

Factsheet 30

Updated on 29 January 2021

Emotional Intelligence (Part 1)

This factsheet has been designed for use by healthcare professionals only.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is a relatively recent concept (the term was popularised in the 1990s) and often refers to an awareness of one's own actions and feelings and how they impact on or influence those around them. However, the ability to evaluate and manage those emotions is also key, and so emotional intelligence should not be confused with general intelligence or astuteness.

There are various elements that comprise emotional intelligence:

- Self-awareness – being conscious of your own feelings and behaviours
- Self-regulation – reflecting and thinking about the consequences of your actions
- Motivation – thinking about future goals and how your actions will impact these
- Empathy – fully understanding, rather than simply acknowledging, the feelings of other
- Social skills – communicating effectively and building relationships with others

In practice, emotional intelligence is about recognising the feelings and actions of others in order to make them feel valued, understand their needs, and empathise or identify with them.

Can Emotional Intelligence be learnt?

The short answer is, yes! There are a number of strategies you can use to develop your emotional intelligence capacity:

- Observe and reflect on how you react to people and situations. Do you jump in and make judgements without knowing all the facts? Try to 'put yourself in their shoes' and consider things from an alternative perspective before responding and making decisions.



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- Think about your professional persona. Do you actively seek attention and praise for your accomplishments, or do you sometimes take credit for the achievements of others? If so, take opportunities to let others shine and place the focus on them; this does not mean you lack confidence or ability, just that you are able to feel quietly confident in your own skills while boosting the confidence of others.
- Examine your response to stress. Do you panic when things go wrong, and try to blame others for stressful situations? Or do you internalise blame, even when the situation was beyond your control? Talk to or observe colleagues who keep calm in times of stress – what strategies do they use?
- Own your actions. If you upset someone, even unintentionally, apologise and discuss the situation openly and honestly. Do not try to avoid the person or sweep the situation ‘under the carpet’; issues are resolved more easily when you are willing to engage.

By developing your ability to empathise with others, you are likely to improve your interactions with colleagues, peers, and patients. In building trust and demonstrating that you are willing to listen to the views of others, you will find that opportunities for **collaborative problem-solving** and **shared learning** will present themselves.

Factsheet 31 - ‘Emotional Intelligence (Part 2)’ will explore how to use these strategies in practice and extend your leadership capabilities.

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