



## 8 Tips on Emotions for Task-Oriented Leaders

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### 1. Add emotions to your leadership toolkit

Task-oriented people often regard emotions as a distraction or an inefficiency. On the contrary, feeding people's emotional needs can increase efficiency and help you and your teams be more productive. In other words, it's important to be able to flex your leadership style and hence your emotional expression. Learn the contexts in which expressing warmth is beneficial and when getting straight to the point would be a better approach.

### 2. Acknowledge the limitations of rational thinking

"But it's a rational decision!" "Why don't they see it's clear from the data?" Even rational, data-driven decisions involve emotions. Data can be disappointing and saving face might be important. Emotions are there whether we like it or not. Assuming people will check their emotions at the door is like wearing blinders into the workplace. By acknowledging that emotions are present, you are taking more information into consideration when you plan your strategy and make decisions. The book [\*Emotional Intelligence 2.0\*](#) is a great resource.

### 3. Look for signs of emotions

As a leader, it is particularly important to take note of where others in the room are coming from. Are they in agreement? Are two team members not getting along? Does your team suffer from a lack of motivation? Use your senses to "feel the temperature in the room." The first sense is sight. Use your eyes to see how are people are sitting. Are they slumped back, facing away from each other (or you), avoiding eye contact, crossing their arms, or frowning? This is valuable information for you to use as you try to influence the team. If there's a lot of negativity in the room, you'll need to start from a different place than if people are in alignment. Too many leaders skip this step and find themselves floundering in deep water without understanding why.

### 4. Learn how to talk about emotions

It's hard to talk about emotions and most of us aren't very good at it. Moreover, we may fight the temptation to talk about emotions to avoid being seen as weak or overly feminine (especially for women). But it doesn't have to be that way. Women and men who are able to articulate their own and others' feelings tend to be [\*effective leaders\*](#) because they connect with people and manage difficult situations. Talking about emotions doesn't have to sound soft. Look at these examples. "That sounds frustrating." "I'm anxious about the upcoming deadline." "I'm really glad you're back. We missed you while you were gone." "It's crushing to lose a sale that big. How are you handling it?"

### 5. Allow people to express emotions

Have you ever been in a meeting where nothing got done because there was an underlying tension that kept people from being productive? Sometimes it helps to start a meeting with a 10-minute check-in or vent. If you give people a chance to let it out, they can get it out of their system and move on and stay focused. The key to success in this situation is to close the vent or celebration session and tell people it's time to get down to business. Usually, people are calmer and can move on. If someone is holding on, however, you may need to invite them to take a break and come back when they're ready or offer to set up a one-on-one after the meeting.

## 6. A little empathy goes a long way

[Empathy is a critical skill for global leaders.](#) Whether you're in a tough negotiation or having lunch with a key stakeholder, you can bridge gaps by understanding what they're going through at an emotional level. It doesn't have to be mushy or long-winded; just a simple understanding of what they're feeling. In a negotiation, it might be, "I can see how important this is to you. I would be asking the same questions." At lunch, it could be, "I bet you're feeling pretty good about the results of your study." Think of empathy as a social lubricant. It smooths out the rough patches and allows different parts of the organization or different organizations altogether to work harmoniously. When in doubt, empathize.

## 7. Face-to-Face, not email!

Make it a policy not to email or text about emotionally challenging topics. Don't let the Millennials trick you. Too much information is missing in text-only communications—facial expressions, body language, vocal tone, to name a few. When you need to deliver negative feedback to someone, disagree with them, or apologize for something you did, it is important to both convey your emotions and read theirs. We've all sent emails we regret and have stewed over emails we've received. Save time, energy, and relationships by meeting in person or picking up the phone. When things escalate, productivity and trust are lost. Projects get delayed and information is not shared. [It's worth the effort to talk face-to-face.](#) It will save you time in the long run.

## 8. If you don't know, ask

How much time have you wasted wondering if someone is mad at you, tiptoeing around, asking others if they've heard anything? How much effort have you put into trying to convince someone to do something because you thought they needed convincing? If you don't know how someone is feeling, ask them. If you can't read how someone is feeling, try one of these questions. "How do you feel about that?" or "I'm having trouble reading you. Do you have concerns about the project?" or "What's your take on the situation?" You can also enlist someone who's good at reading emotions to help you. Many successful leaders have help, just as they might ask someone else to take notes while they are leading a discussion.

**Ask Joanie your "emotional question" on a free 15-minute zoom or phone call:**

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