



**The Blake Group**  
Organizational Consulting LLC

More Than Consulting. Solutions.™

## October 2013 Newsletter

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Thanks for reading.

### Get Emotional & Lead Better

Emotions are critical to everything a leader must do: build trust, strengthen relationships, set a vision, focus energy, get people moving, make tradeoffs, make tough decisions, and learn from failure. Without genuine emotion these things always fall flat and stall. You need emotion on the front end to inform prioritization. You need it on the back end to motivate and inspire.

Yes, being too emotional in business can create problems. It clouds objective analysis, fouls up negotiations, and leads to rash decisions. But in nearly two decades of working with leaders, I've found that showing too much emotion is far less of a problem than the opposite — showing too little.

Effective leaders don't buy into or try to suppress their inner experiences. Instead they approach them in a mindful, values-driven, and productive way—developing what we call emotional agility. In our complex, fast-changing knowledge economy, this ability to manage one's thoughts and feelings is essential to business success.

Numerous studies, from the University of London professor Frank Bond and others, show that emotional agility can help people alleviate stress, reduce errors, become more innovative, and improve job performance.

Often, one of the reasons we don't show emotion is because we're not even aware we're feeling it. We're angry, frustrated, or upset and we suppress it. We're excited, motivated, or inspired and we temper it. We do it without even realizing it. Emotional data seems less relevant in the business world where logical data reigns supreme. But it's not only relevant; it's usually the lynchpin to change and growth.

One further point. It's important to note there's a gender bias around showing emotion at work. I've seen that in the same places where men get labeled tough, passionate, or open, women get labeled bitchy, hysterical, or weak. I find this double standard particularly destructive and insidious because it leads to women's emotions getting dismissed more readily than men's, often at exactly the times where that emotion is most needed — times when no one else in the room is raising the most important points. We all need to stay aware of this double standard and not enable it.

### Develop Emotional Agility

**Recognize your patterns.** The first step in developing emotional agility is to notice when you've been hooked by your thoughts and feelings.

**Label your thoughts and emotions.** When you're hooked, the attention you give your thoughts and feelings crowds your mind; there's no room to examine them.

**Accept them.** The opposite of control is acceptance—not acting on every thought or resigning yourself to negativity but responding to your ideas and emotions with an open attitude, paying attention to them and letting yourself experience them.

**Act on your values.** When you unhook yourself from your difficult thoughts and emotions, you expand your choices. You can decide to act in a way that aligns with your values.

Source: Advice from Susan David, CEO of Evidence Based Psychology, a cofounder of the Institute of Coaching, and an instructor in psychology at Harvard University. Christina Congleton, formerly a researcher on mindfulness and the brain at Massachusetts General Hospital, is an associate at Evidence Based Psychology

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