

Member's Quarterly

Summer 2021 Edition

Perspective

What's Your Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Score?

Which is more important – EQ or IQ?

We all like to believe that we're smart, but what's our emotional intelligence score? Emotional intelligence is your ability to empathize with others. It distinguishes the star performers from the mediocre. In the midst of this pandemic, we should empathize now more than ever. The good news about emotional intelligence is that although we may not have been born with it, it can be learned and even mastered with practice.

There's a whole language around emotional intelligence which many may not realize. It rates people's emotional intelligence on a scale that ranges from something called 'spongy' to 'unaware'. I think we know what unaware looks like, but what is spongy? A spongy person is highly emotionally aware and can usually feel and recognize a wide range of emotions. This is not always good in the workplace as it means these people can take on the emotional weight of others. It actually sounds like a bit of a burden.

At the bottom end of the scale are the unawares. These people seem to have few emotions they can recognize or name. If you ask them how they are today, it's almost always fine. Just to be clear, fine is a descriptor — not an emotion. They also don't pick up the social cues that others may be upset with them until the situation blows up. This doesn't make for a very healthy workplace either.

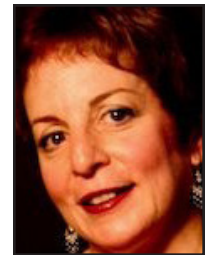
Fortunately, most of us are in the middle zone of emotional intelligence. Some experts call us the 'non-stick' people. We (myself included) can recognize our own emotions and see them happening in others. We just don't pay much attention to them. The problem with this approach is that we non-sticky people appear as though we are not empathetic enough, or that we don't seem to care when someone around us is in emotional distress.

Some people may ask why we care about emotional intelligence anyway. What we've found in the last twenty-five years since the release of Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* is that emotional competence can have a positive effect on the modern workplace and on the bottom line. Research has shown that it helps workers interact with others better and this reduces stress, anxiety and conflict. In turn, engagement and productivity show marked increases once the workers become more emotionally intelligent.

These are good reasons to pay attention to emotional intelligence. For managers and supervisors, improving your emotional intelligence will not just make you easier to get along with, but there are other tangible benefits. These include helping you make better decisions and improve your problem-solving techniques. You can also keep your cool under pressure. Once you have greater empathy, you will also be able to diffuse and resolve conflict much more efficiently and effectively.

What can we do to improve our emotional intelligence? The good news as noted above is that no matter where we start on the scale, we can all get better. The first way to improve becoming more empathetic at work is by reading or rereading Daniel Goleman's book. It provides extensive information on the topic as well as insights on how to master the skills.

Numerous resources available online and in print suggest doing some work and practice on yourself in order to get better at feeling and recognizing emotions. Activities like journaling seem to help many people as well as using your physical sensations to start recognizing your emotions. Your body will often signal to



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you when you are anxious or worried. That could come as a headache or a pain in your stomach. As you improve, you may even start to feel your stomach tightening as a sign of tension or stress that is just beginning. This is when you realize that you may be improving your emotional intelligence score.

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