

WHY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE LEADS TO INCREASED SUCCESS & HAPPINESS



DEFINING IT

Emotional intelligence is a hot term right now, but what exactly does it mean? Human beings are inherently social, and we are hard wired to connect. We are drawn to others with high emotional intelligence because we feel comfortable and at ease with these people. Emotional intelligence is an integral part of forming and developing meaningful relationships.

Emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to recognise and understand our own and others feelings, use this awareness to guide our thoughts and actions, manage our behaviour and regulate our emotions for personal growth and relationships.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The concept of emotional intelligence has grown rapidly in recent years and has a strong relationship with stress, mental health, relationships, and work/academic performance. Emotional intelligence offers a window into mental health since our ability of to understand our own emotional states or emotional problems is considered an important indicator of healthy mental functioning.

Emotional intelligence is believed to predict better psychological and physical health. It is related to greater feelings of emotional well-being, reduced psychological stress, improved communication skills, higher positive mood, higher self-esteem, lower depression, higher optimism, and greater life satisfaction. People with higher emotional intelligence also have better skills in empathic perspective taking, cooperation with others, developing affectionate and more satisfying relationships as well as greater social skills in general.



PROBLEMS WITH LOWER EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

People with low emotional intelligence have less well-developed emotion regulation skills and find it difficult to use their emotions to attain personal goals and to form and maintain personal relationships. Low emotional intelligence may lead to being argumentative, failing to recognise other's feelings, behaving insensitively, emotional outbursts, avoidance or aggression, conflictual behaviour, higher levels of drug and alcohol use, as well as stealing and fighting.

Low emotional intelligence can lead to emotional hijacking. Daniel Goleman describes Emotional Hijacking in his book 'Emotional Intelligence: "Why it Matters More than IQ"' as a state when our emotions control our behaviour, and we act without thinking. An overwhelming emotional response occurs with a later realization that the response was inappropriately strong given the trigger or situation.

THE COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

There are four components of emotional intelligence:

1. Emotional Self-Awareness – knowing what one feels
2. Emotional Self-Management – the ability to sustain goal directed behaviour
3. Social Awareness – encompasses the competency of empathy and the ability to recognise emotions
4. Relationship Management – ability to attune oneself to or influence the emotions of another person

	Internal or Recognition	External or Regulation
Personal Competence	Self-Awareness: ability to accurately perceive your own emotions in the moment and understand your tendencies across situations (Bradberry & Greaves, p. 24).	Self-Management: ability to use your awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and direct your behavior positively (Bradberry & Greaves, p. 32).
Social Competence	Social Awareness: ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them (Bradberry & Greaves, p. 38).	Relationship Management: ability to use your awareness of your own emotions and those of others to manage interactions successfully (Bradberry & Greaves, p. 44).

WHAT ROLE DOES EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVE FOR US?

Emotional intelligence helps us:

- Manage behaviour
- Navigate and cope with change
- Better deal with stress
- Make well thought out decisions
- Have more successful and positive social interactions
- Lead to healthy and better-quality relationships
- Increase productivity
- Help with prioritising thinking
- have better academic and work experiences
- protects us against burnout



HELPFUL STRATEGIES:

Emotions impact our body and our brain, there are universal triggers, rules and progressions to emotions, as well as a smorgasbord of strategies to build emotional agility and resilience.

Being Aware of Your Emotions: We all experience many different emotions throughout the day. Being able to notice and accurately label these everyday feelings is the most basic of all the emotional intelligence skills and helps us manage our own emotions. It also helps us understand how other people feel. Practice noticing emotions as you feel them. Label them in your mind (for example, by saying to yourself "I feel grateful," "I feel frustrated," etc.). Make it a daily habit to be aware of your emotions.

Manage your own emotional reactions: Try to practice the stop – think – do method. This involves identifying emotions at the STOP stage and engaging in self-control, perceptual and communication skills, then ensuring the brain has the opportunity to THINK about options to solve the problem using problem solving skills, and behavioural skills (motivating and skilling) us to DO the thought out response. In this process challenge yourself, your assumptions and your emotions. (What are your thoughts? Is there more to this situation than you know? More information that you need?)



HELPFUL STRATEGIES:

Listen: If you want to understand what other people are feeling, the first step is to actively listen. Take the time to listen to what people are trying to tell you, both verbally and non-verbally, hear what they are saying and think about what they are saying means. Observe their body language, nonverbal gestures and consider the different factors that might be contributing to that emotion.

Empathise: Noticing the other person's feelings are important, but we also need to be able to consider their experiences from their point of view. Practice imagining how you would feel and respond if you were in the same situation. What would you do?

Observe and reflect: The ability to consider and reflect on our own emotions is an important part of emotional intelligence. It is important to be aware of the way that our own emotions influence our decisions and behaviours. It is helpful to be aware of how we react to other people. Practice thinking flexibly and considering multiple reasons or options for behaviour while approaching with curiosity and accepting others' perspectives and needs.

Assess how you react to your own stressful situations: Noticing our own triggers for stress and the ways that we typically respond helps us to make conscious choices about how we would like to respond to those same triggers in the future. The ability to stay calm and in control in difficult situations is highly valued.

