

Emotional Intelligence

If you want to improve some of your soft skills, you can accomplish that by improving your emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is often given the abbreviation "EQ." Just what is emotional intelligence?

The literature reveals a number of different but related definitions. Let's define "EQ" as a set of abilities affecting how people manage themselves and their relationships with others. By "manage" we mean what we do when we adjust our personal habits or the way we interact with others with a specific purpose in mind.

High EQ people have the ability to convert unhealthy emotions into healthy emotions and to turn negative feelings into positive ones. People with high EQ's usually have very good soft skills. This is because many soft skills are dependent on attitudes and emotions. EQ involves how we manage our feelings and emotions and our relationships with others.

As a result, high EQ people are better at solving soft problems while high IQ people are better at solving hard problems. Simply stated, EQ relates to soft skills in very much the same way as IQ relates to hard skills. As, such, EQ involves emotional issues while IQ is concerned with intellectual problems.

Just what are your soft issues? They are ones that involve personal problems that you have or problems that you have in dealing with other people. Hard problems, on the other hand, are those that do not involve such personal or interpersonal issues.

So, one way to improve your soft skills is to improve your EQ, but how do you do that?

Let's consider four tips that many people find helpful. To improve your emotional intelligence and soft skills:

- ❖ Become aware of emotions – both your own and those of others.
- ❖ Generate and choose your emotions.
- ❖ Manage emotions – both yours and others, and
- ❖ Control the progression of emotions in yourself and in others.

Tip 1: Become more aware of your emotions. You can do this by getting into the habit of monitoring your feelings. Learn to recognize your own emotions as you experience them. High EQ people are aware of their emotions as they happen.

In addition, they develop empathy, meaning that they are also aware of the way others around them are feeling. Without this self-awareness and empathy for others, your emotional intelligence and soft skills will never improve.

Some instructors bore students nearly to death with little awareness of the affect that they're having. Yet others really inspire students without knowing specifically how they do it.

Tip 2: By learning to generate specific emotions, you can develop the self-control that is so characteristic of high EQ people. This ability will help you to recover more quickly from negative emotions and will prevent you from expressing inappropriate emotions at the wrong time and place.

Being able to generate an emotion means that you do some reasoning first and then choose a constructive and appropriate emotion to internalize and express. In other words, you act with the emotion that you generated. Now this isn't ever easy, but it's a powerful skill that can help make you the master of your emotions rather than a slave to them. All that's required is awareness, determination, and practice.

Tip 3: Managing emotions refers to the ability to control emotions in yourself and in others. As an instructor, one important rule is to never, never lose your temper. Loss of temper indicates loss of control. When you feel like you're losing your composure, you must generate another emotion that allows you to maintain self-control.

Likewise, when you see emotions getting out of hand among members of your class, take immediate action to intervene. Politely inform the class that you understand their disagreement and their feelings. Manage the discussion, and do what you can to guide them to some sort of resolution.

On a more positive note, managing emotions also involves motivation. You can help your students to be more enthusiastic and motivated by expressing these emotions yourself!

In addition, consider starting class with a plan for motivating the group and thereby managing emotions. There are many ways to do this, limited only by your own creativity and desire. The more you manage emotions, the less you will need to manage behaviors.

Tip 4: Understanding emotions helps us to recognize how they progress from one stage to another in ourselves and in others. For example, negative emotions like resentment or frustration can lead to anger which can then lead to disruptive behavior.

Understanding the process allows a person to prevent emotions from progressing to a point at which they are out of control. This progression can occur within ourselves, in others, or in groups.

Practice using Tips 1, 2, and 3 to intervene before the progression goes too far. These four were selected because they are so frequently mentioned as problem areas.

Which of the following do you feel that you need to work on most to improve your EQ and soft skills?

- A. Becoming more aware of my emotions and those of others
- B. Generating and choosing emotions
- C. Controlling the progression of emotions
- D. Managing my emotions and those of others