

## Why Human Emotions will Spell Success in the Workforce of the Future

*In the very near future, robots and machines will do many of the jobs currently performed by humans. Therefore, your future success will depend on your ability to connect with and relate to others in a way robots cannot. Authors Ed Hess and Katherine Ludwig share insights to help harness your emotional intelligence in order to remain viable in tomorrow's workforce.*

We are on the cusp of a new era, one led by artificial intelligence and deep learning. The so-called Smart Machine Age will lead to technology and robots outperforming humans in many tasks. This is bad news on the job front. In fact, research from the University of Oxford states there is a high probability that 47 percent of jobs in the U.S. will be automated over the next 15 years. Further, based on additional, independent research, the chief economist of the Bank of England predicted that the United States could lose upward of 80 million jobs during that time frame.

At first glance you might think the solution is for *you* to become more robot-like to fit into this brave new high-tech work world. Ed Hess disagrees. He says the key to staying employable in the Smart Machine Age is to further excel at what makes us unique as human beings — our *real*, not artificial, emotional and social intelligence.

“The technology of the future, led by artificial intelligence and deep learning, will be able to outthink us in many ways,” says Hess, co-author along with Katherine Ludwig of *Humility Is the New Smart: Rethinking Human Excellence in the Smart Machine Age* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, ISBN: 978-1-626-56875-4, \$27.95). “However, in the coming Smart Machine Age, our emotional intelligence will be the very factor that makes us unique and employable.”

Hess and Ludwig explain that our emotions fuel our imaginations and enable personal connections to others in ways that machines cannot replicate. When we use our emotions to serve and collaborate with each other, there are no limits to our thinking, creativity, and performance.

“In the Smart Machine Age, you do *not* want to behave like a machine,” says Ludwig. “As smart machines take over more jobs, the most successful people will be those who can leverage their emotions and the best of their humanness to think better and be more creative, innovative, and collaborative.”

According to Hess and Ludwig, three steps are key to mastering human emotions in order to be more successful in the Smart Machine Age:

- *Increasing positivity;*
- *Actively managing negative emotions;* and
- *Embracing the power of “Otherness.”*

The following sections describe each of these steps.

### **Increasing Positivity**

Positive emotions help us think and relate at our highest levels. Leading research by cognitive, social, and positive psychologists, including Barbara Fredrickson and Alice Isen, shows that positive emotions enable and enhance cognitive processing, innovation, and creativity and even lead to better judgment and decision making. By contrast research has shown that negative emotions like fear and anxiety have the opposite effect. These can manifest in many forms: fear of looking bad, making mistakes, losing your job, or not being liked.

The strategy is two-pronged: One, generate plenty of positive emotions, and, two,



# Brown Bagger

stop allowing negative emotions to control your behavior and thinking. (More on the second prong in the following section.) You *can* change the ratio of good and bad feelings in your head by a shift in focus. You *can* take more time to notice the beauty of nature and the smiles of a young child. You *can* reflect upon something joyous in your life. You *can* think more often about the people and pets you love, the times you felt good about your performance at work, the times you felt appreciated by others. Practicing gratitude also increases positive emotions.

“To stay positive, I keep a list on my desk with five daily reminders,” says Hess. “They are:

- One, be positive.
- Two, take time to exercise and meditate.
- Three, just smile.
- Four, slow down at every opportunity.
- Five, avoid ‘drainers,’ by which I mean negative people.

By focusing on these five things, I have been able to make a significant difference in increasing my own positivity.”

### Actively Managing Negative Emotions

Examples of negative emotions include anger, fear, anxiety, dread, and cruelty. Emotions usually last only 90 seconds unless you let them overtake

## More on Reflective Listening

*Reflective listening* is a communication strategy involving two key steps: seeking to understand a speaker’s idea, then offering the idea back to the speaker, to confirm the idea has been understood correctly. It requires responding actively to another while keeping your attention focused completely on the speaker. In reflective listening, you do *not* offer your perspective by carefully keeping the focus on the other’s need or problem. Thus reflective listening consists of a step beyond what is normally thought of as listening:

- Hearing and understanding what the other person is communicating through words and “body language” to the best of your ability.
- Responding to the other person by reflecting the thoughts and feelings you heard in his or her words, tone of voice, body posture, and gestures.

Reflective listening has more than one purpose. You can use reflective listening to help you understand what the speaker is saying. It also allows the speaker to feel heard. Reflective listening can help the speaker achieve his or her outcomes. Listening can help the speaker clarify his or her thoughts on some matter, decide on a course of action, or explore his or her feelings to some new depth. It is useful for both speaker and listener.

Reflective listening is useful in a variety of situations. You can use listening to help when another person is experiencing a difficulty or problem. Also, the communication skills of problem solving, assertion, conflict management, and negotiation all require extensive listening. In social situations listening can create a climate of warmth between people. Listening is also important for handling resistance or anger in others. It is needed to settle disputes. Leading group discussions/conversations require effective listening as well. Directions can be clarified by listening. In general, reflective listening is useful in conducting any difficult conversations with another.

Source: “*Reflective Listening*,” by Neil Katz and Kevin McNulty.

you. You can let negative emotions float through your mind without engaging them. That is what meditation can teach you. You are not your ideas, and you are not your emotions. You have a choice as to whether to engage with an emotion or not. And you have a choice as to whether you allow an emotion to be translated into a behavior. Hess says: “I was never taught that I had choices about my emotions. I had to learn that emotions don’t necessarily have to lead to behaviors. It is not automatic — we make the choice about whether that happens.”

“One way to recognize when negative emotions are taking hold is to be very sensitive to physical changes that often accompany them,” says Ludwig. For example:

- Your heart rate may increase.
- You may feel warmer.
- You may feel tightness in your stomach.
- You may notice your fists are clenched.

If this is the case, identify and label the emotion you are feeling. You can learn to calm yourself by taking deep breaths and engaging your thinking to get to the root of the emotions and reflect on something more positive in your life.

### Embracing the Power of ‘Otherness’

Otherness is the ability to rise above our self-absorbed, ego-driven emotional defensiveness in order to connect to and emotionally relate with others. That’s crucial because we all need others in order to flourish, say Hess and Ludwig. We can’t reach our potential by ourselves. We need other people who can help us see past our cognitive biases and open our minds to new perspectives in order to think more critically, creatively, and innovatively.

Otherness requires building positive, caring regard and trust with others. If we trust someone, then we feel psychologically safe with them, and we can have the vulnerable kinds of conversations that enable collaborative relationships and breakthrough thinking and learning. In the Smart Machine Age, humans will be needed to do the highest levels of problem solving, thinking, and

emotionally engaging with other human beings — jobs that smart machines will not be able to do. Those skills are hard, and they are emotional. All involve or require caring about and establishing positive regard and trust with others.

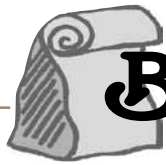
To build positive, caring trust requires behaviors. One must take the time to connect and relate with others in ways that demonstrate that you care about them. That means actually paying attention to the other person — giving them your undivided attention by facing them, making eye contact, smiling, and not multi-tasking. And really listen to them with an open, non-judgmental mind that is fully focused on trying to understand what they are saying.

Hess calls that type of listening “reflective listening.” Good listeners do not interrupt people; good listeners do not formulate their answers while the other person is talking; good listeners do not immediately respond with their views but rather first ask questions to make sure they understand what was said. Really listening to another person says, *I care about you and what you think and feel.* (**Editor’s note:** More tips on effective listening are provided in the accompanying sidebar on page 2.)

### Summary

“Our emotions — when properly cultivated — can propel us to the highest levels of human thinking and learning and fuel our connections to others,” concludes Hess. “To that end, smart technology may be smart indeed, but we should focus on being more emotionally and socially intelligent. Embrace positivity and excel at managing your emotions and Otherness, because that’s what will help you thrive in the Smart Machine Age.” ■

*Ed Hess, Professor of Business Administration and Batten Executive-in-Residence at the Darden Graduate School of Business, and Katherine Ludwig are the authors of the book *Humility Is the New Smart: Rethinking Human Excellence in the Smart Machine Age* (Berrett-Koehler, 2017), which puts forth a new model called NewSmart, designed to help humans thrive alongside technology in the Smart Machine Age. For more information, visit [www.edhld.com](http://www.edhld.com) and [www.katherineludwig.com](http://www.katherineludwig.com).*



## Coping with Negative Emotions

❖ **Recognize and name the emotion.** Name the emotion in your own head. *I'm angry. I'm sad. I'm really happy right now.* Be a dispassionate observer, looking at yourself from outside the situation and making an assessment.

❖ **Notice how the emotion is affecting your behavior.** If you're angry, you might be talking loudly, quickly, or even swearing. You may stand with your arms or legs crossed. If you're feeling sad, you may be listening to sad music, crying, or lying in bed. It's the same with positive emotions. If you're feeling excited, you may be singing or dancing, talking loudly, or smiling. Recognizing how your emotion is affecting your behavior is super important.

❖ **Remind yourself that the emotion will not last.** That's why it can feel like we are on emotional roller coasters sometimes. We're good, we're bad, we're good again, and then we're bad again. If you're feeling something negative, make sure to keep in mind that it won't last forever, just like physical pain.

❖ **Determine what is causing the emotion.** Don't blame yourself or anyone for the emotion; just try to identify its root. Maybe you got a nasty email from your ex-boyfriend. Maybe your supervisor said something snarky about your work. Maybe it's something more subtle, like spilling coffee on your new coat. Or maybe it's something huge, like the death of a friend or family member. Whatever it is, try to identify it. If it is more than one thing, that's okay. Find all the potential causes of the emotion.

❖ **Accept the emotion.** This emotion is what you feel right now. It just is – like it, love it, or hate it. This is what you've got. You can't

change it. You have to live with it, so you may as well accept it. It doesn't define you and it's going away soon anyway, but, for the moment, just accept it for what it is. Tell yourself that you are feeling whatever you are supposed to be feeling. Even if it's not the best feeling. That will definitely help.

❖ **Remind yourself that the emotion will pass.** After accepting the emotion, remind yourself one more time that it will pass. Don't forget this step! In fact, slip this step in between the other steps as many times as you need. This is key. If you're feeling unhappy right this second, it does *not* mean you are going to feel unhappy for the rest of your life!

❖ **Snap back into the present.** Now it's time to get back to whatever you were doing. If you need a quick break first, take it – go for a walk; do some pushups or jumping jacks; call a friend or a family member if you have the time. Do whatever you need to do to bring yourself back to the present moment. Your emotion is just a feeling. It does not define who you are. Bring yourself back to your present moment, to your *here* and *now*.

❖ **Learn from the emotion.** If the emotion you experienced was negative, there might be a reason for it. It could be a red flag for something that is causing uneasiness within you. Of course, the opposite is also true. It might just have been a completely normal and healthy negative emotion. Take the steps you need to take to handle the emotion and move on, but don't just ignore it. File it away in your brain so that you can retrieve any useful information about it for the future. ■

*Source: "How to Handle Negative Emotions" by Allison Mandel, Lifehack.*