

ENHANCING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Introduction

Recent behavioural research has shown that emotional intelligence is an important determinant of success in both our personal and professional lives. Emotionally intelligent people are adept at making their emotions work for them. They are able to handle their emotions in ways that enhance their work productivity and quality of life around them. They use their emotions intelligently to guide their thinking and behaviour. Emotions are strong mental or instinctive feelings such as love, fear, hope, anger and sadness.

On the other hand, there are numerous cases of smart people with high IQ who behave stupidly in emotionally charged situations. The lack of emotional intelligence often results in their emotions working against them with unproductive outcomes. I once worked under a boss who often shouted abusive and vulgar words at his subordinates in public when overwhelmed with anger. He was also unappreciative and had poor interpersonal skills. Due to his low emotional intelligence, he was greatly disliked by most people in the organization.

Fortunately, our level of emotional intelligence is not fixed at birth. It can be learnt and enhanced. One can become more emotionally intelligent by learning and practising the skills of emotional intelligence.

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

The term “emotional intelligence” was coined by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990. It was then greatly popularized by Daniel Goleman in his bestseller, *Emotional Intelligence*.

Peter Salovey and John Mayer define emotional intelligence as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.” According to Goleman, emotional intelligence refers to “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.” Simply put, emotional intelligence is the ability to manage one’s own and others’ emotions in order to guide one’s own behavior and to attain desired results.

Importance of Emotional Intelligence

At the workplace, there is increasing evidence that IQ gets people hired, but emotional intelligence gets them promoted. More careers have been damaged due to poor interpersonal relationships rather than a lack of technical knowhow. 75% of derailed management-level careers result from a lack of emotional competencies (e.g. lack of self-awareness, poor emotional self-control and poor interpersonal skills). Emotional intelligence also directly affects teamwork and productivity. It enables managers to understand themselves better; maintain their self-confidence, enthusiasm and resilience;

create a sense of purpose and meaning among followers; empathize and relate well to others; motivate and inspire employees; and to build high-performance teams.

Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence

1. **Self-awareness** which is the cornerstone of emotional intelligence. It involves observing oneself and recognizing one's own emotions (emotional self-awareness); seeing the links between thoughts, emotions and reactions; seeing the consequences of alternative choices; recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses (accurate self-assessment); and seeing oneself in a positive but realistic light.
2. **Self-management** which involves primarily handling emotions appropriately. It involves staying calm under pressure (emotional self-control), adapting oneself to change, engaging in constructive inner dialogues, and channelling emotions in the service of a goal which includes achievement drive, initiative and perseverance.
3. **Social awareness** which is essentially being sensitive to other people's feelings and concerns (empathy) besides respecting differences in how people feel about things. It encompasses understanding others; the ability to read and respond to others' feelings; service orientation (recognizing and meeting customers' requirements); and awareness of organizational politics (being politically savvy).
4. **Relationship management** which encompasses managing emotions in others and social competence. This domain is critical for developing effective leadership and interpersonal relationships. It includes developing others; being assertive rather than angry or passive; managing conflict constructively; networking; promoting teamwork and collaboration; and mastering the art of persuasion.

Tips for Promoting Self-Awareness

1. Know the *Real You*. What are your inner thoughts and feelings? What are your strengths and weaknesses? Complete scientifically validated self-assessment instruments to gain insights into your personality. Practise self-disclosure; check out aspects of yourself that you are uncertain of.
2. Identify events and behaviour which normally trigger your emotions. For example, identify what kind of situations or events can trigger your anger and what are its early signs.
3. Monitor your general behaviour and assess its impact on other people. Maintain a journal to reflect upon your past experiences. Ask questions such as "What really happened?", "Why did it happen?" and "What is the lesson learned?"
4. Be honest with yourself. Avoid being defensive. Do not deny painful realities.
5. Be receptive to new knowledge. Seek feedback from other people as to how they perceive you.
6. Determine what are your key guiding values or basic philosophy of life.
7. Reengineer yourself. Identify and discard false beliefs about yourself.

Tips for Managing Yourself Effectively

1. Avoid being swept away by your emotions. Remember that you are primarily responsible for your emotions and behaviour.
2. Use “I” messages to express your emotions. Examples are “I feel unappreciated when you take me for granted” and “I feel unimportant when you are late for your appointments with me.”
3. Pick an appropriate time for expressing your emotions. Don’t react impulsively. Take deep breaths or a time-out to stay on top of your behavioural actions.
4. State what bothers you clearly, calmly and courteously. Avoid generalising and don’t bring up old grudges. Stay away from destructive labelling.
5. Accept the fact that change is part of life. Adapt quickly to new realities. Be open to new ideas and ways of doing things.
6. Determine what is success to you. Establish specific, realistic and time-bounded goals.
7. Wake up happy. Start the day with positive thoughts. Don’t worry about things beyond your control. Have faith in God and hope for the best.
8. Be bold and take the initiative to make things happen. Dare to fail; view failures as lessons learned.
9. Maintain the company of nourishing people. Avoid negaholics and “toxic” people.
10. Keep track of your progress towards attaining desired goals. Maintain perseverance in the face of setbacks. Try out new approaches instead of getting demoralized.

Tips for Enhancing Social Awareness and Managing Relationships

1. Treat everyone with respect and dignity. Make them feel important. Remember and use other people’s names.
2. Be empathetic. Always try to see the other person’s point of view. Try to understand why others feel the way they do.
3. Be an active listener. Listen attentively with the purpose of understanding what is being said. Maintain eye contact and resist distractions. Ask open-ended questions (e.g. “Why do you think so?” and “Do you have any other concern?”) to clarify any point of contention.
4. Make others feel good about themselves by giving them sincere, specific and timely praise.
5. Call attention to people’s mistakes indirectly and politely. Avoid making sarcastic remarks.
6. Speak positively of others or not at all. Practise the basic courtesies such as saying “please”, “thank you” and “sorry” when necessary.
7. Avoid being judgemental. For example, you might say, “You have failed to meet work deadlines twice this month”, instead of “You are an unreliable employee.”

8. Seek out the good in others and accept them as they are. Ignore minor irritations and trivial issues.
9. Create “win-win” relationships. Seek mutual benefit in all human interactions.
10. Assist others in their growth and development. Share ideas, skills, experiences and pertinent information.
11. Provide subordinates challenging assignments that stretch them to give their best.
12. Know your organization inside out and its organizational political terrain, particularly identifying who has clout and credibility.
13. Practise subtle self-promotion (raise your “visibility”) like sending regular progress reports to your boss, volunteering for high-visibility projects or writing in your company’s newsletter.
14. Make networking a top priority. Network with people inside and outside the organization who can assist you in attaining work-related goals and advancing your career.
15. Be a good team player. Express willingness to assist others in meeting project deadlines. Project confidence in team members. Be reliable and conscientious by honouring deadlines and work commitments.