

Dealing with frustration

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Most of us are likely to find some circumstances or people at work frustrating, but there are steps you can take to overcome that feeling, says *Karen Gately*.

For most people dealing with frustration is an all too regular challenge. Reflect for a moment on how you respond to feeling frustrated. Does your blood pressure rise when your efforts to progress outcomes are thwarted? Do you find yourself drained of energy when people behave in certain ways? Understanding what ‘presses your buttons’ is the first step toward dealing with frustrations, ideally before they arise.

Understand yourself

While most of us like to believe we are self-aware, research shows that the opposite is in fact true. In one widely reported study, Dr Tasha Eurich and her research team found 95 percent of us believe we have a good understanding of ourselves; however, only 10 to 15 percent actually do. But don't let this fact deter you. Research also shows there are steps we can take to build deeper insight to both our inner world of thoughts and feelings as well as our awareness of how we are perceived by the world around us.

Honest feedback can be undeniably tough to hear and take on board. But without it, seeing a full picture of ourselves is virtually impossible. Look for people you trust to help you build awareness of how you're thinking and who influence the depth of frustration you feel.

Understand difference

The simple truth is we are all different and at times those differences can give rise to conflicts.

Take for example the differences in the way an introverted versus extroverted person thinks and behaves. Introverts typically prefer to think things through before speaking, while in contrast extroverts prefer to think out loud and are therefore more likely to share their thought process. However it's extraordinarily common for an extroverted leader to express frustration at the introverted members of their team who they perceive to be disengaged. When in reality all they need to do is change their own approach to get what they need from the people they lead.

Manage our expectations

At times the best way to avoid frustration is to recognise that your expectations are the issue. According to Dr Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski's report in their book *The Key Insights to Burnout*, the scientific reason for many of our frustrations lies in the working of a particular brain function known as discrepancy-reducing / increasing feedback loop. This function is there to constantly assess our current situation against our future plans and keep track of how much effort it's going to take to get there. To put it simply, our brain tells us when we should feel concerned about how well we're doing in achieving our objectives.

If you're driven by outcomes, recognise that other people are focused on precision. While you may be pushing for a result, they may in turn be pushing back to ensure all of the appropriate i's are dotted and t's are crossed. If you are the type of person that likes to explore conceptual ideas, recognise other people are likely to become frustrated if you never work to turn ideas into workable solutions.

Take a breath

The reality is, despite growing your self-awareness and empathy for the priorities, preferences and approaches of other people, there are likely to be days or events we still find frustrating. In those moments the best you can do is observe the draining emotions you are experiencing and choose to put them in their place.

While that can be far easier said than done, you're entirely more likely to shift your mindset and get back to feeling calm if you have a plan. If you're like most people you'll need a 'circuit breaker'. Some people take a walk around the block to burn off steam. Others spend some time focused on their breathing. Whatever works for you, choose to step away from frustration and adjust your expectations of what is likely or possible.

See Karen at an Executive PA Masterclass

Karen Gately is one of our facilitators for the 2020 Executive PA Media Masterclass program. If you'd like to learn how to become a 'high impact EA', book your spot to see Karen in Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne at a Masterclass this year, [click here](#).



THE EXPERT

Karen Gately, founder of Corporate Dojo, is a leadership and people-management specialist. Karen works with leaders and HR teams to drive results through the talent and energy of people.

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