

# How to Mitigate the Human Cost of Emotional Labor

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## What is Emotional Labor?

Emotional labor is defined as the emotional regulation required for employee expression in order to fulfill the emotional requirements of a job. The term was introduced by sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild in *The Managed Heart* (1983). *Emotional labor is providing service with a “smile” in the workplace, even when the smile is not authentically genuine.* Emotional labor can have negative consequences for employees:

- Stress
- Inauthenticity
- Burnout

The emotional “self” is the least recognized component in the modern workplace. Organizations must put more emphasis on ensuring that occupations do not damage their employees’ emotional health.

## Emotional Labor Impact on Women

More women are in the workplace in this post-industrial American economy. It has been found that women do not experience higher levels of inauthenticity or burnout than men because of the type of job performed, but because of the differential in managing agitation and the affects of the suppressing feelings of anger. The other factor is status--the more powerful one’s status, the more control they have over emotional labor. Therefore, the more powerful you are, the more empowered you are to express negative emotions, in particular anger. In other words, women’s lower profession status, not gender, results in higher levels of emotional labor. The good news is the status of women and their access to money is steadily increasing which means the research in emotional labor will continue to evolve.

## Literature Cited

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### The Nurse.

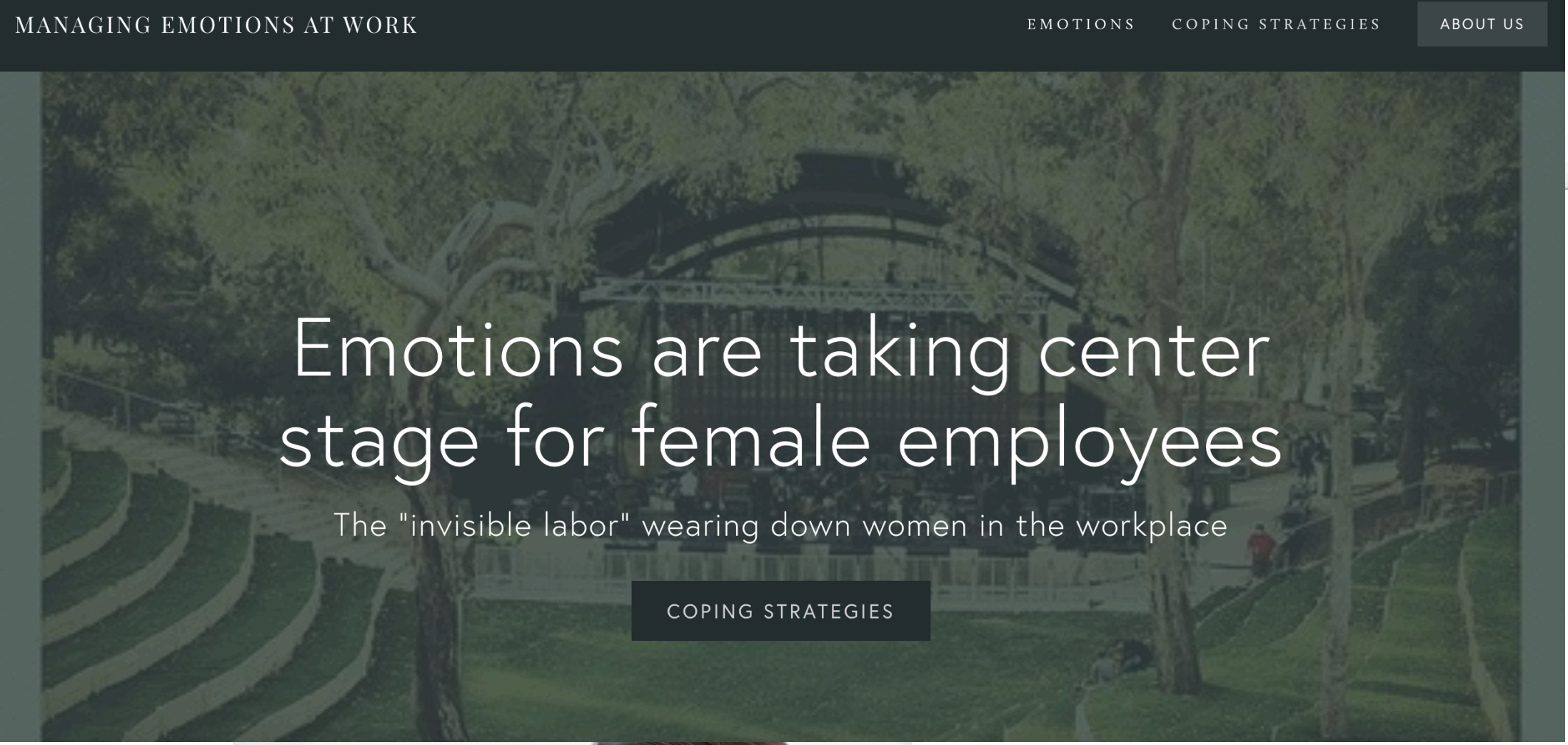
*I am a hard worker and very attentive to my patients but I haven't felt like going to work lately. I'm not as nurturing as I used to be. I've always enjoyed helping others but it is taxing trying to brighten someone else's day when I don't feel so great myself.*



### Interruption Tactics

#### MEANINGFUL BREAKS

It is break time at work. Whether it is a formally scheduled short break or a scheduled break to get away from your desk, it's time to recharge. Make you as possible. That means taking the time to do something important to you s for a cheerful chat, walking outside to get some sun or making a cup of hot silence. A meaningful break can refuel your emotional energy level when yo require a high output of emotional energy.



### The Customer Service Representative.

*My customer is upset because she received the wrong size shirt from her online stylist. I'm being nice, I've apologized several times and let the customer know we will send the correct size and she's still very upset. I had a terrible morning before coming to work and this is making my morning worse. I know I can't get angry or else I'll lose my job.*



## Background Information

### Traditional Coping Mechanisms for Dealing with Emotional Labor



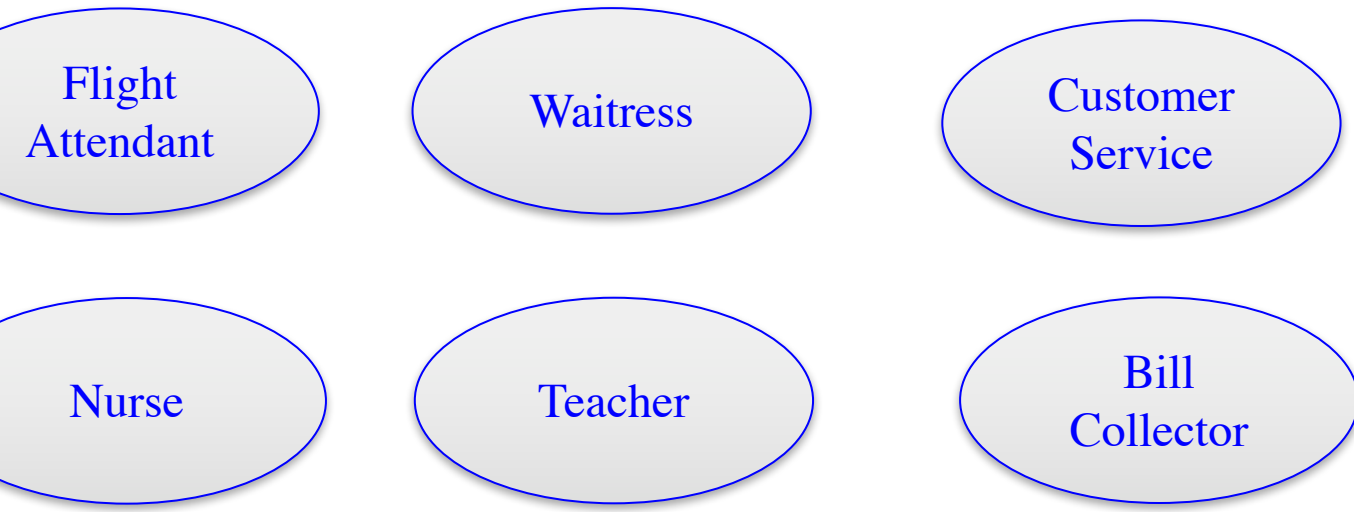
#### Negative:

Punishment  
Expediting  
Avoidance  
Discourteousness

#### Positive:

Emotional Management  
Venting  
Referral

### Occupations Highly Associated with Emotional Labor



## Conclusion

Organizations must understand the human cost of emotional labor since emotional labor affects organizational objectives and results. There are mechanisms that organizations and individuals can put in place to mitigate emotional labor but the first step is acknowledgement that emotional labor exists in the workplace.

## Acknowledgments

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## Further Information

The capstone research paper outlines recommendations to be used by organizations to address emotional labor in the workplace, such as:

1. Organizational assessment of emotional labor
2. Utilizing heuristics to solve the emotional labor problem
3. Tactics and strategies to overcome the human cost of emotional labor