

EXECUTIVE VITALITY: COACH YOURSELF OUT OF A BAD MOOD

You have read in previous editions of Breakaway Performance that we encourage taking care of yourself—getting adequate sleep, eating properly, and exercising as a route, not just to better health and increased vitality, but specifically to increased calmness, serenity, contentment, and ability to handle the stresses inherent in being a leader.

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, we as leaders, still end up angry, disappointed, or otherwise in bad humor. Perhaps an inconsiderate driver on the freeway triggered you; maybe it was a comment your spouse made, or the behavior of your boss or a customer. The cause doesn't matter—what does matter is the ripple effect. You end up in a bad mood and your listening skills are diminished; you may be more reactive; you may be less patient; you may just need alone time. The key to remember is that your impact on others is significant. Taking the time to regroup is important. So, we suggest:

1. Understand that you are triggered. Knowing that your state of wellbeing is compromised is an important quality for emotional stability and bad mood management.
2. Identify the trigger and park it. For example, a customer for whom you have bent over backwards has given your company a very public negative review. You are furious. Instead of calling your contact and making some defensive or sarcastic remark, you can:
 - a. Realize you are triggered. This is the most difficult step and requires self-awareness.
 - b. Identify the real causes of your discomfort. Do you feel unappreciated by your customer? Do you feel “disrespected” by the other driver?
 - c. Breathe deeply and calm down. Visualize something that makes you happy or picture yourself in a favorite spot—smiling.
 - d. Remove yourself from the temptation of picking up the phone (go for a walk without your cell phone) so as not to escalate the situation.
 - e. Return to the situation with personal awareness. Consider how you can turn the trigger into something positive. For example, criticism, though negative, can be seen as a gift that presents an opportunity to improve. Why assume it is without merit? Annoyance at an inconsiderate driver could be turned into an opportunity to discuss driving and responses to provocations with your children or other young people.
3. Remind yourself that you are responsible for your own internal state of wellness. Take five minutes to visualize letting go of the emotional bondage of anger, disappointment, fear, and other negative emotions that the situation may have stirred up.
4. Recognize how thankful you are for the job you are in, the house you own, the friends you have, your health, and your relationships.
5. For additional tips on getting out of a bad mood, see the excellent *Harvard Business Review* article [4 Steps to Dispel a Bad Mood](#).

How can you help yourself out of a bad mood the next time one hits? What triggers are likely to put you in one?