

**EMOTIONS IN BUSINESS: GOOD OR BAD?****By Robert J. Tamasy**

Emotions are curious things. We see them on display at weddings, sporting events, family gatherings, and in public demonstrations. They can range from joy and happiness, with smiles and laughter, to deep sadness with tears and agonized cries. They can reflect high-spirited enthusiasm or deep-seated anger. In the home, emotions can provide a secure environment where family members can thrive, or they can cause great turmoil and even fear.

We can observe emotions exhibited in the business and professional world as well, both in positive ways and in a negative sense. Watching the trading floor at the New York Stock Exchange we can see the full spectrum of emotions, from great excitement to sheer panic, depending on how the markets are trending.

At an individual company or in an office setting, we can find many examples of emotions used, misused, and abused. An energetic, positive, affirming leader can do much to inspire and motivate those under his or her authority. However, a negative, critical leader prone to fits of anger can have a demoralizing and counterproductive impact on the team.

Over my career I have worked for several very different bosses. Some were so inspirational I would have run through a wall for them. Others, however, had demeanors that wore people down over time, causing them to dread coming in to work every day. One person I worked for in a newsroom would have unexpected fits of rage, even taking items off his desk and throwing them when he was displeased.

Timothy Kight, the late entrepreneur and leadership consultant, understood the power of emotions, both for good and for ill. He said, "Emotions are a great servant but a terrible master. Harness your emotions and make them work for you, not against you. Your emotions should be a messenger, not a dictator."

Not surprisingly, the Bible has much to say about emotions and how they are expressed. A prominent example was Israel's King Saul, who had the disconcerting habit of throwing spears at his rivals. Here are just a few of the many principles the Scriptures provide concerning emotions, both in action and in words:

**Negative emotions bring adverse consequences.** Uncontrolled emotions can result not only in actions we might later regret, but also generate negative feelings and attitudes toward us from those we work with. "An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins" (Proverbs 29:22)

**Positive speech and actions reap benefits.** It is impossible to overestimate the importance of communicating affirming, uplifting feelings both through our words and our actions. "Do not

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let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29)

**Emotions can be contagious.** That man I mentioned who threw things from his desk? Some of those who reported to him began to exhibit similar behavior, wrongly believing that was expected of them. “Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and become ensnared” (Proverbs 22:24-25)

© 2024. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC’s Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today’s Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd’s Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard.

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### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of emotions have you seen exhibited in the workplace? In your opinion, what kinds of emotional display are appropriate – and which are not?
2. How would you rate yourself on the emotional scale, 1 being very low and emotional and 10 being very prone toward displays of emotion? Explain your answer.
3. Can you think of an example or two when someone’s display of positive emotions provided very beneficial, even inspirational results? What about one or two situations when negative emotions were exhibited that had a clearly detrimental effect on the working environment?
4. How do you react to the statement, “Emotions are a great servant but a terrible master. Harness your emotions and make them work for you, not against you”?

### Challenge For This Week

We all are emotional beings; some of us just exhibit our feelings more openly than others. During the coming week consider how you handle your emotions – at work and in the home as well – whether they are openly communicated or not.

If you conclude you sometimes struggle with your emotions in inappropriate ways, consider meeting with a trusted friend (or more) and discuss this, being willing to consider their advice. Similarly, if you know of someone who needs help in dealing with his or her emotions, be willing to offer your help if requested.

### NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:  
Proverbs 14:17, 15:18, 17:27, 27:4; Matthew 12:34; Romans 14:19; Colossians 3:8, 4:6-7

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