

Emotional Intelligence and mental health in work place for enhanced productivity a wellbeing

By Ameh Zion Abba

Founder /President MHEI

Convener Association of Mental Health Reform Organizations for the
promotion of mental health in Africa

The Industrial Revolution required strong workers. The Information Age required knowledgeable workers. The future age of work will require emotionally intelligent workers.

Rising rates of loneliness, depression, and mental health concerns represent an opportunity for companies and leaders to embrace emotional intelligence in order to reengage people at work and life.

According to Google's famous Project Aristotle initiative, a high-performing team needs three things:

- 1) a strong awareness of the importance of social connections or “social sensitivity,”
- 2) an environment where each person speaks equally, and
- 3) psychological safety where everyone feels safe to show and employ themselves without fear of negative consequences.

In fact, employees who feel cared for by their organization are...

☐10 times more likely to recommend their company as a great place to work.

☐9 times more likely to stay at their company for three or more years.

☐7 times more likely to feel included at work.

☐4 times less likely to suffer from stress and burnout.

☐2 times as likely to be engaged at work.

Emotional intelligence in leadership is comprised of **empathy, social skills, self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation**. These are all teachable soft skills that are the focus of our leadership and management courses.

characteristics of emotional intelligence in good leadership

According to Daniel Goleman, the psychologist who popularised the term 'emotional intelligence', EQ consists of:

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-regulation
3. Motivation
4. Empathy
5. Social and relationship skills

Self-awareness

As a self-aware leader you know how you feel. You recognise how your emotions affect those around you. Your self-awareness isn't just restricted to emotions, either. You acknowledge your ego and are aware of both your strengths and weaknesses. You aim to ensure your ego and personal traits work for the benefit of the workforce and organisation.

Tip to improve self-awareness as a leader: slow down

Pause. Slow down. Don't react to situations immediately. Take time to process and engage in critical thinking (which means challenging your own assumptions as well as those of others). Ensure that your reaction is measured and appropriate, not flawed by emotional responses in the heat of the moment.

Self-regulation

Picture yourself as your own boss – firm, but fair. You stay in control of your emotions. You don't lash out, and you don't compromise your workplace ethics. You hold yourself accountable to your actions.

When you are calm, other people around you are reassured and motivated to take positive action.

When you hold yourself accountable and act accordingly, you are upholding organisational ethics and leading by example.

Motivation

Motivation partly stems from understanding WHAT you want to do and WHY you want to do it. Getting to grips with the 'why' part often requires a degree of self-reflection, which is where high Emotional Intelligence comes in.

Motivated leaders have high work standards for themselves and work towards goals in a consistent way. Leaders with high Emotional Intelligence also understand what makes their employees and work colleagues tick, and will be able to incentivise and motivate them to find their own reasons for working to the best of their ability.

Tip to improve motivation as a leader: value optimism

Empathy

As a leader with empathy, you are able to put yourself in someone else's shoes. This ability will help you develop people on your team, challenge stereotypes and unfair assumptions, deliver critical feedback wisely and be a good listener when your team need someone responsive in charge to help them navigate difficult situations.

An empathetic leader builds a positive work atmosphere upheld by team loyalty and mutual respect.

Tip to improve empathy as a leader: acknowledge feelings, not just words

Soft & Relationship skills

Most of us know a leader we'd describe as being a 'people person' or having great social skills. Social skills are about the art of making an emotional connection with communication.

Leaders with good social skills are able to deliver bad news and celebrate good news in a way that makes people feel boundless actionable opportunities for improvement exist. Leaders with high communication skills are also talented at resolving conflicts and managing change in a diplomatic fashion that is in keeping with the sensitive nature of the situation.

When people's lives will be affected by a decision, leaders with high Emotional Intelligence will demonstrate they respect the needs, fears and hopes of the people involved.

Tip to improve social skills as a leader: resolve conflict with care and communication

Signs of Low Emotional Intelligence

In general terms, low emotional intelligence means you **often find it tough to:**

❑1. Decipher and manage your own emotions

❑2. understand how other people feel

Low emotional intelligence can show up in various ways. Some of these manifestations affect the people around you, so you might notice some challenges with maintaining your relationships.

Other key signs include:

❑3. Trouble understanding what causes certain feelings

❑4. Frequent emotional outbursts or mood changes

❑5. Difficulty asserting opinions or taking charge in a situation

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- 6. Little interest in finding new ways of solving problems
- [?]7. Trouble accepting criticism, constructive or otherwise
- [?]8. Difficulty expressing ideas clearly or getting a point across
- [?]9. A habit of saying the wrong thing at the wrong time
- [?]10. Certain obliviousness to emotional cues from others
- [?]11. A tendency to fixate on mistakes instead of learning from them and moving on
- [?]12 pessimism and loss of motivation after setbacks

Several factors can affect how emotional intelligence develops.

1. Upbringing and parenting styles

2. Emotional awareness and empathy begin to develop in early life. Parents and other caregivers help shape these skills as you grow.

Children generally grow up to have higher levels of emotional intelligence when their primary caregivers:

- ☐ respond to their needs quickly

- ☐ offer love and warmth

- ☐ demonstrate good emotional regulation skills themselves

- ☐ encourage them to talk about their feelings and express them in appropriate ways

3. Low emotional intelligence can run in families, too. Children whose parents have lower emotional intelligence might struggle to manage their own emotions since they have less opportunity to learn healthy coping skills.

4. You might also have lower emotional intelligence if your parents offered inconsistent support and warmth, never encouraged you to express emotions, or punished you for showing your feelings.

5. Research also links lower emotional intelligence with parental negative demandingness, which might include:

- ☐ attempts to exert control

- ☐ overly harsh discipline

- ☐ inconsistent discipline

Mental health conditions

Difficulty identifying and managing emotions can show up as a symptom of some mental health conditions, including depression and borderline personality disorder.

Low emotional intelligence might also play a part in social anxiety.

If you have trouble understanding how other people feel, you could begin to find interactions stressful and fear saying something that gets people mad at you.

Persistent social anxiety can eventually lead you to avoid social situations, and contribute to feelings of depression or hopelessness.

Research also links alcohol dependence and other substance use disorders to lower emotional intelligence. This link can go both ways: Addiction can cause changes in the brain that affect your ability to interpret and manage emotions and impulses.

What are Anxiety Disorders?

- Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress and can be beneficial in some situations. It can alert us to dangers and help us prepare and pay attention. Anxiety disorders differ from normal feelings of nervousness or anxiousness and involve excessive fear or anxiety. Anxiety disorders are the most common of mental disorders and affect nearly 30% of adults at some point in their lives. But anxiety disorders are treatable and a number of effective treatments are available. Treatment helps most people lead normal productive lives.

Types of Anxiety Disorder

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Generalized anxiety disorder involves persistent and excessive worry that interferes with daily activities. This ongoing worry and tension may be accompanied by physical symptoms, such as restlessness, feeling on edge or easily fatigued, difficulty concentrating, muscle tension or problems sleeping. Often the worries focus on everyday things such as job responsibilities, family health or minor matters such as chores, car repairs, or appointments.

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- Panic Disorder
- The core symptom of panic disorder is recurrent panic attacks, an overwhelming combination of physical and psychological distress. During an attack several of these symptoms occur in combination:
 - ☐ Palpitations, (rapid heartbeats) , Sweating
 - ☐ Trembling or shaking
 - ☐ Feeling of shortness of breath or smothering sensations
 - ☐ Chest pain, Feeling dizzy, light-headed or faint
 - ☐ Feeling of choking, Numbness or tingling
 - ☐ Chills or hot flashes, Nausea or abdominal pains
 - ☐ Feeling detached, Fear of losing control
 - ☐ Fear of dying

DEPRESSION

- Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems. You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day activities, and sometimes you may feel as if life isn't worth living.

Some Key facts about depression

- ☐ Depression is a common mental disorder. Globally, it is estimated that 5% of adults suffer from depression.
- ☐ Depression is a leading cause of disability worldwide and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease.
- ☐ More women are affected by depression than men.
- ☐ Depression can lead to suicide.
- ☐ There is effective treatment for mild, moderate, and severe depression.

- Although depression may occur only once during your life, people typically have multiple episodes. During these episodes, symptoms occur most of the day, nearly every day and may include:
- ☐ Feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness
- ☐ Angry outbursts, irritability or frustration, even over small matters
- ☐ Loss of interest or pleasure in most or all normal activities, such as sex, hobbies or sports
- ☐ Sleep disturbances, including insomnia or sleeping too much
- ☐ Tiredness and lack of energy, so even small tasks take extra effort
- ☐ Reduced appetite and weight loss or increased cravings for food and weight gain
- ☐ Anxiety, agitation or restlessness

How to increase emotional intelligence

1. Determine where you want to grow

You might have stronger skills in certain areas already. Maybe you struggle to manage your own emotions but don't have too much trouble recognizing when loved ones have something on their mind.

Or perhaps you have plenty of personal motivation but find it difficult to empathize others.

Recognizing the areas where you have room to grow can help you explore strategies that have the most impact.

For example, meditation helps many people improve self-awareness and get better at controlling emotions. Practice with taking others' perspectives can help build empathy.

2. Remember: **Practice means progress**

Raising your emotional intelligence usually takes time. It can feel awkward and difficult to talk about feelings if you aren't used to expressing yourself emotionally.

Still, the more you flex your emotional awareness, the easier it generally becomes to regulate emotions and use them for your benefit.

RULER, an acronym developed by psychologist Marc Brackett, offers a helpful tool for building emotional intelligence:

(R)ecognize your emotions

Instead of ignoring feelings that come up, acknowledge that you feel something, pleasant or otherwise, even if you don't yet have a name for it.

(U)nderstand what causes them

Tracing specific emotions back to what you were just doing, your location, or the people you're with can help you begin exploring why you might feel a certain way.

(L)abel them

Name your emotions as specifically as possible. Tend to get stuck on finding the right label?
Try an emotion wheel to familiarize yourself with a wider range of feelings.

(E)xpress them

Talk about feelings instead of denying them or bottling them up. Different situations require different types of expression, of course — you probably wouldn't express emotions to your best friend in the same way you would to a parent.

Journaling and art can help you practice expressing emotions privately until you feel ready to share them with others.

Don't forget to ask others how they feel and invite them to share their emotions with you.

(R)egulate them

Learning to manage your emotions might sound difficult, but you actually have plenty of options.

Once you acknowledge an emotion, temporary distractions can help you set it aside until you have the chance to address it.

You might try: a short walk or quick meditation music or funny videos texting a friend or loved one for emotional support a favorite hobby

Grounding exercises can help you get better at coping with difficult emotions in the moment. Meditation can help improve overall emotional awareness and regulation skills, so it may offer more long-term benefits.

Emotional intelligence affects:

- **Your performance at school or work.** High emotional intelligence can help you navigate the social complexities of the workplace, lead and motivate others, and excel in your career. In fact, when it comes to gauging important job candidates, many companies now rate emotional intelligence as important as technical ability and employ EQ testing before hiring.

- **Your physical health.** If you're unable to manage your emotions, you are probably not managing your stress either. This can lead to serious health problems. Uncontrolled stress raises blood pressure, suppresses the immune system, increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes, contributes to infertility, and speeds up the aging process. The first step to improving emotional intelligence is to learn how to manage stress.

- **Your mental health.** Uncontrolled emotions and stress can also impact your mental health, making you vulnerable to anxiety and depression. If you are unable to understand, get comfortable with, or manage your emotions, you'll also struggle to form strong relationships. This in turn can leave you feeling lonely and isolated and further exacerbate any mental health problems.

- **Your relationships.** By understanding your emotions and how to control them, you're better able to express how you feel and understand how others are feeling. This allows you to communicate more effectively and forge stronger relationships, both at work and in your personal life.

- **Your social intelligence.** Being in tune with your emotions serves a social purpose, connecting you to other people and the world around you. Social intelligence enables you to recognize friend from foe, measure another person's interest in you, reduce stress, balance your nervous system through social communication, and feel loved and happy.

Everyone has feelings, but not everyone has an easy time accepting and understanding them.

Improving your emotional intelligence can take some effort, but it's absolutely possible. Finding it tough to get started on your own? A therapist can always offer guidance and support.