
Letting go...

- Be compassionate with yourself
- Be honest with yourself. What is the reason for my irritability?
- Express the unexpressed
External Dynamics
How can I have a boundary setting conversation?

How do I apologize for losing my temper or lashing out at a colleague?
## Boundary Setting Conversations - S-B-I Model

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>Situation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe the situation. Be specific about when and where it occurred.</td>
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<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
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<td>Describe the observable behavior. Don’t assume you know what the other person was thinking.</td>
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<th>I</th>
<th>Impact</th>
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<td>Describe what you thought or felt in reaction to the behavior.</td>
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Boundary Setting Conversations - S-B-I Model

**Situation**—Describe when and where the behaviors were observed. Being more specific about the situation will give clearer feedback.

✔️ “When I was presenting at today’s staff meeting...”
❌ “In the meeting today,...”
Boundary Setting Conversations - S-B-I Model

Behavior—Describe the actions that were directly observed. Use the specifics, not an interpretation or judgement of the person’s behaviors.

✓ “and you disagreed with my proposal and repeatedly interrupted”

✗ “when you were being openly disrespectful to me”
Boundary Setting Conversations - S-B-I Model

**Impact**—Describe how the person’s behavior impacted you and others who were present. Using “I” statements will make your internal experience known to the individual.

✔ “I felt as if my ideas weren’t heard. I was embarrassed to be put down in front of the whole staff.”

✗ “It made me look bad in front of everyone”
Boundary Setting Conversations - Additional Pointers

- Barriers vs. Hurdles
- Left-hand column process
1. Have you ever had a situation at work where you knew you should have apologized but you didn’t

- Yes
- No

Submit
How to say ‘sorry’ with sincerity and grace

The Art to an Effective Apology
Objectives

- To create awareness about what makes an apology effective
- Sensitise you about “false” apologies and their negative impact
- Promote a culture of apology as part of a respectful workplace
Why is it hard to say ‘sorry’?
An effective apology is a powerful means of reconciliation and for restoring relationship and trust.
What makes an apology effective?  
5 elements

| Sincerity - Do you really mean it? | Tone of voice  
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<th>Body language</th>
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<td>Acknowledgement of the pain or embarrassment caused</td>
<td>What I said was insensitive; I could have chosen different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I realise this was hurtful to you; if someone said this to me, I would not have liked it either</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A statement of regret</td>
<td>I am really sorry I reacted so irritably to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An indication of future intentions</td>
<td>I will make sure this does not happen again. I hope we will be able to once again work well together</td>
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Beware of non-apologies

What is a non-apology?

- A ‘forced’ apology because it is the ‘right’ thing to do
- Absence of remorse or sorrow
- Involves excuses
- (Implicitly) blames the other person for having taken offense.
Examples of a non-apology

- I am sorry you are feeling this way
- I am sorry you are so easily hurt
- Sorry I snapped at you. I was really stressed out as I had to finish something.
- I am sorry if I hurt your feelings
- I am sorry I made that joke but it was funny
What are the possible effects of a non-apology?

Trust is further eroded

It reinforces the feeling of hurt
How to offer an effective apology – a five-step process

1. Ask for a moment to speak to the other person
2. Refer to the facts of what happened. Beware of justifying the mistake you made, or implicitly blaming the other
3. Acknowledge the pain or embarrassment experienced by the other person
4. Offer words of apology. Express regret for what you did or share your feelings about the mistake you made
5. Give an indication of your future intentions (e.g. not to repeat the wrong-doing)
Thank you
Join us for the follow-up workshop!

1 October 2020 from 10am to 11.30am.

Scan the QR code or register via the link in the chat: https://bit.ly/34IssoP

Thank you for joining!

Dealing with Irritability in Uncertain Times, with the Office of the Ombudsman and the Staff Counsellor’s Office at UN Geneva.

To provide feedback, please scan this QR code:

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