

HPN EAP Newsletter for Employees

What is Emotional Intelligence?



At Health Promotion Northwest EAP, we see a lot of people who want help with co-worker conflict and/or communication with their significant other and children. Emotional Intelligence is one phrase that is used in describing the level of skill and experience a person successfully draws upon in these situations.

Have you heard this phrase “Emotional Intelligence,” or “Emotional Intelligence Quotient” (E.Q.)? For years, it was primarily used in research circles. Then, in 1995, Daniel Goleman, Ph.D. published “Emotional Intelligence; why it can matter more than IQ,” launching the popular use of the new phrase. Many people are now saying that E.Q. will quickly become as reliable (or more reliable) in predicting a person’s potential as I.Q. Dr. Goleman opens the forward to his book with a quote:

“Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not easy.” - Aristotle

Goleman praises a curriculum for public schools called “Self Science” and talks about the ABC’s of Emotional Intelligence as including the following skills:

- Choices: A person may not always be able to choose their emotions, but we can choose how we respond to them.
- Self-Awareness is “...recognizing feelings and building a vocabulary for them, and seeing the links between thoughts, feelings and reactions; knowing if thoughts or feelings are ruling a decision; seeing the consequences of alternative choices; and applying these insights to decisions...” “Self-awareness also takes the form of recognizing your strengths and weaknesses, and seeing yourself in a positive but realistic light (and so avoiding a common pitfall of the self-esteem movement).”
- Managing Emotion is about allowing yourself to be aware of the vulnerable emotions (like sadness, insecurity or fear) and learning ways to handle those feelings, rather than just responding to defensive emotions like anger.

- Behavior: The E.Q. application to behavior focuses on taking personal responsibility for decisions and actions, not blaming others for your own behavior, and following through on commitments.
- Empathy: "...understanding others' feelings and taking their perspective, and respecting differences in how people feel about things."
- Relationships: involve "...learning to be a good listener and question-asker; distinguishing between what someone says or does and your own reactions and judgments; being assertive rather than angry or passive; and learning the arts of cooperation, conflict resolution and negotiating compromise."

It is not that hard to see how these skills can profoundly affect an individual's success in career, school, family, marriage and community. Not long ago, people did not value these skills so highly, but, today, it is entirely common to have employers and significant others asking people to look at these issues. Reading, counseling and just talking with friends and family can help us grow in our Emotional Intelligence.

Call Health Promotion Northwest at 360-788-6565 for more information and services.

