**Moods Compromise Integrity**

*By Shannon Warren,
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Never affected by a bad mood in his voyages through the Final Frontier, the Vulcan alien known as Mr. Spock in the popular *Star Trek* television series always made completely logical decisions to save the day. Maintaining tight control on emotion, he never exhibited anger or resentment. When it comes to ethical behavior, could we learn something from Mr. Spock?

Even the most ethical person can be compromised by emotions. For instance, a 2009 study by Christian Miller tended to confirm conventional wisdom. Basically, people in good moods subconsciously desire to prolong their happy feelings by helping others. Conversely, someone in a bad mood is less likely to extend compassion. Using Spock-like reasoning, it is not difficult to see that moods can either enhance or diminish our ability to demonstrate positive characteristics like generosity, humility or discernment.

Feeling pressure can foster bad moods, which, in turn, makes us more vulnerable to ethical missteps. In his book, *The Ethical Challenge*, Mick Ukleja points out that even people with strong moral compasses can be tempted to engage in illegal behavior when pushed by events such as tight deadlines. Citing a study of drivers who run red lights, most violations (65%) occurred while rushing to school, work or running errands during the lunch hour. This compared to only 9% of violations committed by people on vacation. (I can only surmise that those folks in the latter category were probably trying to catch a flight.)

His point is that our best intentions have the potential to be hijacked by feelings. We sometimes let our moods master us instead of harnessing those toward constructive behavior that will yield long-term benefits. While we do not want to become like the robotic Mr. Spock, it is important to learn to channel our emotions in a positive manner. The first step in this process is to be self-aware, taking responsibility for our feelings and adjusting our reactions so that they do not lead us into destructive behavior.

The character Spock put it well when he said in one episode: “…the healthy release of emotion is frequently unhealthy for those closest to you.”

Important to remember if we are to live long and prosper.