

Factsheet 31

Updated on 29 January 2021

Emotional Intelligence (Part 2)

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

How can Emotional Intelligence benefit practice?

Being emotionally intelligent will of course help you to establish and sustain relationships with colleagues and patients, but increasing your **self-awareness**, **self-regulation** and **motivation** can also have a significant impact on your professional practice. Here are some of the potential outcomes of investing in your emotional intelligence:

- **Taking initiative.** When you feel comfortable taking responsibility for your actions and their consequences, you will find yourself more able to seize opportunities and try new ideas, often with great success.
- **Problem-solving.** People with excellent self-regulation skills can identify potential (or existing) problems or obstacles and explore creative solutions that might address an as-yet unmet need. Being able to view a situation from multiple perspectives enables you to pre-empt any challenges that might arise from other people's priorities and feelings.
- **Adaptability.** Having the ability to manage your emotions and responses to stress will lead to an increased willingness to change your practice and perceptions based on new evidence or information. This is particularly important at present, as intelligence around Covid-19 accumulates at pace.
- **Constructive criticism.** It can be hard to hear feedback that highlights areas for improvement, but well-managed emotions, combined with motivation to improve, can make constructive criticism a welcome tool for professional development. Equally, awareness of the emotions of others enables you to provide feedback sensitively and with improved practice in mind.

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

It comes as no surprise that effective leaders almost always have high levels of emotional intelligence. Understanding the feelings of others is critical when introducing or managing change: people are often resistant to new ideas and it is only by recognising and exploring their concerns that resolution can occur.



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However, it is also the responsibility of leaders to **manage expectations** and make it clear that change is driven by service priorities and the needs of patients, rather than personal feelings. When applying emotional intelligence to a leadership context, it is important to ‘myth-bust’:

Myth #1: *Emotional intelligence is about being nice all the time.*

Reality: It is about being honest. Being sensitive to the feelings of others is not the same as being nice; it is usually necessary to discuss things openly, even if this requires you as the leader to be ‘firm but fair’.

Myth #2: *Emotional intelligence is about being “touchy-feely.”*

Reality: It is about being aware of your feelings, and the feelings of others. Ineffective leaders often fail to manage change well because they view emotions as irrelevant to professional practice. In healthcare particularly, many decisions are highly emotive, and leaders must recognise this while remaining impartial and managing any personal feelings.

Myth #3: *Emotional intelligence is about being emotional and showing emotions.*

Reality: Sometimes it is quite the opposite! Emotional intelligence is about being smart with your emotions and managing them according to the situation: professional practice often requires an objective response, but on other occasions evidence of your passion and emotional investment can encourage people to action. Effective leaders read each situation and apply their emotional responses accordingly.

Of course, emotional intelligence is just one aspect of effective leadership. Next week, we will explore leadership via a podcast and factsheet.

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