

Emotional Regulation at Work

TL;DR · QUICK SUMMARY

- Many neurodivergent people experience emotions intensely, which can be hard to manage in professional settings.
- Having a few go-to regulation strategies helps in the moment, not just in theory.
- It's okay to step away briefly to regulate; this is a skill, not a failure.
- Longer-term support (therapy, coaching) can help build regulation skills over time.

A Note Before You Read On

This resource offers general guidance and reflects common experience, not professional, legal, medical or financial advice. It is not a substitute for employment law, HR policy, occupational health guidance, or individual professional assessment. Every person's experience of neurodivergence is different, so please adapt anything here to your own situation. The Uniquely Wired Network does not accept liability for decisions, actions or outcomes arising from the use of this material. If you need advice specific to your circumstances, please consult a qualified professional (e.g. HR, legal, medical, or financial advisor).

Why This Matters

Workplaces often expect a narrow, calm emotional range. For people who feel things intensely, this can create real pressure; having strategies ready reduces that pressure in the moment.

What This Might Look Like

- Feeling a strong emotional reaction to feedback, even constructive feedback.
- Needing a few minutes alone after a stressful meeting before responding to anything else.
- Worrying that visible emotion at work will be judged unprofessional.

In-the-Moment Strategies

- Pause before responding: “Can I take a moment to think about that?” buys valuable time.
- Grounding techniques: naming things you can see/hear/feel, or slow breathing.
- Step away briefly if possible; a bathroom break or short walk can reset intensity.
- Write down your response instead of speaking immediately, if that's an option.

Building Longer-Term Regulation Skills

- Notice your own early triggers and patterns over time.
- Therapy (e.g. CBT, or ND-affirming counselling) can help build regulation tools.
- Regular routines (sleep, movement, sensory breaks) support baseline regulation.
- A coach experienced with ND clients can help build workplace-specific strategies.

Helpful Phrases You Can Borrow

You don't have to use these exact words. Take what fits and leave the rest.

“Can I take a moment to think about that before I respond?”

“I want to give this proper thought. Can I come back to you after lunch?”

Quick Tips

- Big feelings aren't unprofessional; they're information worth pausing for.
- A short break to regulate is a legitimate professional choice, not a failure.
- Writing a response first, then speaking, can reduce in-the-moment intensity.
- Notice patterns in what tends to trigger strong reactions for you.
- It's okay to revisit a conversation later once you've had time to process.
- If emotional intensity is affecting your wellbeing regularly, a GP or therapist can help.

Want to Know More?

- See our companion guide: “Managing Boundaries: Scripts & Frameworks” for related strategies.
- A therapist or ND-affirming counsellor can help build longer-term regulation skills.
- Access to Work can sometimes fund coaching that includes emotional regulation support.

Before You Go

Feeling things intensely isn't a flaw; it often comes paired with real depth, empathy and passion.

Learning to regulate, not suppress, your emotions is a skill you can keep building at your own pace.