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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: HOW WE PERCEIVE, EVALUATE, EXPRESS, AND CONTROL EMOTIONS

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What is Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI or EQ for "emotional quotient") is the ability to perceive, interpret, demonstrate, control, evaluate, and use emotions to communicate with and relate to others effectively and constructively. This ability to express and control emotions is essential, but so is the ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others. Some experts suggest that emotional intelligence is more important than IQ for success in life.

What Are the Signs of Emotional Intelligence?

Some key signs and examples of emotional intelligence include:

- An ability to identify and describe what people are feeling
- An awareness of personal strengths and limitations
- Self-confidence and self-acceptance
- The ability to let go of mistakes
- An ability to accept and embrace change
- A strong sense of curiosity, particularly about other people
- Feelings of empathy and concern for others
- Showing sensitivity to the feelings of other people
- Accepting responsibility for mistakes
- The ability to manage emotions in difficult situations

How Emotional Intelligence Is Measured?

A number of different assessments have emerged to measure levels of emotional intelligence. Such tests generally fall into one of two types: self-report tests and ability tests.

Self-report tests are the most common because they are the easiest to administer and score. On such tests, respondents respond to questions or statements by rating their own behaviours. For example, on a statement such as "I often feel that I understand how others are feeling," a test-taker might describe the statement as disagree, somewhat disagree, agree, or strongly agree.

Ability tests, on the other hand, involve having people respond to situations and then assessing their skills. Such tests often require people to demonstrate their abilities, which are then rated by a third party.

If you are taking an emotional intelligence test administered by a mental health professional, here are two measures that might be used:

- **Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT)** is an ability-based test that measures the four branches of Mayer and Salovey's EI model. Test-takers perform tasks designed to assess their ability to perceive, identify, understand, and manage emotions.
- **Emotional and Social Competence Inventory (ESCI)** is based on an older instrument known as the Self-Assessment Questionnaire and involves having people who know the individual offer ratings of that person's abilities in several different emotional competencies. The test is designed to evaluate the social and emotional abilities that help distinguish people as strong leaders.

There are also plenty of more informal online resources, many of them free, to investigate your emotional intelligence.

What Are the 4 Components of Emotional Intelligence?

Researchers suggest that there are four different levels of emotional intelligence including emotional perception, the ability to reason using emotions, the ability to understand emotions, and the ability to manage emotions.

- 1. Perceiving emotions:** The first step in understanding emotions is to perceive them accurately. In many cases, this might involve understanding nonverbal signals such as body language and facial expressions.
- 2. Reasoning with emotions:** The next step involves using emotions to promote thinking and cognitive activity. Emotions help prioritize what we pay attention and react to; we respond emotionally to things that garner our attention.
- 3. Understanding emotions:** The emotions that we perceive can carry a wide variety of meanings. If someone is expressing angry emotions, the observer must interpret the cause of the person's anger and what it could mean. For example, if your boss is acting angry, it might mean that they are dissatisfied with your work, or it could be because they got a speeding ticket on their way to work that morning or that they've been fighting with their partner.
- 4. Managing emotions:** The ability to manage emotions effectively is a crucial part of emotional intelligence and the highest level. Regulating emotions and responding appropriately as well as responding to the emotions of others are all important aspects of emotional management.

The four branches of this model are arranged by complexity with the more basic processes at the lower levels and the more advanced processes at the higher levels. For example, the lowest levels involve perceiving and expressing emotion, while higher levels require greater conscious involvement and involve regulating emotions.

Impact of Emotional Intelligence

Interest in teaching and learning social and emotional intelligence has grown in recent years. Social and emotional learning (SEL) programs have become a standard part of the curriculum for many schools.

The goal of these initiatives is not only to improve health and well-being but also to help students succeed academically and prevent bullying. There are many examples of how emotional intelligence can play a role in daily life.

Thinking Before Reacting

Emotionally intelligent people know that emotions can be powerful, but also temporary. When a highly charged emotional event happens, such as becoming angry with a co-worker, the emotionally intelligent response would be to take some time before responding. This allows everyone to calm their emotions and think more rationally about all the factors surrounding the argument.

Greater Self-Awareness

Emotionally intelligent people are not only good at thinking about how other people might feel but they are also adept at understanding their own feelings. Self-awareness allows people to consider the many different factors that contribute to their emotions.

Empathy for Others

A large part of emotional intelligence is being able to think about and empathize with how other people are feeling. This often involves considering how you would respond if you were in the same situation.

People who have strong emotional intelligence are able to consider the perspectives, experiences, and emotions of other people and use this information to explain why people behave the way that they do.

Cognitive Empathy vs. Emotional Empathy

How to Use Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be used in many different ways in your daily life. Some different ways to practice emotional intelligence include:

- Being able to accept criticism and responsibility
- Being able to move on after making a mistake
- Being able to say no when you need to
- Being able to share your feelings with others
- Being able to solve problems in ways that work for everyone
- Having empathy for other people
- Having great listening skills
- Knowing why you do the things you do
- Not being judgemental of others

Emotional intelligence is essential for good interpersonal communication. Some experts believe that this ability is more important in determining life success than IQ alone. Fortunately, there are things that you can do to strengthen your own social and emotional intelligence.

Understanding emotions can be the key to better relationships, improved well-being, and stronger communication skills.

Are There Downsides to Emotional Intelligence?

Having lower emotional intelligence skills can lead to a number of potential pitfalls that can affect multiple areas of life including work and relationships. People who have fewer emotional skills tend to get in more arguments, have lower quality relationships, and have poor emotional coping skills.

Being low on emotional intelligence can have a number of drawbacks, but having a very high level of emotional skills can also come with challenges. For example:

- Research suggests that people with high emotional intelligence may actually be less creative and innovative.
- Highly emotionally intelligent people may have a hard time delivering negative feedback for fear of hurting other people's feelings.
- Research has found that high EQ can sometimes be used for manipulative and deceptive purposes

What Are Some Ways to Improve Emotional Intelligence?

While some people might come by their emotional skills naturally, some evidence suggests that this is an ability you can develop and improve. For example, a 2019 randomised controlled trial found that emotional intelligence training could improve emotional abilities in workplace settings.

Being emotionally intelligent is important, but what steps can you take to improve your own social and emotional skills? Here are some tips.

Listen

If you want to understand what other people are feeling, the first step is to pay attention. Take the time to listen to what people are trying to tell you, both verbally and non-verbally. Body language can carry a great deal of meaning. When you sense that someone is feeling a certain way, consider the different factors that might be contributing to that emotion.

Empathise

Picking up on emotions is critical, but you also need to be able to put yourself into someone else's shoes in order to truly understand their point of view. Practice empathising with other people. Imagine how you would feel in their situation. Such activities can help you build an emotional understanding of a specific situation as well as develop stronger emotional skills in the long-term.

Reflect

The ability to reason with emotions is an important part of emotional intelligence. Consider how your own emotions influence your decisions and behaviours. When you are thinking about how other people respond, assess the role that their emotions play.

Why is this person feeling this way? Are there any unseen factors that might be contributing to these feelings? How do your emotions differ from theirs? As you explore such questions, you may find that it becomes easier to understand the role that emotions play in how people think and behave