

FAST COMPANY

13 tips to stay level-headed in the world of business

Be calm and professional in the workplace, so you can lead your employees by example.

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When you are dealing with team dynamics and diverse perspectives in the workplace environment, there are bound to be occasions when team leaders or co-workers disagree over the projected plans on an assignment or a decision that was made.

In these cases, it's best for everyone involved to put the conversation on pause so they can take time to reflect on what's happening and refrain from overreacting on the spot. Here are 13 suggestions from [Fast Company Executive Board](#) members to help agitated colleagues focus on the business at hand without losing their cool.

1. AVOID HASTY REACTIONS.

There is always time to handle any situation, no matter how severe they initially seem. It's important to avoid hasty reactions. Take a moment to gather all the details and information you need to tackle the situation. If it involves multiple people, an open platform for communication is ideal such as in-person meetings or an online forum to diffuse tensions. – [Larry Brinker Jr., BRINKER](#)

2. STEP AWAY SO YOU CAN THINK CLEARLY.

It's best to step away from the situation to reassess it. Take time to think about multiple perspectives and emotionally detach yourself from the state of affairs. – [Harish Srigriraju, Verizon](#)

3. LOOK THROUGH SOMEONE ELSE'S LENS.

Make a conscious effort to broaden your perspective. Our perception of any situation is always limited by our individual perspectives. The more narrow your lens is the more limited your capacity will be to truly communicate. So broaden your perspective by asking thoughtful questions of the others in the circumstance—look through their lens. This will inherently sharpen your judgment and ease the tension. – [Jennifer Lee, Intradiem](#)

4. FOCUS ON THE IDEAL OUTCOME.

Focus on the outcome you want. What do you need to do or say to get the best result? If you focus on the outcome, you will be less likely to get caught up in drama, emotion, or unproductive behavior. – [David Faye, Faye Business Systems Group, Inc.](#)

5. STAY CALM AND CURIOUS.

Even the tensest moments can be learning opportunities, so approach the situation with curiosity. All interactions—even difficult ones—yield information. Staying calm in a tense situation, rather than defaulting to emotional reactivity, allows you to identify that information more clearly, pinpoint the underlying issues, have empathy for other people's positions, and pose rational solutions. – [Nicole Marra, Fixer Advisory](#)

6. WRITE DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS.

Wait. Don't react on the spot. Give it a couple of hours, let your thoughts wander, and then write down how best to approach this new situation. – [Yoav Vilner, Walnut](#)

7. GET A TRUSTED OPINION AS YOU MAP UP THE RESOLUTION.

Take a step back to collect yourself, your thoughts, your response, and your resolution. A tense business situation will most likely not bring about a meeting of the minds or de-escalation. Sometimes it is best to table a topic or discussion and revisit it after some reflective time. Mapping out the best course to resolve the situation, and getting other trusted opinions on a response resolution could also be helpful. – [Eric Cohen, NuVoodoo](#)

8. BE MORE PERSONAL WITH COMMUNICATION OUTREACH.

Earlier on in my career, I lost my temper a few times. It did nothing to inspire me or my designers. Now, when things get tense, we pick up the phone, hop on a Zoom, or get together in person to be present, talk things through, and co-create solutions. Meeting up in real life is a much better approach for staying cool than communicating over a text message or through email, where we all tend to say things we wouldn't normally say to each other in person. – [Beau Oyler, Enlisted Design](#)

9. BRING HUMOR AND LAUGHTER INTO THE ROOM.

Research has shown that laughter has a chemical impact on the brain that is proven to enhance perceptions, build bonds, speed the path to trust, improve creativity, and drive new connections in a safe space. After all, it is hard to lose your cool when you are laughing, and it is also impossible not to like someone who makes you laugh. – [Maggie O'Neill, Peppercomm](#)

10. ALWAYS ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT.

Most people have good intentions and by assuming that they are frustrated or disconcerted for a valid reason, you can look past the charged aspects of the conversation. Not all individuals are skilled at surfacing their concerns in a productive way, so take the high road and get your arms around what is at the heart of the matter. – [Antonella Pisani, Eyeful Media](#)

11. KEEP YOUR EMOTIONS IN CHECK.

Don't let your emotions get the best of you in tense situations! Instead, focus on listening to the other party and collecting information. By doing this, you'll be able to come back with a cohesive point of view that will be much more effective than an emotional reaction. Your future self will thank you for keeping a cool head in tough situations. This is leadership. – [Robert Brill, Brill Media](#)

12. REALIZE THAT IT'S JUST BUSINESS.

Right now, somewhere in the city where you live, someone's son or daughter is recovering from cancer or someone you know is saying a final goodbye to their mother or father. The point is to have some perspective. I guarantee you, whatever situation you're dealing with isn't as intense as what others are working through. So take a breath and move forward calmly knowing, it's only business. – [Barry Fiske, Merkle](#)

13. PRACTICE BREATHING EXERCISES.

Choose to get unhooked by stopping and taking five deep breaths to ground yourself. You can even do this right at the moment in front of the other person. It is amazing how much your nervous system calms down and your brain processes information better in the 30 seconds it takes you to do this! – [Steve Dion, Dion Leadership](#)

