

The Emotionally Intelligent Manager

The vital role that emotional intelligence (EI) plays in the workplace isn't a new concept, yet it persists in relevance as research continues to point to its value. There is a wealth of information on the subject, written from a wide range of perspectives for various applications, and it has even been the topic of this newsletter a time or two. In this issue, though, we'll take a more practical approach that explores why emotional intelligence should matter to you as a leader and how you can further develop your "feeling mind."

"In a very real sense we have two minds, one that thinks and one that feels."

– Daniel Goleman

The quote above is by Daniel Goleman, a psychologist who has been widely credited with bringing the concept of emotional intelligence to prominence. In his best-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman introduced a model comprised of five main abilities or skills deemed essential to one's emotional intelligence. Let's take a look at each one:

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to consciously recognize yourself (your strengths, weaknesses, preferences, feelings) separate from other people, your surroundings, and the present situation. It also means being aware in the moment of how your behavior and emotions affect those around you and influence your own reactions.

Example: You've been dreading to deliver some bad news to your team, yet you're able to set aside your fear of confrontation and the potential negative reactions of your employees. Instead, you choose to focus on listening to their concerns and answering questions as best you can.

Why self-awareness matters

Being self-aware allows you to recognize and improve upon your emotional and behavioral habits, better predict the reactions and emotions of others, deal with people and situations that you can't control, choose the way you react to negative circumstances, and influence the mood of others.

How to increase self-awareness

- Keep a journal of activities, interactions, feelings, reactions, and decisions you make and why
- Conduct a self-review from your employees' perspective
- Ask employees and work peers for feedback
- Know your strengths, weaknesses, preferences, habits
- Take a personality assessment, like DiSC or Meyers Briggs

Self-regulation

Self-regulation is, in short, thinking before you act and speak. It's the ability to act in your own best long-term interest by controlling your behavior, emotions, thoughts, and managing disruptive emotions and impulses.

Example: You remain calm and respectful during an employee's hostile reaction to her annual performance review. You maintain composure as you listen to concerns and attempt to shift back to a more productive and civil interaction.

Why self-regulation matters

When you are able to press pause long enough to step back, assess the situation, check your emotions, and wait to express yourself, allows you to be fully present in the moment, stay calm under pressure, react appropriately, and build resilience to disappointment and failure.

How to improve self-regulation

- Identify your triggers
- Reframe negative thoughts
- Consider the potential consequences of your reaction
- Step away from a stressful or challenging situation by taking a walk or a few deep breaths
- Reflect on situations and how you might handle your behavior and responses differently next time

Motivation

Self-motivation is our inner drive, willingness to improve, eagerness to take advantage of opportunities, and dedication to accomplish goals. It's that good kind of pressure that pushes us to keep going and keeps our central purpose top-of-mind.

Example: A special project was just assigned to your team and you volunteer to take on the research portion because it will save your employees some time, and/or because you want to show them that you're committed to their success *and* that you're willing to help them get there.

Why motivation matters

Understanding what motivates you is essential to your level of enthusiasm, and since attitudes and

emotions are contagious, that enthusiasm can have a profound effect on your employees. When they see that you're excited about your work, they're more likely to be engaged in theirs.

Likewise, if you lack excitement, or if your passion dwindles, they'll notice and be affected by that, too.

How to elevate motivation

- Take time to understand what you genuinely want

- Assess your current level of motivation with your work
- Reevaluate your career and why you do your job
- Explore untapped aspects of your job and develop new skills
- Allow yourself to be smitten by a new idea, project, or activity

Empathy

Empathy involves understanding the emotional states of others and the ability to identify with another person's feelings. More simply, it's an active attempt to put yourself in the other person's position and see things from their perspective.

Example: An employee has begun a new role but isn't performing as well as usual. In conversation, you recognize that the he has not had adequate training for the new role, so you let him know that you see the challenge of the learning curve and commit to better training the employee.

Why empathy matters

When managers prove that they understand and care about their people, they tend to be more liked and respected. And, employees who like and respect their managers are more loyal, produce better-quality work, and are willing to go beyond what's asked of them. Then, when you do ask for something extra of them, like needing to assign an undesirable task or resolving a conflict, your empathy skills can make or break the outcome.

How to unlock more empathy

- Really listen to what others say (and what their body language communicates)
- Ask open-ended questions; prepare a few prior to conversation if possible
- Check in with your feelings and emotions
- Practice putting yourself in the other person's position to better understand their perspective
- Travel to unfamiliar places and experience other cultures
- Assess your biases

Social Skills

Having good social skills, as they relate to emotional intelligence, involves using the other four EI abilities to influence the emotions of others. This isn't manipulation; rather, it's managing interactions using an array of relationship competencies.

Example: Your employee reacts positively to an otherwise undesirable task because you've worked to get to know her as an individual. The trust and rapport you've built, along with knowing her motivations, allow you to frame the task in a way that appeals to her.

Why social skills matter

Well-honed social skills can strengthen relationships, deepen connections, and improve verbal and nonverbal communication. Development of these skills can be especially helpful for managers when it comes to some of the tougher aspects of your job, like having difficult conversations, dealing with challenging employees, handling conflict, delivering bad news, and managing diverse teams.

How to strengthen social skills

(Adapted from the Institute for Social + Emotional Intelligence)

- Practice active listening and foster open dialogue
- Get to know and develop a rapport with each employee
- Communicate with diplomacy and tact
- Establish and maintain trust
- Frame messages to appeal to employees' motivations
- Motivate, guide, and mobilize individuals and groups
- Initiate, manage, and lead change
- Coach and mentor others; develop individual abilities
- Nurture and maintain meaningful relationships

Much of the information in this newsletter was compiled from the sources below. They are great places to start if you want to learn more about emotional intelligence and how you can apply it to managing your employees.

- MindTools.com
- PsychologyToday.com
- PositivePsychologyProgram.com
- VeryWellMind.com

Your EAP is also a valuable resource that is available 24/7. Call any time to schedule a management skills consultation, or visit the EAP online at FOH4You.com to find articles, on-demand webinars, and much more.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees and their family members at no cost.

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