

Table 10.3 Taking the Edge Off

Notice moments when you feel stressed, upset, annoyed, disappointed, frustrated, or bothered in some way during the course of your day. When you notice one of these feelings, stop what you're doing for 60 seconds and engage in the 3-step sequence described below. Practice with *every* frustration or upset feeling that you experience on a daily basis -- no matter how small, and no matter what triggered your upset feeling. Most of the work involves simply remembering to interrupt whatever you're doing for a few moments and do the exercise. Here are the steps:

Step 1: Say to yourself things that will help you avoid jumping to negative conclusions, such as...

"There might be more to the story."

- "Things might not be as clear cut as they seem."
- "Maybe they are; maybe they aren't."

"I can afford to take my time."

- "There's no rush." The sky isn't falling."
- "This doesn't have to be that big of a deal."
- "I don't like the way she is acting and I'm going to need to say something about it, but I need to relax and let things unfold first."

"I need to relax."

- "Right now, calming down is more important than anything else."
- "I need to feel less frustrated before I do or say anything."

"Just because I try to understand doesn't mean that I have to go along with it."

- "If I want the other person to understand my perspective, I need to understand his/hers, too."

Step 2: Relax, slow your breathing, and temporarily let go of the urge to say or do anything.

- Let go of the urge to say or do something right away. Tell yourself, "There's no rush. "I'll figure out what to do. I can afford to take my time."
- Let go of tension in all parts of your body and become physically "loose" all over. Take a big inhale and then let go of your breath with a long, slow-release exhale.

Step 3: Look for Understandable Things.

- Come up with at least one possible explanation for the present situation that doesn't cast yourself or others in a negative light.