

Emotional Intelligence, A Key To Success In Life

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Emotional intelligence, the ability to manage ourselves and our relationships effectively, is composed of 4 fundamental capabilities: self awareness, self management, social awareness, and social skills.* (EI) differs from cognitive intelligence (IQ), and research shows it is a greater determinant of success in life than IQ.

Emotional intelligence is a critical factor in business and personal success. The need for it increases with higher levels of responsibility, such as management or parenthood. It becomes even more important with groups, such as work teams.

Building Self-Awareness

Those with greater awareness of their feelings as they are happening are better navigators of their lives. This awareness is a first step, and provides the springboard for the positive development of the other emotional intelligence skills.

Knowing your emotions and recognizing a feeling as it happens is the beginning. It is important to be aware of your moods and your thoughts about that mood. Not being able to notice your true feelings leaves you at their mercy. Emotions that simmer below your awareness can have a powerful impact on how you react and what you perceive.

Self-awareness doesn't mean getting carried away by emotions. It's a neutral mode that manages a "self-witnessing eye" even in the middle of powerful emotions. This ability is a skill that can be learned over time. Without thinking through your reaction you might be giving people your 'knee jerk' or automatic response, something you might regret shortly after you "blurt".

Building Self-Management

It's true you can't choose where or when feelings happen, but you can choose your reaction to them. This is where the practice of self-control comes in, and self-control improves with practice. There isn't a formula that fits everyone, but self-awareness is not enough. Active self-management and self-control is required.

One basic tip is to be mindful of your ups and downs and find your way of keeping calm and bringing your thinking to bear on your reactions.

* Based on Daniel Goleman's analysis from his book, *Emotional Intelligence*™

Each of us must develop a way to calm ourselves, whether it's using positive self-talk, taking a walk, talking to a coach or friend, regular exercise, meditation, the 6-deep-breaths methods, prayer, climbing stairs or whatever else works for you. The key here is to get away from the "emotional high-jacking" that's occurring.

Another competency of self-management is the ability to motivate yourself, using your emotions in the service of a goal. Essential for mastery, focusing and creativity, you don't want your emotions to get in the way of your ability to think and plan, pursue a distant goal or solve problems.

Hope, optimism and even a small amount of anxiety are also fundamental to self-motivation. Hope has an important role in life, helping you not to give in to a defeatist attitude or to overwhelming anxiety. Optimism is how you explain your successes and failures. Optimism, like hope, means having strong expectations that in general things will turn out all right, despite frustrations and setbacks. Optimism is defined as how people explain their successes and failures. Optimists see failure as something that can be changed. Pessimists take the blame for failure, ascribing it to a characteristic impossible to change.

Although persistence is important, it's not enough. You might persist, based on a powerful emotional need, but be blinded to finding a creative way to reach your goal, or to realize that the goal must change.

Emotional skills such as impulse control and not doing or saying things you'll later regret are important skills for mastery and focus. When you become swamped by your emotions, they can limit your ability to use your mental abilities.

The emotional self-control of delaying gratification and impulse control underlies accomplishments of every sort. You have probably realized that when emotions overwhelm concentration, working memory stops working—you can't even think straight.

Building empathy or social awareness

Another keystone of emotional intelligence is the ability to "get" how someone else feels. Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes. This includes appreciating the differences in how people feel about things.

Empathy is also the ability to 'read' others. The first step is to focus your attention on the person, seeking to truly listen to understand her actions and emotions. It requires following others with genuine curiosity—what are they feeling? How strongly? Why?

Healthy empathy is vital to the ability to develop and maintain deep and lasting interpersonal relationships.

How might you build your empathy?

Research has shown that the more open you are to your own feelings, the more skilled you will become in reading others' feelings

Analyzing a situation from another person's perspective, and seeing how it might affect them also sensitizes you to the issues of others. Think about the Indian adage "never judge a person until you walk a hundred miles in his moccasins".

Building Social Skills

Another area of emotional intelligence is social intelligence or relationship management. These are the people skills that make for effectiveness in dealing with others—abilities that enable you to persuade and influence others, put people at ease, handle disputes, shape encounters and be an inspired leader. The quality of our interpersonal relationships establishes the climate in our workplaces.

How might you build your social intelligence?

Knowing your strengths and weaknesses gives you the confidence to be your real self with others.

Having good impulse controls helps to build trust with others.

Developing your empathy helps you understand others' perspectives.

Practice and gain skill in the other domains of emotional intelligence, relationship management skills build on the other capabilities of emotional intelligence

Practices

Have you recently been in a situation where you wished you hadn't responded in a particular way?

- 1 Describe the situation
- 2 What were you feeling about the situation?
- 3 Why did you feel that way
- 4 How did you respond to those feelings?
- 5 How was your body responding when you were feeling that way?
- 6 How would you like to respond differently in the future?

When you are in conversation with someone, you can best demonstrate your empathy by reflecting back two critical parts of the message, namely the meaning and the feeling.

- 1 Learn to read body language. Attend to a person's facial expressions, breathing, posture, and tonality. Then match his/her physical state in your own body and see how it feels to you.
- 2 Form an intention to pay attention to others.
- 3 Practice paraphrasing, using phrases such as "So you're telling me", "what I hear you want (need)", "it sounds to me like".