

♠ Cheat Sheet When Leaders Should Keep a Poker Face at Work

👤 Why Your Face Matters

Your team reads your expression before they process your words.

A raised eyebrow, a sigh, a smirk — small reactions can:

- Influence morale
- Signal bias
- Shut down ideas
- Escalate tension

📌 Leadership is emotional signaling.

🧠 Emotional Suppression vs. Regulation

❌ **Suppression** ✅ **Regulation**

Hiding emotions Managing emotions

Bottling reactions Choosing responses

Appearing cold Staying composed

The goal isn't to feel less — it's to respond intentionally.

🚦 When to Keep a Poker Face

1 During Idea Sharing 💡

Avoid reacting too quickly.

Neutral expression = psychological safety.

2 In Crisis Moments 🔥

Calm face → calm team.

Panic spreads fast.

3 During Negotiations 🤝

Visible reactions weaken leverage.

4 When Receiving Bad News 📉

Composure encourages honesty and transparency.

♥ When NOT to Keep a Poker Face

✓ Celebrating Wins 🎉

Show enthusiasm.

✓ Showing Empathy 💬

Emotion builds connection.

✓ Acknowledging Hard Moments 😊

Compassion increases trust.

Leadership isn't emotionless — it's emotionally intelligent.

🔧 How to Control Your Reactions

📌 Pause Before Responding

Breathe. Count to three.

👁️ Neutral Resting Expression

Relax jaw and forehead.

🗣️ Clarify Before Reacting

Ask: "Tell me more."

🧘 Ground Physically

Slow breathing lowers visible stress cues.

⚠️ Common Mistakes

- ✗ Overreacting publicly
- ✗ Showing visible favoritism
- ✗ Displaying frustration in meetings
- ✗ Looking disengaged when neutral

🌟 Final Reminder

The strongest leaders don't hide emotion.
They harness it.