

Business Sense: Emotions and the art of leadership



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For years I have been saying that I needed new or more tools to help me in my varied and many leadership roles: executive director of a non-profit, local business owner, theater director, even being a mother. The tools I craved were meant to help me handle others when they “emotionally hijacked” a situation whether in business or my personal life. A friend told me about a local leadership course through Humboldt Area Foundation called Cascadia. Without knowing much about it, but certainly with high hopes, I signed up. The class happened over ten days that were spread out over four months.

Without giving away all their secrets, Mary Gelinis and Roger James (the creators and instructors of the class) take you through a personal journey that intertwines human behavior with strategic tools. In the end, I learned way more than I could ever have imagined! Did I get my needs met you ask? Did I find out the

secret to handling others emotional hijacking? Yes. But you’ll never guess the answer.

It was me. In order to deal with someone else’s “emotional hijacking” you have to be able to notice your own emotions and make conscious decisions on how to handle them. I learned that when someone is scared, angry or simply emotional, I need not to match them in that way. I need to not let my emotions hijack myself and then make me operate in a way I am not in control of. Instead, I need to recognize that the upset person in front of me has “emotionally hijacked” themselves and is stuck there. Next, I should ask myself what is that person scared of or what does that person need right now. By doing this, I can then genuinely help alleviate their fears, answer concerns they might not even know they had, or just simply listen.

In business, we all have run into people who are upset for some reason or another. Knowing how to help defuse the situation instead of always feeling like I had to just avoid or run away from these types of situations is a great skill to have. Cascadia not only gave me the tools for these kinds of issues but gave me the confidence to deal with them. And this was just one gift the class gives you!

I am so incredibly humbled and grateful that we have individuals in our community that have not only the tools to great leadership but can teach it. I encourage everyone and anyone who wants to strengthen their leadership skills for their business or personal lives to take the class. Heck, I have been telling people to mortgage their house if they have to in order to pay for it. It’s worth it.

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