

What Is Emotional Intelligence As A Skill

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Emotional intelligence underpins our professional relationships, interpersonal interactions and is also correlated with our capacity to inspire us. If you have ever held back when you feel like lashing out, you are already familiar with one way in which EI works. It is not observable like other facets of the self, but while we cannot see Emotional Intelligence, we can definitely sense its impact.

According to the APA dictionary of psychology, Emotional Intelligence is “a type of intelligence that involves the ability to process emotional information and use it in reasoning and other cognitive activities”(Dictionary.APA.org, 2018). From this definition, it is clear that EI is important both in our professional and personal relationships and in the relationships we have with ourselves. The word was coined in 1997 by two American psychologists, John Mayer and Peter Salovey, and from their interpretation: “The emotionally intelligent person is skilled in four areas: identifying emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions, and regulating emotions.”

EI helps us manage our emotions – by encouraging us to disregard, neglect, or regulate our unproductive emotions in situations where they are just not instrumental. For example, there's little interest in shouting at a bus driver because your commute has been slowed down by bad traffic. Our EI abilities are what allow us to notice and understand how others are feeling. They play a major role in determining who we are by forming our relationships with those around us and Owing to their effect on our ability to self-manage and inspire, our Emotional Intelligence skills are considered to be major contributors to our overall success in life.

Often, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and social skills are all taken together. For one, they are intangible and have a huge effect on virtually everything we do. These are certainly called soft skills for which a successful therapist can effectively assist. At the same time, the 'soft ability' classification does not mean that interpersonal abilities such as EI cannot be psychometrically assessed, or that you cannot develop them yourself in extremely effective ways.

Several researchers have come up with emotional intelligence theories and an example is the Four Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence. Mayer and Salovey's Four Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence is a helpful way to visualize the different Emotional Intelligence Skills. The two psychologists are credited with coming up with the term 'Emotional Intelligence' before the concept was extended by other researchers and later came to mainstream popularity. The Four Branch Model simply premises that Emotional Intelligence Skills come under four categories, as shown below. *These are Perceiving Emotions, Facilitating Thought Using Emotions, Understanding Emotions, and Managing Emotions.*

Perceiving emotions is about being mindful of others' feelings and being sensitive to them. In other words, it is about the ability to detect and interpret emotional signals to correctly classify emotions

(yours and others). This can be in expressions, voices or even images of others.

Facilitating emotional thinking occurs when we sense and recognize emotions. Facilitating emotional thought requires examining and recording this 'emotional content.' And integrate it into our cognitive higher-level roles for better decision-making, rationalization, problem-solving, and consideration of the experiences of others.

Understanding emotions is about understanding how different emotions relate to each other, how they can change depending on the circumstances that we experience and how our feelings evolve overtime. Being able to tell how somebody's feelings shift from their facial expressions, their tone of voice, and so on, means you also have good emotional management skills.

Managing emotions is the capacity of Emotional Intelligence that deals effectively with the emotions of your own and others. Usually, higher-level skills are called emotional control and comprehension, since they rely on the first two (Perceiving Emotions and Encouraging Thought) to function effectively. Thinking about the position of work, it is easy to see how managing your own (and others) emotions might make life easier when facing a stressful deadline.

Another theory is the Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence (ESI). Israeli psychologist Reuven Bar-On's (2006) ESI Model considers emotional intelligence, social skills, and their facilitators all together. This is a more recent contribution to Emotional Intelligence literature. The Model consists of five interrelated competencies, skills, and behavior clusters that were identified from academic literature.

Specifically, they were considered because they were all perceived to impact our well-being and performance as humans (Bar-On, 2013). These 'clusters' are:

- Self-Awareness and Self-Expression;
- Social Awareness and Interpersonal Relationships;
- Emotional Management and Regulation;
- Change Management; and
- Self Motivation.

The Bar-On model suggests that these EI skills and competencies contribute to how we, as individuals, understand ourselves and others, our self-expression, respond to each other, and cope with everyday demands (Bar-On, 2006; McCleskey, 2014). While its fundamental assumptions are still discussed in the wider psychological literature, the Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology finds the ESI Bar-On Model as one of the three main models of Emotional Intelligence (Spielberger, 2004).

Bar-On 's research considers EI and cognitive intelligence (IQ) as distinct, independent terms, and he believes the former is more important than the latter in predicting the success of a person in life. Ironically, this dimension of the ESI model is endorsed by neurology studies. These studies show that brain damage to areas we use can result in different emotional functions and decision-making can impair our ability to function socially (Behra et al., 2000; Bar-On et al., 2003).

Yet another theory is the Goleman's Model of Emotional Intelligence. Daniel Goleman is one of the most famous names worldwide when it comes to EI. His work on Emotional Intelligence skills is linked very often to leadership and managerial abilities, and his model of EI is an extension of Mayer and Salovey's earlier work that identified four Emotional Intelligence skills. Goleman's (1995) model, like Bar-On's, is based on five essential factors that determine an individual's EI, though they are a bit different:

- Emotional self-awareness – which is very similar to Mayer and Salovey's Perceiving Emotions skill, concerns awareness of one's own feelings, and encompasses an appreciation of how those feelings can affect those around us;
- Self-regulation – concerns managing one's own emotions and predicting their effects, in a similar way to Facilitating Thought and Managing Emotions;
- Motivation – this covers continuing when encountering obstacles;
- Empathy – which relates to detecting others' emotions; and
- Social skills – a set of Emotional Intelligence social skills that help us manage our interpersonal relationships and elicit certain reactions from them.

At a neurological level, it is possible to link some of these EI abilities to different parts of our brains. However, the best news for most of us is that while EI has some ties to how our brains function neurologically, a lot of it is learned from our daily experiences. Which means our Emotional Intelligence capabilities can be established and it is you who decides your Emotional Intelligence in that context.

Research from recent decades has shown that being mindful of our emotions and coping with our feelings could be more important in deciding the degree to which we are effective in many areas of life. Relationships, emotional intelligence and social skills undoubtedly play an enormous role in our relationships with happiness and our families. The ability to interpret and control feelings is helping us to deal with conflict when it comes to EI skills. It does so by allowing us to predict how others feel and to adjust our responses so that we can solve them mutually beneficially.

Interestingly, academics have noted a particular positive correlation between EI and increased satisfaction in relationships; and this has helped us to build actionable approaches to strengthen our relationships by increasing our Emotional Intelligence competencies. The benefits linked with high emotional intelligence include finding it easy to form and maintain interpersonal relationships and to '*fit in*' to group situations as well as being better at understanding your own psychological state, which includes [managing stress effectively](#) and being less likely to suffer from [depression](#).

Although "normal" intelligence is essential to life's success, emotional intelligence is crucial to communicating well with others and attaining your goals. Many people assume it is at least as critical as normal intelligence, and many companies are now using emotional intelligence testing to recruit new staff. Emotional intelligence is an understanding of your actions and emotions – and how those around you affect them. It also means that you value others, listen to their needs and wishes, and are capable of empathizing or identifying with them on many levels.

References

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