

HAVE YOU CHECKED YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ) LATELY?

It didn't surprise me I was lured into Daniel Goleman's book titled: *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. It became quite apparent after a nerve-wrecking incident that I needed to learn how to become more emotionally smart.

On a late Saturday night, while I was designing a new training program (exciting life), I accidentally spilled a lovely glass of Merlot I had just opened into my laptop computer. Needless to say, I responded with fear—great fear. “Save the computer!” was the only concept I could process. All I could see was my \$3,000 computer getting drunk and passing out forever. As a result of this disaster, I put my family all my friends and myself through the wringer while I waited for the unknown outcome of my computer. In my emotional state they had no choice. I was distraught. To make matters worse, my files had not been backed up. Every morning I called the manufacturer in California to inquire about my “baby.” Was the data on the hard drive retrievable?

The outcome of this debacle, and personal aging process exposed my low EQ. I vowed to manage myself more effectively through increased emotional learning (and keep beverages away from my computer!).

The definition of EQ is the power not only to control emotions, but also to perceive them. Failing to perceive emotions at work and in a personal life can be a costly factor. People who are constantly developing good interpersonal skills are distinguishable as the star performer versus the non-star performer. What is unsettling is that none of this success has to do with your IQ -- how smart you are!

The way I handled the demise of my computer was just one example of my low EQ. Another more common example might be the driver that carelessly pulls out in front of you after a long day at work. Your immediate response is to yell, “You jerk, can't you wait your turn? I'll get you, you ...!” In the meantime, your knuckles are turning white as you firmly grip the steering wheel. You tell five people about this “jerk” when you get to your destination. Additionally, the mood of this upset lasts for hours in your body, mind and spirit. This verifies low EQ!

Daniel Goleman, Ph. D. asserts that more powerful than IQ, emotional intelligence is a newly defined form of intelligence. IQ has a nearly one-hundred-year history of research with hundreds of thousands of people. Like IQ, EQ is partially predetermined by the brain one is born with. The good news (thank goodness) is that learning from the repeated experiences of life can shape EQ constantly. Goleman uses science to confirm what common sense has long observed: there's more to success than having a high IQ -- much more!

Emotional intelligence is made of five closely related factors that can be developed and improved. These include: self-awareness, mood management, motivation, empathy, and social/people skills. Eventually, over a sustained period of time, you begin to ask yourself

this probing question: “Why did I do that?” Goleman says this is a sign that the rational mind is awakening to the moment, but not with the rapidity of the emotional mind.

It often seems as if the hardest part of work is managing the diverse emotions that control us throughout the day. Yet, emotional intelligence may be the key to being a team player, and perhaps the most critical tool available in the workplace today. If we begin to ponder our emotional thoughts, we might notice that we are paying too little attention to what is going on, e.g., was a conflict at work an innocent mistake? The skills Goleman describes are exactly those required of people struggling to lead or work within a group or team.

Give this example some thought: you are a manager in an organization that is implementing downsizing (what a surprise!). You have two very competent and equal employees, but one must be laid off. Both of these employees have the same IQ, same education, same skills, same title and responsibilities. Yet, the one you decide to retain has a little “something more” than the other. You keep this person even though you’re not sure what this ingredient represents. This mental component of “something more” is usually EQ.

Being able to channel emotions toward a productive end is a master aptitude. Several of these abilities include: being able to motivate oneself when faced with frustrations; controlling impulse and delaying gratification; regulating one’s mood by keeping distress from bogging the ability to think; and empathizing and integrating hope.

One of the observations I detect in people at work is how frequently they misinterpret facial expressions. What matters more in this case is how the facial expressions are *perceived*. What something *reminds us of* can be far more important than what it is! As Goleman states, “Feelings are self-justifying with a set of perceptions and ‘proofs’ all their own. When some feature of an event seems similar to an emotionally charged memory from the past, the emotional mind responds by triggering the feelings that went with the remembered event. The emotional mind reacts to the present as *though it were the past*. The trouble is that, especially when the appraisal is fast and automatic, we may not realize that what was once the case is no longer so.”

Here are nine key skills that can improve your emotional quotient:

1. Recovering quickly from upsets.
2. An easygoing nature.
3. Becoming “an observer” of oneself as a way to cope with a topic or challenge.
4. Controlling impulses, setting goals.
5. Identifying alternative actions.
6. Anticipating consequences.
7. Expressing feelings and making better emotional decisions.
8. Handling stress and anxiety.
9. Finding creative solutions to social predicaments.

After noting my own EQ and those I train in various workplaces, I am inclined to support data suggesting that EQ can be as powerful, if not at times more powerful, than IQ. The question is, can you teach an old dog a new trick? I focus on Socrates’ injunction: “Know thyself.” This seems to be the bedrock of emotional intelligence: *an awareness of one’s own*

feelings. The inquiry worth pondering is how do we utilize this awareness to be more effective in all relationships and activities both business and personal.

I am happy to share that my “baby” was repairable and the data was sober in the hard drive.

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