When someone criticizes something you’ve done or gives you news that is troubling, you can have a strong, instinctive reaction. The “fight, flight, freeze response” kicks in—you may want to make the person feel bad too, you may want to run away or you may be stunned silent not knowing what to do. Lots of emotions can be triggered—anger, anxiety, sadness, fear or confusion.

In the workplace, conflict can happen between employees and managers or between co-workers. The challenge may be about an unrequested change of assignment or a project that did not go as well as planned. When confronted with aggression or on hearing some tough words, you may feel defensive. The hair on your neck may stand up. You may feel your body tensing—readying to recoil or strike out. These feelings are sending a strong signal. Hey—this is important. Pay attention. You have something to deal with. You recognize the urgency and want to respond, but are not sure how. You may also be concerned that expressing yourself now, while you are having intense feelings, could be a mistake. Your own history may suggest that things could turn ugly quickly.

When your emotions are intense and hard to control, it is important to slow down and choose your responses carefully. Your goal is to get calm so your brain can focus on the issues at hand. Here are some tips to help you manage your emotions and work toward a positive outcome. William Ury, author of “Getting Past No,” suggests that the crucial first step to respond to difficult situations is “don’t react: go to the balcony.” This gives you a chance to step back and regain perspective.

**FOLLOWING ARE 7 TIPS TO HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS BEFORE YOU ADDRESS CONFLICT:**

1. Stop, take a breath and recognize your feelings. Don’t act on them; just notice them.
2. Separate the issue from the impact it is having on you.
3. If your emotions are too powerful to control in the moment, ask for time. Go to the balcony.
4. In the interim, try to understand what caused your emotions.
5. Work to understand the other person. What is their objective? What is important to them?
6. Come up with possible solutions that might work for both of you.
7. When you come back together, focus on outcomes that you think would satisfy both of you.

It is important to manage emotions first, before you address the issues. When you recognize what is going on inside yourself, you can master your responses and deal with the issues more effectively.

If you are the one delivering the difficult message, watch for signs of how you are being received. If you see arms crossed, brows furrowed or lack of eye contact, the person is probably too emotional to hear you. This is not the best time to try to get your point across. Offer the person a chance to absorb the information. Just like you, they may need time to manage their emotions. After a little time, schedule a conversation to discuss questions, concerns or ideas. With time and managed emotions, you both will be better set to address the issues.