



THE OTHER ... SIDE OF SMARTS

How to increase your emotional intelligence and master love, life and work

AT THE CORPORATE OFFICES of a national security alarm company, Tina and Jennifer introduce new hires to the folks in human resources. The training session begins with Becky, a shy but eager-to-please receptionist who has volunteered to host at the lectern. She starts by asking Tina and Jennifer for some background information and jots down details on index cards. After the new hires and the rest of the employees take their seats, a nervous Becky dives in but gets the details of Tina's bio wrong.

Sparks fly. 'I moved to New York in 2008, not nine,' the manager corrects a flustered Becky, 'and I have three children, not two.' Becky's eyes became downcast and her shoulders slump. The office was for once hushed as Becky apologized, cleared her throat and introduced Jennifer. But she made errors there, too,

By now entirely flustered, Becky stopped mid-introduction and looked at Jennifer. 'Oh wait, were you came on-board in December, not September?' There was silence

again as Jennifer walked over to Becky, putting her arm gently around her back. "Yes, it was December and my title technically is VP, but details are not always paramount to running an effective organization and titles are not always relevant when it comes to increasing team spirit and company cohesiveness, so Becky, you are helping my presentation. We are more than our data."

Everyone clapped as Jennifer's clear empathy and emotional intelligence won the day. This VP had navigated an upsetting scene to find a positive, uplifting aspect, teasing grace from the awkwardness so support and harmony could reign.

We live in a world that treats cognitive intelligence - often measured by intellectual quotient, or IQ - as the key to success. We are conditioned to respect the guy with the sharp memory, quick to quote the economic advisor or current medical journal, in awe of the gal who wins the trivia game. Schools base much of their admission decisions on testing



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that hews to measurements of IQ, reflected in standardized achievement tests, or SATs. Skills that require emotional development are often ignored.

This leaves out a major, though underrated aptitude: The other side of intelligence, rooted in emotional insight and understanding, called Emotional Intelligence or EI. Those with emotional intelligence interpret and react to situations by understanding themselves, the other guy, and the situation at hand on a deep level, fostering interactions that are likely to be positive and productive. The playbook includes several key qualities. Empathy and compassion are part of the EI playbook, along with intuition, self-awareness, and the confidence to rely on one's natural insight and the confluence of social skills to get things done. Disagreements may not always be avoidable, but for those with EI, aggression and hostility are almost always avoidable. High-EI individuals see the world through others eyes, using techniques from eye contact to touch to intuitive insight to pave the path to calmness. The practitioner of EI uses encouragement, not insult, to urge others along -and marshals honesty, clarity and compassion to create a sense of comfort and keep relationships intact.

"Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand one's own and other's feelings and moods and to use this

knowledge to guide their thoughts and actions,' says Annie McKee, a senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of the Penn CLO Executive Doctoral Program. 'At work, EI helps us to manage pressure, stress, and the inevitable challenges of working with others in our fast-paced, complex organizations. It doesn't matter whether you work in a Fortune 500 company, government, or a small entrepreneurial venture—EI differentiates great managers from run of the mill and helps all of us create resonant, collaborative relationships. The single most important thing you can do to become more effective at work is to develop your EI.'

● **KEY COMPONENTS**

To develop emotional intelligence, it's important to cultivate a core group of qualities and skills, starting with empathy. An empathetic supervisor would postpone an evaluation meeting to ease the anxiety of a struggling employee. In settings outside of work, empathy involves bringing a box of pastries to a grieving family who just lost a loved one. Empathetic gestures take place in unexpected circumstances, such as a loving partner surprising his wife by showing up at her office to take her to dinner when she had to work late, or accepting a phone call late at night from a friend who needs to vent.

FIVE WAYS TO INCREASE EI

Emotional Intelligence is made of a group personality features and skills which, when deployed in concert, lead to greater success and a more harmonious life. The following tips should help you hone your EI to stay at the top of your game.

- 1 Seek high EI friends.** Individuals with high EI are sure to see greater success in life. But to really ace situations, try to partner with high-EI peers. In horse training, a wild horse is paired with several trained horses for daily running. In time, the wild horse begins to adapt a style of running and overall compliance that matches the other horses. Not an exact metaphor, but as Neil Katz explains, 'Real self-awareness is about achieving a realistic view of one's strengths and weaknesses compared to others. Learning the skills of EI requires practice. Assessments are confusing because then it's about how people think they are verses actual behavior' Modeling your EI on the success of others is a valuable means of honing and increasing EI skills. And remember, when one person brings EI to the table, there is a higher chance that others will, too.



- 2 Employ mindfulness.** Mindfulness is the technique through which you focus in on the present by paying attention to the environment. Being in the present and free from the distractions that come from ruminating about the past, makes it more likely that you will

correctly interpret the meaning of what others say and do. Engage in a pattern of controlled breathing, where you inhale for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of four, and exhale for a count of four. Work on noticing basic things in the environment -even the mundane- to bring attention back to the here and now.

- 3 Know your own beliefs.** Neil Katz addresses the aspect of self-awareness with an example from his childhood. "My four-foot ten-inch mother had the monopoly on anger in our family. I grew up believing that anger was not a legitimate

emotion for males." Katz describes learning that anger in males was, in fact, permissible and he became aware of his tendency to sometimes miss the legitimacy of what men were saying when they were angry. In the application of EI, our beliefs determine how we interpret and value the behavior of others. If we know what our beliefs are, we can recognize how they are impacting our interpretation at any given moment.

- 4 Focus your attention on the needs of someone else.** Helping others in times of need increases your own EI. Confidence is increased

by recognizing a sense of mastery in guiding others through turbulent times. Helping someone else lets you utilize your E skills without the taxing burden of problems of your own.

- 5 Get out a pad or your laptop** and list challenging situations that have resulted in unfavorable behavior on your part. When have you lost control by exploding in anger, or felt so overwhelmed that deadlines went unmet? Notice when negative emotions, such as fear and anger, increase to a level that feels tough to manage, preventing you from maintaining composure and self-control. Review the list to identify the common elements shared by these difficult situations; what actions or beliefs correspond to these negative events? After reviewing the list, you will have a clear awareness of the similarities between the events that precipitated challenging emotions. Seeing the overall commonality will give you a better-defined target to work on. For example, if you discover that most negative situations erupt when others are in control, you can prepare yourself for that eventuality in advance. Going to dinner at a bossy neighbor's barbecue? Just knowing

Empathy is a friend bearing emotional gifts. The empathetic individual possesses clear sensitivity to the feelings, thoughts and overall point of view of others. Such sensitivity allows us to be informed about the mindset of the person we are dealing with. Whether in business or personal life, empathy gives us the power to make good decisions by feeling what others feel and using to our and their benefit.

Intuition -clearly reading circumstances, even when aspects remain unknown- is another key ingredient of EI. EI is a manager accessing intuition to decide the best timing for awarding a star employee -during the team meeting or at the end of the meeting, after having given positive feedback to the team as a whole. In the manager's final decision to save the award for the end of the meeting, she has made sure that each employee received adequate acknowledgement and so would feel secure enough to welcome praise for a fellow team member.

EI also requires confidence in the power of your skills. You must have confidence in your intuition. You may realize that your best friend will feel overwhelmed before her first house party, but too prideful to ask for help. The intuitive friend will arrive early to pitch in, and the person with EI will know that was the right thing to do.

● **PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER**

While individual components of EI are important, having only some of the requisite skills can jeopardize your ability to navigate the world.

When someone has a high degree of empathy, but is low in intuition, they risk misinterpreting the type of intervention others really need. One can have empathy about the sadness another feels for losing their dream house in a fire, but if intuition were present, the fact that the person is using the loss of their house as an excuse to avoid taking new risks and living in the present would be obvious. With intuition, it could be equally obvious that the fire victim has begun to glamorize the past.

Likewise, high empathy paired with low confidence can be damaging in the extreme. In this instance, one might feel the compassion necessary to write a warm note to a

friend in pain, but lack the self-trust to continue to make himself available to listen and show support, hurting the friend again.

And even a person possessing all the requisite skills can see their EI diminished by stress. Stress blocks the ability to fully absorb the moment-by-moment actions taking place around us, damaging our ability to navigate the world. Developing EI requires a clear sense of what is taking place around us. Clarity allows us to respond on-target. When bumper to bumper traffic or the buzz of constant phone calls and emails creates the firewall of stress, the odds of being able to utilize EI are diminished.

Stress is best managed by reframing what one tells himself about it. "Finding a deeper meaning in the present circumstance and goal increases the likelihood of making a sustainable change", says Richard Boyatzis, author of *The Competent Manager* and Professor of Organizational Behavior, Psychology, and Cognitive Science at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. Recognizing meaning and purpose fuels a level of motivation needed to power through with the tasks at hand, no matter how uncomfortable.

● **A WORLD-BEATING SKILL**

But when all the pieces are in place, emotional intelligence is a world-beating skill. Having knowledge and intellect is an asset, but EI provides the ability to communicate this knowledge and make choices in the most effective way.

Boyatzis says that leaders with emotional intelligence

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understand the necessity of encouraging others in order to get their best performance. These leaders, he adds, know how to highlight the value in the task at hand. When working with others, they raise the stakes to include results that have meaning beyond the actual specific goals. When employees feel a sense of purpose and connection to the task, they are better able to apply themselves and access their talents. One example is employees having ownership in the company; another is company newsletters, where employee participation is covered.

Boyatzis describes applying this mindset when working with alcoholics new to recovery. "Whenever someone says that their goal is to stop drinking, I know that they'll

probably drink. It's too narrow a goal," he says. "There needs to be more meaning. I ask them to think about their dream life and what they want to be. Dreams, such as creating and raising a healthy family or fulfilling a long-standing vision to start a charity, give an added layer of purpose to sobriety beyond the absence of abstaining from alcohol," he explains.

Psychologist Neil Katz, who teaches EI at Nova Southeastern University in Florida, emphasizes its role in dispute resolution. He describes using EI to help understand what each person is fighting for. In some situations, such as divorce mediation, a man may be fighting on the surface for fair financial consideration, but additionally, his fight may be for his own right to feel anger or to protect himself.