



WHY WE TALK ABOUT OUR FEELINGS

Granate's unique approach

By Catherine Blersch

When you think about a typical person working in the finance industry, the images that first come to mind are likely to be of hard-charging, aggressive, Wall Street types: men in suits with big brains, big egos and low EQ. While broad generalisations like those are probably unfair, the reality in South Africa (according to *Citywire*) is that still only 10.8% of fund managers are female. The legacy of an industry that historically showed very little diversity is that a workplace culture pervaded that generally valued emotional stoicism: leaving the realities and messiness of life and emotions at the door in favour of cold, rational professionalism. In a field like asset management where we need to make rational decisions, you might think this makes perfect sense. We think not.

GRANATE'S APPROACH IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT

Having seen the photo of our team, you'll notice we are a pretty diverse bunch. But perhaps even more important than outward diversity, we also have very different personalities. Success of a diverse team hinges on the ability to work together towards a common goal while leveraging the strengths of each individual. The only way to do that is to acknowledge that every team member is a unique person, not a robot.

We use tools like the Enneagram, a model of the human psyche centred on nine interconnected personality types – and we are happy to report that we have at least one team member that falls under each of these. Understanding the Enneagram gives us insight into what motivates people and helps us uncover behavioural patterns that subconsciously drive us to act in certain ways. Digging deeper into how we are wired helps us better understand why someone may be reacting harshly, lashing out, or shutting down and withdrawing; why certain work teams are dysfunctional; or why other teams work so well. It gives great self-awareness. And it means spending a lot of time talking about our feelings.

WHY DOES DOING WORK AROUND OUR EMOTIONS MATTER?

Firstly, let's consider what happens on the inside. As Dr Lisa Feldman Barrett explains in her excellent book *How Emotions are Made*, the idea that we have an 'emotional brain' and a 'rational brain' is a massive oversimplification



that leads to the largely false assumption that we can reason our way out of emotions. Her theory of constructed emotions posits that our brains use concepts to construct meaning out of sensory inputs. In response to outside stimuli our bodies undergo physical changes to balance our 'body budgets'. Our brains recognise these changes as feelings, and assign meaning to them through emotions. This means that emotions can be mastered - but not in the way that most people think. Let me explain.

WE CANNOT REASON OURSELVES OUT OF OUR BASIC IRRATIONALITY. ALL WE CAN DO IS LEARN THE ART OF BEING UNREASONABLE IN A RATIONAL WAY.

Barrett advocates for three simple ideas. The first is managing our body budgets, which is really just about getting the basics right – sleep, exercise, healthy diet, time outdoors, reading and socialising. The more in tune we are with our physical needs, the more stable our emotions. The second is to grow the range of words we use to describe what we are feeling, which she calls 'emotional granularity'. The more concepts we have, the more likely we are to be able to correctly put our finger on the 'What?' and 'Why?' of our feelings. The third is to learn to recategorise. By being inquisitive, leaning in to what we are sensing and feeling, and developing our emotional vocabulary, we can bring a much more authentic rationality to our decisions. This is because we are more in tune with what's actually going on. I think this is what Aldous Huxley meant when he said, "We cannot reason ourselves out of our basic irrationality. All we can do is learn the art of being unreasonable in a rational way."

Secondly, consider what happens on the outside. At Granate we encourage open and honest conversations,



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Relentlessly committed to protect and grow your savings.



which require the willingness to be vulnerable and express our emotions. These conversations can often be hard ones to have but we think that a culture where hard conversations can happen gracefully will lead to better outcomes for our clients.

Why? If we talk about problems instead of letting them stew, we can course-correct and keep the Granateam well oiled. When we give honest feedback, we enable each person to keep learning and growing. When vulnerability is the norm, it becomes much easier to admit our mistakes and figure out ways to avoid them in future. And when open debate is encouraged, we are all more likely to speak up when something isn't right.

BRINGING OUR WHOLE SELVES TO THE TABLE

Honesty and integrity are part of our core values. One definition of integrity is 'the state of being whole and undivided'. Humans who leave their feelings at the door when they walk into the office are not whole humans. To have real integrity, we need to all have the courage to bring our whole selves to the table – all our feelings and concerns. As renowned research professor Dr Brené Brown puts it, "Integrity is choosing courage over comfort.". Our life experiences shape our personal values and enable us to collectively make the right calls about what to do with our clients' money. Outside of work we all care about different things: our families and friends, strangers, charities, animals, the environment. Fostering these passions enables us to care deeply about our clients. It's the 'soft side' of all of us that plays such a big part in keeping us relentlessly committed to protecting and growing our clients' savings.