



# wolf callings

## We Pack Our Emotions with Us, Even at Work

For those of you who are convinced you don't pack your emotions with your laptop in your briefcase each morning, stop! Don't waste your time reading this article. Read on only if you've ever regretted your emotional reaction to a workplace situation.

Anyone left still reading? Congratulations, you've just grasped the basic point: your emotions are always present, even at the office where you know you are always "most professional" in your behavior. Just because we are adults doesn't mean we don't still sometimes act from our emotions. Hard to believe? Not really.

### TEST IT FOR YOUR-SELF-WE ALL STILL WANT TO PLEASE MOMMY

Try this exercise...grab a bag of cookies, stick your nose in and take a deep breath. Does that take you back to your Mom's kitchen? Can you picture

your little three year-old-self looking longingly at the cookie jar? Do you remember a few minutes later when your mother caught you with a face full of crumbs and you first learned how to lie? Why did you lie? Were you evil? I don't think so. You just made a simple choice to want a smiling Mommy rather than a sore behind.

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And sure enough, as adults, we would rather make people happy than not. This fact provides us with a built-in anxiety about possible negative results of our work. There are many reasons why we want to succeed in our working endeavors. Wanting to deliver good news upwards is just one of them.

### IT'S STILL UNPLEASANT TO DELIVER BAD NEWS UPWARDS

Now, fast-forward to the most recent occasion when you had to deliver less-than-wonderful news somewhere above you in the workplace pecking order. Are

you there? Feel the prickling on the back of your neck? Is there a little moisture on your upper lip? Smell the cookies?

## **SIMPLE EMOTIONAL CHOICES CAN COLOR OUR RESPONSE**

With this connection established, you can see how simple emotional choices can color our response to our outcome measures. Although these measures appear as cold, impersonal numbers, we often give them the power to lead us into a three year-old's

response and decision model. This may work in the short run for three year-olds, but its certainly career limiting and angst-producing in the adult arena of business decisions.

## **SHOWING ACCOUNTABILITY IS A HIGHER MEASURE**

This doesn't mean you have to forego the "high" of being praised by your authority figure (oh, hi Mom.) It does mean the praise can come from a more complex set of signals. Often, it isn't the metric itself which does you credit; it's being

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able to show your insights and accountability for it.

So, whether your results are good, bad or ugly, own them fully. Concentrate on the important information they give you about where you need to put your attention. If you fully understand the story they tell, you can appreciate that even inside a negative measure, there is usually valuable information. And if there isn't, you're still free to choose your reaction. You can then move on to applying quality improvements to make the next measurement better. Misery IS optional. 🐺

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*It is nice to have someone to call when things are not going well that will help us find a way through it”.*

*- A state government project manager*

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