Keeping cool when work heats up

Have you ever been in a tense situation at work? Perhaps two people were arguing or someone got angry with you.

Though it's hard to stay calm in these types of situations, it's the best thing you can do. If you don't react strongly, you can help defuse tension and find a helpful resolution.

FOCUS ON A SOLUTION

It's easy to get wrapped up in the problem, not the solution. Ask yourself, "what are we trying to accomplish?" Many workplace arguments start because two people have different ideas about what should be done. But, both people ultimately want to fix the same problem.

Sometimes, an argument can be stopped if both parties remember what they both want: a good outcome. Talk about what you agree upon, and try to build from there.

TAKE PAUSE

When something stressful is happening, your body immediately wants to respond. You may feel tense and anxious. You may also want to run from the situation or defend yourself. This is a normal "fight-or-flight" response that wants to protect you. But, this isn't always the best way to react. Here's how you can stay in control:

- **Watch your breathing.** Take deep, slow breaths to help calm your body's natural response to stress. This can help you think more clearly and lower your anxious feelings.
- **Think before you speak.** It's okay to pause before answering a question. Also, you can say, "Let me think about that for a moment." This gives you time to come up with a professional response, rather than an angry one.
- **Wait to hit "send."** Read emails out loud to yourself before you send them. Save the draft and wait before you send it if you're angry. This can help avoid something you will later regret.

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