

1.2.3 Emotional Spinning is More than Experiencing Our Feelings

Emotional spinning is not the regular day-to-day feelings that people experience and demonstrate. Emotional spinning is not the acute, short-lived moments of agitation or disturbance that are a reaction to normal challenges.

Emotional spinning is an effect, or process, which endures long enough to have consequences. Acute or short-term processes are like breezes; they come and go with a bit of a dramatic flair, but are not consequential, unless the breeze is carrying a contagious disease. (The consequences of a toxic-laden breeze may be quite collectively impressive.) When people get together day after day at work, tension happens and conflicts happen. Tension and conflict are normal breezy gusts associated with human beings that hang out with other human beings. People working together are going to find joy and annoyance as they associate with one another to create products and complete performance tasks. Human feelings happen and spin into all the nooks and crannies of human life, including the worksite, like simple breezes blowing across the face of planet Earth. No part of the Earth is untouched by the wind. This is a good thing. A bit of a breeze can move the dust of boredom around and create a sense of “fresh air” in a worksite. New ideas can come from a bit of fresh air. Normal human emotions are good. Emotional spins, however, are more like big winds, tempests, gales, storms, typhoons, hurricanes, cyclones, and batten-down-the-hatch-and-head-for-the-cellar tornadoes!

Many human feelings are the kind that can be described as positive, like happy, enthusiastic, hopeful, ambitious, energized, loyal, and so forth. Some feelings are the kind that can be described as negative like angry, fearful, gloomy, annoyed, tense, and so forth. Some feelings are comfy and some are uncomfortable. Both kinds of emotions, positive and negative, are normal, human, useful, to be expected, and are okay, even at the worksite. Most healthy adults can handle periods of joy and periods of discomfort without it interfering with their jobs. Even the bigger emotions that go with grief and sorrow, anger and disappointment can come and go. Most individuals and businesses can handle temporary periods of joy and periods of discomfort and even turmoil without significant risk or losses. Businesses that employ human beings should expect and be willing and able to handle the full range of human emotional expression without coming apart at the seams. If you, or your company, are made out of tissue paper and the wind blows, this is another discussion.

There are some very scary human beings in the world and in our worksites. Scary people have day jobs, too, you know!

1.2.4 Sometimes Spinning Leads to Violence

Okay, so you agree that human emotions are normal. Even big emotions can be useful and creative. But emotions that escalate to conflict must be stopped long before violence. And what does that mean? When is someone having a bad moment, and when is someone being a bully or emotional terrorist? What are the rules? What is abusive? And what should you just ignore?

Violence and abuse does happen and it happens at work and at home. Women abuse men. Men abuse women. Men abuse men. Women abuse women. There are some very scary human beings in the world and in our worksites. Scary people have day jobs, too, you know! Bullies, battering spouses, child abusers, sex offenders, criminals, and even mass murders have jobs.

No one is immune to the potential dangers of abuse and violence, not even at work. Abuse and violence are not culturally, ethnically, racially, politically, socioeconomically, or in any other way limited to one group or another. Workplace spinning is an equal-opportunity issue. So is abuse and violence. It is necessary to learn how to recognize the difference between situations of normal conflict that includes big emotions, and situations of abuse or violence.

Some industries require their employees to be mandated reporters of abuse and violence. Health professionals, teachers, law enforcement personnel, and even day-care providers are required to take training on violence and abuse. You and your employees can opt to become mandated reporters of abuse violence toward other people and find a local or national educator to train your team. Abusers do not want you to have that information and will downplay the seriousness of their emotions and your efforts in order to create a deflection. The courts are becoming more and more concerned with bullies and domestic and child violence and *it is becoming more important for businesses to stop covertly supporting perpetrators, and to take positions of anti-abuse advocacy in their companies.*

If you suspect violence or abuse is happening at your worksite, or someone on your team is either perpetrating or suffering from abuse, check your employee handbook and follow your company's policies. If there is no policy, protect yourself first. As they say when you fly, "Put on your own

oxygen mask first before you try to help others!” If you are not supported by your company, make certain you take care of you. Then if you need more help, go ahead and call Child or Adult Protective Services, a mental health crisis response unit, or 911. If you are wrong, it will certainly be embarrassing. If you are right, it will certainly be upsetting. If you are wrong, you might lose your job. If you are right, you might even lose your job. If you are right, you may save a life! If you are right and don’t make the call you may read your name or that of someone else in the headlines tomorrow. Which headline would you rather read: “Joe Fired” or “Joe Murdered”? Up to you!

You may be in an abusive or potentially violent situation if you:

- ▶ Are frightened of someone’s temper.
- ▶ Are feeling crazy because someone says you are the cause of the problems.
- ▶ Feel controlled by someone’s actions, silences, moods, looks, gestures, voice, threats.
- ▶ Have the urge to rescue someone when he/she is in trouble.
- ▶ Apologize for someone’s bad behavior.
- ▶ Make decisions about your activities, friends and ideas, according to what someone else wants or how they might react.
- ▶ Were abused as a child or in another relationship.
- ▶ Have been teased, pushed, ignored, slapped, chased, punched, tickled, thrown, hit, humiliated, or worse and that person has not responded to your needs for safety.
- ▶ Are forced to have sex, commit a crime, do something unethical or against your will, or are humiliated for refusal.
- ▶ Are forcibly isolated from others.
- ▶ Are afraid to express your feelings for fear of someone’s response, or told your feelings were invalid, or that you were to blame for any problems.
- ▶ Are passive-aggressive and use silence and stonewalling to control someone else’s behaviors.

- ▶ Blame others for your bad feelings rather than being accountable for your own moods.
- ▶ Feel like a poor victim most of the time.

You may be contributing to abuse or potential violence if you:

- ▶ Lose your temper frequently or easily.
- ▶ Drink alcohol or use drugs excessively.
- ▶ Are very jealous, sulk silently when upset, use silence as a weapon, use explosive behavior as a weapon, and have difficulty expressing your feelings.
- ▶ Criticize and put down people.
- ▶ Blame others for problems.
- ▶ Monopolize the free time of others.
- ▶ Have rigid ideas about roles and control.
- ▶ Have broken things, hit, shoved, kicked, tickled, punched, pushed, slapped, chased, humiliated, teased, physically controlled or worse, and blamed others for these behaviors.
- ▶ Frightened others with displays of anger or threats of danger to self, children, pets, property, or others.
- ▶ Were physically or emotionally abused as a child.
- ▶ Saw violence in your family home.