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## Emotional Intelligence: A Pathway to Self-Understanding and Improved Leadership Capacities

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## Emotional Intelligence: A Pathway to Self-Understanding and Improved Leadership Capacities

### Abstract

In 1995, Goleman wrote his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, based upon Salovey and Mayer's (1990) work. Since then, emotional intelligence (EQ) has become one of the hottest leadership topics in corporate America and has filtered into the not-for-profit and educational arenas as well. It is through an individual's emotional intelligence that he/she will be able to deal with life and lead others in a more positive manner. This article described the successful incorporation of emotional intelligence training in Ohio State University Extension's leadership training.

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With the ever-increasing pressures at work, within the community, and at home, the ability of individuals to deal with the daily environmental demands and pressures is even more critical. Cognitive intelligence (IQ) accounts for up to 25% of the variance in professional success and job performance (Hunter & Hunter, 1984). Social and emotional abilities are four times more important than IQ in determining success (Sternberg, 1996).

In 1990, Salovey and Mayer coined the term "emotional intelligence" (EQ) and based their work on the non-cognitive aspects of intelligence. These authors defined emotional intelligence as "a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' thinking and action." In 1995, Goleman wrote his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, based upon Salovey and Mayer's work. Since then, emotional intelligence has become one of the hottest topics in corporate America and has filtered into the not-for-profit and educational arenas as well.

### Emotional Intelligence: What is it?

According to Bar-On (2002), emotional intelligence is "an array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in the coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p.14). Broadly defined, emotional intelligence "addresses the emotional, personal, social, and survival dimensions of intelligence" (p.1). Emotional intelligence and emotional skills develop over time, change throughout life, and relate to one's potential for performance, are process-oriented, and can be improved through training. Dr. Reuven Bar-On developed the EQ-i: Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory, which measures 5 components and 15 subcomponents. These include:

- Intrapersonal--assertiveness, self regard, self actualization, independence, and emotional self-awareness
- Interpersonal--interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, and empathy

- Adaptability--problem solving, reality testing, and flexibility
- Stress Management--impulse control and stress tolerance
- General Mood--happiness and optimism

## **Value of Emotional Intelligence at Work and at Home**

Emotional intelligence helps to predict success because it reflects how a person applies knowledge to the immediate situation. EQ measures your "common sense" and the ability to get along in the world. EQ training is used in corporations, employee development, leadership programs, and in education settings.

According to Bar-On (2002), when companies or organizations invest in the development of their employees, productivity and the bottom line increases, and EQ provides you with a valuable return for your business. From a leadership development perspective, participants enhance their leadership capacities, improve communication, decrease workplace conflict, and improve problem-solving skills. As a personal benefit, individuals are motivated and inspired to achieve their life goals, have greater career success, build stronger personal relationships, increase their optimism, and are healthier.

## **Implementation**

As Extension educators, we frequently receive requests for information and/or trainings on emotional intelligence from community leadership programs, business leaders, high school teachers and administrators, youth leadership groups, Extension professionals, and many other groups. As a result, we are constantly searching for cutting-edge training, ideas, and resources to incorporate into our educational offerings. Helping clientele increase their capacities and skills is the role of an Extension professional. Improving one's own capacities and skills is an expectation of Ohio State University Extension professionals.

We participated in a 3-day EQ certification training with Collaborative Growth in Golden, Colorado and passed a written certification exam as well as a practicum of providing feedback to participants. As a result of our certification, emotional intelligence has become a large facet of our leadership-training repertoire.

Our training consists of having the participants complete the EQ instrument on-line prior to a 1 1/2-hour group overview of emotional intelligence, its various components, and its usefulness in their professional and personal lives. After the group session, each participant receives a 45 to 60-minute feedback session of their individual results on the five components and 15 subcomponents of emotional intelligence, coaching on how to improve their EQ, and a reference list of materials to consult on their own for further development. Participants also may contact us later via phone or e-mail to clarify any questions or follow-up needed.

We train and provide feedback to numerous individuals and groups to enhance their leadership capacity. Some of these groups include: Extension research center staff, Extension county directors, state agricultural leadership program participants, Extension administrators, school administrators, university faculty and staff, youth leadership groups, Youth-At-Risk programs, and individuals receiving personal coaching.

## **Discoveries**

We have found the general group overview session prior to each participant's feedback session works well to provide the necessary background and answer any general questions regarding emotional intelligence. This allows us to use the individual feedback session time to go in-depth with the results and provide coaching on how to improve EQ.

Participants agree with their results if they have been honest in responding to the EQ questionnaire. For many, it is a confirmation of what they know about themselves but have not discussed in detail with anyone or talked about how to improve their areas of least strength.

Positive comments have been received from these trainings, including: "I believe it is important for the youth to understand themselves and others to help them adjust to life's challenges," "The EQ feedback session was right on about who I am. I am looking forward to working on some of the strategies to improve my EQ score--it's neat that I can improve my EQ score."

A 1-year follow-up evaluation was conducted with a group of 27 university staff who participated in a year-long leadership development program, with EQ being one of the components of the training. Of the 27 participants, 20 completed the evaluation using a Likert-scale of 1=none, 2=little, 3=some, 4=much, 5=great deal, and n/a=not applicable. Sixty percent of the respondents indicated their knowledge about EQ increased much to a great deal, while 75% indicated their attitude toward others improved some to much. Ninety percent have used their knowledge gained about their personal emotional intelligence to improve their professional relationships some to a great deal, while 80% improved their personal relationships some to a great deal.

## Conclusion

In our work with emotional intelligence, we have personally seen individuals improve their leadership capacities and skills in their professional role and enhance their personal lives. We fully subscribe to several of Low and Nelson's (nd) implications for how we teach learners and manage our emotional intelligence training program. These beliefs include the following.

- Emotional intelligence is the most important factor in achieving success.
- High levels of achievement, success, and happiness are self-defined and directed.
- The effects of negative and unchecked emotional stress, ineffective and poor relationships, and personal stagnation are financially costly.
- A personal and emotional accountability system is essential for positive human development.
- Honest self-assessment is requisite to positive and intentional personal change.
- People develop and change themselves.
- Learners learn best and teachers teach best in environments that are physically and emotionally safe.
- Personal meaning is more relevant and powerful than external meaning.
- Education and learning require the perspective of balance between academic achievement and becoming emotionally intelligent.
- Healthy and effective relationships, personal leadership, self-management, intrapersonal growth and development, and recognition of potential problems are essential elements for creating a positive and healthy learning climate (pp.15-16).

Including emotional intelligence training and coaching into our leadership-training repertoire has proven to be a positive step toward improving the lives of Ohio's citizens as well as enhancing our own professional and personal development.

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