I was once told by a coworker to never show emotion at work. “Business is a place for logic and strategic planning, not emotion,” he said. After pondering his statement for a while, I respectfully disagreed. To me, logic conjures up visions of black, white, and gray, lines, arrows, flow charts, and project plans. Logic forms the map guiding knowledge and skills into useful directions. While logic is necessary in most business environments, emotion provides color and depth by creating momentum, building inspiration, and developing involvement and commitment. Emotion is like transforming a black and white picture into a colorful masterpiece.

Would you sit riveted through an hour-long PowerPoint presentation in black and white filled with charts and graphs outlining the next sales strategy? Can you imagine being in a meeting to share ideas on the upcoming new product launch without a hint of excitement? Would the discussion of a succession plan for the beloved founder of your business not conjure up emotional memories? How would you react to a negative performance appraisal? How would you feel when the long-awaited promotion you desired was awarded to your best friend? How do you struggle through a project plan that you know will not be well received?

So how do logic and emotion merge in the workplace?

Some call it Emotional Intelligence (EI): the awareness of how yours and others emotions can influence and impact decision-making and perceptions in the workplace. The use of emotions in the
workplace can be a powerful tool. From a positive perspective, the leader who dynamically communicates the vision of a new branding plan, emotionally impacts those around her to also become emotionally involved, and initiates a call-to-action based on emotional commitment from her employees. The mentor is empathetic towards the tentative incoming employee and guides him through the initial processes to reveal the “ins” and “outs” of the organizational culture. An employee relates a personal story and convinces the HR department to continue with the current insurance plan. From a negative viewpoint, emotions rise as a supervisor agonizes after being told she has to cut back her staff by 20%, knowing the impact on those valued employees. A team member struggles with a conflict of values with another associate. An employee bullies and intimidates another employee in a staff meeting to make himself look good.

Emotions, positive or negative, are everywhere in the workplace, and while there are some conflicting opinions on EI, some believe that being more aware of emotions in the workplace can be linked to better job performance. Those individuals who are more aware of the consequences of having more emotional control can navigate through the business labyrinth with greater ease.

So, I believe what my coworker was really trying to tell me, was to use emotions wisely in the workplace. Be aware of your own emotions in a situation and have an understanding of how those emotions affect others and how their emotions affect you. With a background of logic, emotions can enhance the black, white and gray areas with colorful perspective.

Wendy Streetman is a consultant for the Florida Tech Center for Organizational Effectiveness. She obtained her MS in FIT’s Industrial/Organizational Psychology program as well. Wendy is a weVENTURE Board Member and a mentor and facilitator for the weVENTURE IGNITE 360 Program.

Columnist series sponsored by weVENTURE (formerly the Women’s Business Center) powered by the Florida Institute of Technology. weVENTURE has locations in Melbourne, Rockledge and Orlando. The Center is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. For more information, visit weventure.org or call 321-674-7007