

Emotional Intelligence: The New Science of Interpersonal Effectiveness

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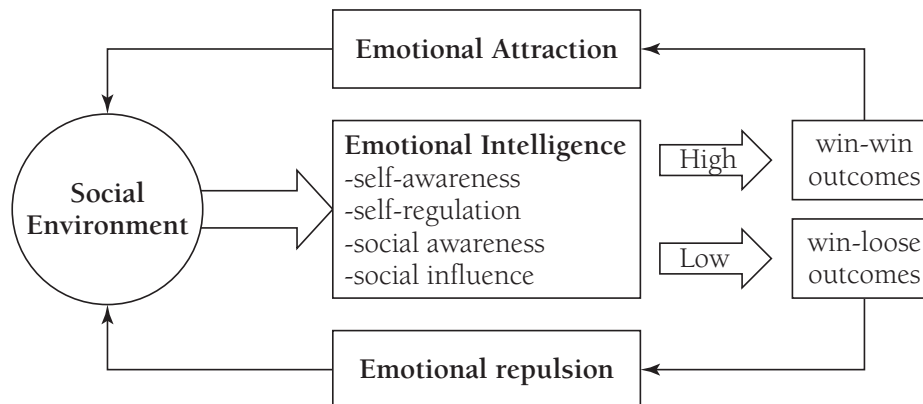
Emotional intelligence (EI) is the newest branch of psychology. It has perhaps broken all records of growth in the field of behavioral sciences. Academically, it has become the research focus of some of the world's leading psychologists. In business, it is growing into a multimillion dollar training industry. Multi-national corporations and the world's giant industrial groups are realizing that emotions play an equally important role as intelligence in enhancing corporate performance. Daniel Goleman, who popularized the concept, argues that the contribution of emotional intelligence to effective performance at work is as much as 66 percent for all jobs and 85 percent for leadership jobs (Goleman, 1995). Research output from industry also shows considerable support for the concept.

Management practitioners all over the world, however, are only beginning to understand what EI is, how EI develops in a person, and what tools, techniques, and methods are available to develop emotional intelligence. The pages that follow explain the current insights on EI derived from both academic research and feedback results received from EI trainers engaged in emotional intelligence training.

Role of Emotional Intelligence in Social Life

Emotional intelligence is the ability of a person to use emotions as a guiding tool for interpersonal effectiveness in his or her social environment (Figure 1). While interacting with members of the social environment, emotionally intelligent people produce win-win relationships and outcomes for themselves and others. Such people develop a magnetic field of emotional attraction around themselves and often are the owners of an ever-increasing network of social relationships and emotional support structures. People with low emotional intelligence, on the contrary, enter into counterproductive emotional transactions and build around them, often unknowingly, a field of emotional repulsion that causes their social circles to become contracted and distanced from them.

Figure 1. Emotional Intelligence and Social Interaction



Thus, it appears that there exists a scale of emotional attractiveness on which every individual will fall, and the higher the position on the scale, the greater the success of a person in his or her social environment. The goal of emotional intelligence, then, is to facilitate individuals in developing self-knowledge about who they are and where they stand in the world of emotions in order to guide them smoothly toward interpersonal success in their social journey.

Emotional Intelligence: What It Means

Emotional intelligence was first defined by P. Salovey and J. D. Mayer in 1990 and was later popularized by Daniel Goleman through his classic book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* (1995). These founding authors of EI portrayed emotionally intelligent people as those capable of diagnosing and monitoring the internal environment of their own and others' minds, and showing remarkable skillfulness in managing their relationships with others in ways that produce winning outcomes. Drawing upon these authors' research results, emotional intelligence may be explained as the sum total of the mental capabilities that enable a person in understanding his or her own and others' emotions correctly, in real time, and in using these emotions intelligently to produce personally and socially desirable transactional outcomes. From a practical point of view, emotional intelligence is the application of emotions wisely in situations that call for emotionally guarded rather than logically smarter responses.

The Biological Dynamics of Emotional Intelligence

Using emotions intelligently is no easy task because there are deep biological processes involved in emotion. Brain theory suggests that through genetically determined processes, the emotional brain (amygdala along with

other limbic structures) tends to dominate over the rational brain (neocortex) and controls the thought processes of individuals (Bear, Connors, & Paradiso, 1996). When situations or critical moments calling for intelligent actions emerge, the amygdala suppresses the rational processes of the neocortex, and interprets or even exaggerates the events as hostile and dangerous to the person. In people who become easily angered, irritated, excited, or upset, this phenomenon can be easily noticed. In such cases, obeying commands from the amygdala, the person perceives the situation as threatening and starts engaging in defensive, emotionalized behavior that can take irrational dimensions (Davidson, Jackson, & Kalin, 2000). The person could be depicted as operating in the emotionally less intelligent mode. At this point, an individual becomes emotionally excited, and the body shows symptoms of palpitations, increased blood pressure, and other biological reactions. All these physical reactions occur within the flicker of a moment and could be summarized as an emotional “game” played by the amygdala. Most people experience many such occurrences of emotional games in their lives.

In emotionally intelligent people, the mind is able to detect this emotional game played by the amygdala, and thus the capacities of the mind are tuned for controlled emotional involvement. This ability of the EI person to pull back and recognize what is happening inside the mind is called meta-regulation of mood (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 1997). In the mature form of EI, the person is able to channel his emotions constructively and use those emotions as motivational support for the actions of the rational mind.

Mastering EI: What Competencies to Look For

In order to use emotions intelligently or behave in so-called rationally and emotionally balanced ways, individuals need to develop necessary competencies, called EI competencies. EI theory classifies these competencies into two broad categories: (1) personal competence in dealing with one’s own self, and (2) social competence in dealing with the self of others (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Personal competence is the ability of a person to sense and regulate his or her internal mental moods and processes. Individuals with personal competence do not allow their emotions to disturb or deter the rational mind from executing its actions rationally and to the best of their intellectual capacity. Personal competence includes two subcompetencies: self-awareness and self-regulation.

Self-awareness is the ability to detect, trace, and label emotions as they occur within us. Self-regulation is the ability of a person to use the above knowledge (or emotional literacy) to regulate the rational and emotional operations of the mind in a balanced way.

Research shows that self-competent people manage their impulsive feelings and disturbing emotions effectively and stay composed, positive, and

unflappable even during trying moments (Martinez, 1997). Such people think clearly and remain focused under pressure, and are able to make sound, decisive decisions despite uncertainties and demands, shifting priorities, and changes in their life. Moreover, self-competent individuals show remarkable tact in adapting to fluid circumstances.

Social competence is the ability of a person to discern the emotional world of others by using his or her interpersonal skills (such as leadership, assertiveness, and communication) to produce socially desirable and productive outcomes. Social competence includes two distinct subcompetencies: social awareness and social influence.

Social awareness is the ability to read the inner minds of others. Often called empathy, it involves entering into emotional dialogue with others and getting the true feel of their thought processes. Empathy forges emotional connections and underlies many interpersonal aptitudes such as teamwork, persuasion, and leadership.

Social influence is the capacity of a person to influence and effect positive changes in others by using his or her interpersonal skills. Among interpersonal skills, the attributes that are of prime importance are leadership, communication, and assertiveness.

In an emotionally intelligent person, the above-mentioned four competencies of self-awareness, self-regulation, social-awareness, and social influence work together in unison. Absence of one or more of these reduces the EI competence of the person and can cause damage to both personal and social functioning.

How Do We Measure Emotional Intelligence?

Just as traditional intelligence is measured as IQ, emotional intelligence is measured and expressed as emotional quotient (EQ). EQ is a measure of the emotional skills of a person but is not emotional intelligence as such. It is the measure of the application of emotional intelligence to one's personal and social life and tells about one's active skills in the area of emotions. The most common measuring instruments include Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS), Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI), Bar-On's EQ-I, and Seligman Attributional Style Questionnaire. These and a variety of other measuring devices can be accessed through the World Wide Web.

Emotionally Intelligent Managers

Portrait studies of emotionally intelligent people from business and industry have illuminated the various ways emotionally intelligent managers and leaders think, behave, and act. These managers handle their emotions carefully, soothe themselves effectively when upset, and get upset less often. They are more relaxed biologically, with lower levels of stress hormones and other physiological indicators

of emotional arousal. Their superiors, colleagues, and subordinates alike rate them as having fewer behavioral problems such as rudeness or aggressiveness (Abraham, 1999). Socially they are more attractive to their peers and are seen by others as more socially skilled and influential. In essence, EI managers are empathic personalities who make others feel involved, understood, supported, and trusted.

Training and Development Programs in EI: What They Do

With the aim of helping people develop and restructure their EI competencies, EI practitioners have developed a plethora of EI development programs. Most of these programs begin with an analysis of one's rational-emotional processes, done with the help of self-reporting inventories or through other methods that aid in self-mapping of emotional intelligence. In some cases, peer appraisals are also used to portray emotional intelligence. Thereafter, the participants move through a typical series of stages, such as emotional mapping, emotional diagnosis, emotional authentication, emotional navigation, empathy building, and social-influence building.

Emotional Mapping. Human beings have a complex repertoire of emotions that includes joy, eagerness, surprise, fear, anger, sorrow, jealousy, disgust, and so forth. Every passing moment, individuals experience hundreds of variations of these emotions—they appear and vanish, blend and merge, and on many occasions confuse us. Emotional mapping helps sort out and chart all of those emotions, name them, understand their causes and effects, and know how they affect thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Emotional Pattern Diagnosis. Brain scientists have found out that the human mind develops neural pathways, that is, the organism's learned responses to various environmental stimuli. Over time, through repetition and reinforcement, these pathways become roads and the roads become highways. Once formed, the neural pathways tightly control our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Interrupting an established pathway requires extraordinary effort and energy.

In a carefully drafted EI development program, the participants are encouraged to penetrate into and recognize these neural pathways, and analyze how these pathways affect their interactions, goals, and motivations. The exercise strengthens the mental capacities for acknowledging emotions insightfully and in dealing with them in socially effective ways.

The first two stages of EI training, emotional mapping and emotional pattern diagnosis, give participants a vivid understanding of their emotional personality. The next two stages, emotional authentication and emotional navigation, are support stages.

Emotional Authentication. In this stage, the participants assess the productivity and consequences of their emotions and actions upon others and on self.

Thoughts, feelings, and actions are guarded and kept well controlled and regulated. Many decisions and choices made unconsciously in the past now become conscious to the mind and subsequently give way to rational and intelligent choices. The result is a balanced personality, able to look at the costs and benefits of each action and choice, and able to align actions with motives and goals.

Emotional Navigation. Society often expects people to control and suppress emotions such as excitement, anger, sorrow, and the like. Emotional navigation tells just the opposite—that feelings are not always troublesome or destructive; instead, feelings have powerful healing properties and are required in many natural occasions. When properly used, feelings provide insight, generate energy, and supply motivational support for making bold and proper decisions. Instead of denying emotions, during emotional navigation individuals slow down their reactions to give intellect a chance to guide emotions. When in conflict or crisis, this slowing-down process helps in carefully engaging both heart and mind, and thus generates creative and intellectually superior solutions. As individuals become competent at navigating their emotions, they are able to face and harness emotions as a source of information and motivation to fuel productive self-action.

Empathy Building. During this stage, participants pass through a series of empathy workshops to experience the emotions of others. Being both a genetic and a learned behavior, empathy is a difficult capability to develop. Yet once developed at the conscious level, it provides the way for building and sustaining valuable relationships with others. Participants are more confident and tuned into making others feel attended to, listened to, cared for, respected, and trusted. The result is that an emotional foundation cements their social relationships.

Influence Building. As mentioned earlier, success in this competence depends on a person's mastery of the various interpersonal skills such as leadership, communication, assertiveness, negotiation, and the like. EI programs generally do not offer direct training in these areas because a plethora of highly specialized and sophisticated training programs are available for developing these skills. What is important from the EI angle is that people who have sharpened their skills in the other components of EI can use those EI competencies as vital inputs for augmenting the effectiveness of their influence-building activities.

Conclusion: Implications for Human Resource Development

To sum up, a carefully drafted emotional intelligence training program changes both the inside aspects and the outside relationships of participants and cultivates a host of virtues and attributes, including better attitudes, clearer perceptions, and productive affiliations in life. In many cases, EI activates within people a burning spirit for pursuing noble goals, missions, and

accomplishments in life that lead to definable improvements in their own selves and in the social world.

In organizations, the contribution of EI training to human resource development can be tremendously beneficial. In fact, companies that have adopted EI competency models have experienced quick and powerful changes in employee behavior that can be sustained over time. Research evidence from industry, government, and organizations of all types points out that the number of organizations benefiting from EI competency applications is on the increase (Hay Group, 2004). In most cases, by creating emotionally intelligent workplace, these organizations have been able to identify and work with personal motives of employees and develop competency models that truly drive performance. In fact, the most noticeable experience of organizations that have benefited from EI applications is that wise and careful implementation of EI competency models can go a long way in helping organizations break the code on how to help leaders, managers, and employees increase their individual and organizational effectiveness.

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