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New Research Looks at the Role Emotions Play at Work

A sampling of the latest scholarship on how to keep calm and carry on.

By Arianne Cohen



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Google Scholar counts more than 17,000 studies on regulating emotions in the workplace in the past two years alone. “Workplaces are more emotionally charged given current events, work, and family stressors,” says Allison Gabriel, an associate professor of management at the University of Arizona. A sampling of the latest scholarship on how to keep calm and carry on.

Don’t hide your feelings

Title: “Are Co-Workers Getting Into the Act? An Examination of Emotion Regulation in Co-Worker Exchanges”

Publication: *Journal of Applied Psychology*, December 2019

Summary: Pair your negative emotions with forward-looking positivity, then express that. “We are horrible actors when it comes to faking our emotions,” says Gabriel, a co-author. “All those negative emotions still leak out.”

Title: “Unpacking the ‘Why’ Behind Strategic Emotion Expression at Work: A Narrative Review and Proposed Taxonomy”

Publication: *European Management Journal*, February 2020

Summary: “We often regulate our emotions to meet other people’s needs,” says co-author Dirk Lindebaum, an organizational psychologist at Grenoble École de Management. “If you suppress emotions, you’re more likely to suffer psychologically.” Instead, ask why you’re doing it.

Don’t worry, be happy

Title: “Investigating the Effects of Anger and Guilt on Unethical Behavior: A Dual-Process Approach”

Publication: *Journal of Business Ethics*, September 2018

Summary: Co-author Daphna Motro, an assistant professor of management at Hofstra University, says angry people are more inclined to lash out or overpay themselves. Guilt, however, reduces unethical behavior.

Title: “Positive Emotions at Work”

Publication: *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, January 2020

Summary: Growing evidence shows that positive emotions—including creativity, engagement, coping, teamwork, customer satisfaction, and leadership—are good for workplace success.

Don’t get overwhelmed

Title: “Managing Job Burnout: The Effects of Emotion-Regulation Ability, Emotional Labor, and Positive and Negative Affect at Work”

Publication: *International Journal of Stress Management*, August 2019

Summary: Those with positive traits such as enthusiasm, confidence, energy, and alertness are more likely to manage ups and downs successfully.

Title: “A Nonlinear Relationship Between the Cumulative Exposure to Occupational Stressors and Nurses’ Burnout”

Publication: *Journal of Mental Health*, October 2017

Summary: Despite stressful situations, some nurses successfully avoid burnout by not suppressing emotions, avoiding rumination, and positively reframing circumstances they can’t change.

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