

Rachel Pienkosz

Professor Colwell

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## Emotional Intelligence

There is no better way to understand someone than to understand their emotions. A deeper way to understand emotions is through the concept of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a psychological concept that is the ability to understand, manage, and express one's emotions and to handle interpersonal relationships and communication (Cherry par. 1) The three main pillars of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, empathy, and self-regulation. Each of these aspects contributes to being an emotionally intelligent person. Learning these skills is essential in creating a better quality of life. People who are more emotionally intelligent are more productive and create a better and more understanding society.

Self-awareness is a quintessential aspect of individuals with high EI. Emotional self-awareness is the ability to understand your emotions. Having emotional self-awareness means, “You know how you feel and why you feel that way. And, you can see how your feelings help or hurt what you do.” (Goleman par. 4). Becoming in touch with the *why* and *how* of emotions is what creates the effective self-awareness. The ability to control and respond to emotions accordingly is what creates the most successful version of oneself. Emotional self-awareness “allows us to understand how we could regulate or control our emotions, preventing impulsivity, which could damage our image and relationships [...] without reflecting upon the consequences” (Botelho par. 10), explains psychologist Gabrielle Botelho. The impulsive behavior and outburst of emotion stem from an inability to be self-aware and control

emotion. Included in self-awareness is the awareness of the aforementioned ‘image’ and how individuals perceive each other. Impulsive behavior negatively affects the way you are perceived and shows low emotional intelligence. The important sub-topic of emotional intelligence is how it is improved, “Once you are able to identify and understand your emotions, you will be able to detect their impact on your performance, distinguishing which are your strengths and which are the areas you need to improve or develop.” (Botelho par. 8) Low emotional self-awareness, low confidence, and low motivation are all challenges that can be avoided by developing emotional intelligence. Understanding self-awareness and implementing the ability to recognize one’s emotions will create a more emotionally intelligent life. Not only are emotionally intelligent individuals able to be self-aware, but they are also able to regulate their emotions.

Self-regulation refers to the ability to control emotions and impulses (Veazey par. 1). While self-awareness has an emphasis on understanding, self-regulation has an emphasis on the control of emotions. Emotional self-regulation is “the learned skill of applying conscious thought to events that prompt strong emotions.” (Veazey par. 8) The difference between being able to self-regulate and not is the reaction to an emotionally overstimulating moment. The implication of self-regulation can help control a wave of negative feelings before one is able to react (or overreact). There are two types of self-regulation; behavioral and emotional. Behavioral regulation is to act based on feelings but with the ability to consider long-term interests. The difference between feeling from behavior because of the results the behavior will create is the core of behavioral self-regulation. Emotional self-regulation is the ability to apply conscious thought to emotions. An effective emotional regulator is someone who can influence their emotions and respond to external situations effectively. For example, being able to calm themselves down during a frustrating or taxing situation (Ackerman par. 16). Being able to self-regulate

emotions is important, “Emotional dysregulation happens when a person interprets emotions or events in a way that makes them feel overwhelmed. They may perceive a situation in a way that does not reflect reality, which triggers a very real set of feelings.” (Veazey par. 16). Emotionally dysregulated individuals experience a poorer quality of life because they do not correctly interpret or respond to situations and let their emotions control them. The psychology behind self-regulation is linked to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief an individual has of their ability to execute their goals (i.e., confidence, motivation, behavior, etc.). A thought experiment explains, “Imagine two people who are highly motivated to lose weight. They are both actively monitoring their food intake and their exercise, and they have specific, measurable goals that they have set for themselves.” (Ackerman par. 23) High self-efficacy allows one individual to succeed and meet their goals consistently. Low self-efficacy and the inability to self-regulate behaviorally will cause another individual to not meet their goals because of their confidence level and inconsistent behavior. Self-regulating emotions and behavior create better thinkers that are more effective in goal-reaching. After understanding and implementing the skills of emotional self-regulation and self-awareness, the next step is understanding empathy and the emotional intelligence of others.

One of the most important aspects of emotional intelligence is empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand and feel the emotions of others. Many researchers believe a person’s ability to empathize with others and their emotional intelligence level go hand-in-hand. Empathy is “the active understanding of the emotions attached to the words used [...] Those emotions are displayed and simultaneously hidden, either because they cause anxiety and confusion, or because they have not yet come into conscious level (Rogers C 1951).” (Ioannidou and Konstantikaki 120) In other words, empathy is understanding the words and feelings that are left unsaid. The

ability to truly empathize with a person is seeing what the other person may not be emotionally intelligent enough to understand. The study *Empathy and Emotional Intelligence: What is it really about?* explains that “[Empathy is] crucial in developing ideas and solutions, in problem solving, effective communication and avoiding or preventing conflicts. Empathy is an important capability, which all people must develop in order to progress and continue with their life (Pedersen R 2007).” (Ioannidou and Konstantikaki 119). People who are able to understand emotionally will have a better practical understanding of the world. They are better at communication because they are able to feel the way the other person does, even without knowing them. A person with a high emotional intelligence level will be more empathetic and have better social connections than those with a lower EI. The way to create a more emotionally intelligent life is through the development of empathy. People “who develop their emotional intelligence more deliberately will be more attuned not only to all aspects of empathy, but to all [...] components of emotional intelligence, in all the relationships they encounter.” (Goleman par. 12) The ability to understand the emotional intelligence of others and empathize with them will allow for better social relationships and more effective communication. Healthier social relationships result in an overall better quality of life for every person involved. Understanding empathy is the last step to improving emotional intelligence.

The three skills of empathy, self-regulation, and self-awareness work together to improve a person’s emotional intelligence. People who are more emotionally intelligent with the ability to understand and control the emotions of themselves and others work to create a more productive and understanding society. The more EI possessed, the better the individual’s quality of life will be. The implication of emotional intelligence skills can change a person’s life.

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