

**Stress Points...
tension-releasers
For piqued performers**

You are meeting again with a group that includes "Sam the Needler." His mannerisms irritate you; his condescending attitude enrages you. He superficially pontificates on subjects you know in depth and either patronizes you or doesn't acknowledge what you say.

After 10 minutes, you're steaming. Your heart is beating too fast and your hands are trembling. However, you know that venting your anger would be unprofessional and counterproductive.

How can you regain command? First, tell yourself that you control your feelings, they don't control you. You can choose to act on them or defuse them. To take the sting out of Sam's needling – and release your anger – try these emergency measures. Do one or more; use the techniques that feel right for you.

1. **Redirect your attention:** Focus on an object in the room that you find pleasing: the view outside the window, a picture, the pattern of a tie or scarf. Notice every detail and then try to sketch the picture in your mind.

2. **Concentrate on your breathing:** Place your hands on your stomach, if possible. Inhale slowly and let your abdomen expand; feel your abdomen fall as you exhale slowly, Repeat until you feel calmer.

3. **Change your position:** Shift in your chair; drop a pencil and pick it up; stand up to get water or coffee.

4. **Pour yourself a glass of water:** *Listen* to the water filling the glass; *feel* the temperature; *taste* the water; *calculate* the amount of water in the glass. Focus on everything about pouring and drinking the water.

5. **Turn the situation around:** Look at the incident in a new way. Find the humor in it. Make a joke (to yourself) that wittily puts Sam's behaviour in perspective.

6. **Use the "Anthropologist's Scan":** Detach yourself from your reaction to Sam. Study him as if he had something to teach you about human behaviour. Observe him: Describe Sam's physical characteristics, then think of his *positive* attributes (everybody has some). Analyse what motivates Sam, what his point of view is. Ask yourself, "What does Sam think of me?"

7. **Redirect the discussion:** When you are calmer, take charge. Steer the conversation to the areas where you agree with Sam. Talk about the status of the project, what excites you about it. Use the energy your anger triggered to move ahead toward your business goals. After all, your goal is to make the deal or complete the project, not to have your ego massaged.

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