



CONCERN:EAP

Healthy & Resilient Workforce



EQ for your EI:

Helping your employees find their emotional intelligence sweet spot



What do 90 percent of workplace high achievers have in common? As an HR professional, it may or may not surprise you to hear that it's not high IQ. It's high EI, or emotional intelligence. Recent studies suggest that people who have developed strong EI skills tend to earn more and enjoy more success compared to those who rely on their IQ alone.

Author and EI expert, Travis Bradberry, defines emotional intelligence as something intangible in each of us that affects how we manage our behavior, navigate social complexities, and make decisions. Emotional intelligence, Bradberry suggests, helps us perceive and communicate our thoughts and feelings in a way that empowers us to better communicate and collaborate to meet individual and collective goals.



**[Click here](#) for a simple primer
on the basics of EI from
CONCERN's Resilience Hub™**

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to request a demonstration.*



This Is Your Brain on Emotion

The theory of EI starts with brain structure and chemistry. Consider a scenario where a colleague asks a tough question. That visual and audio information enters the brain through the limbic system (the brain's emotion factory), where it picks up emotional energy. Then, it travels to the frontal cortex (the brain's executive office), where we make rational decisions.

By nature, the brain puts the emotion first. So, the more emotionally charged the question, the harder it is to react rationally. Emotional intelligence can help us to offset this pattern and be more resilient and rational in the face of strong emotion.

By honing our EI, we can help our emotional and rational sides communicate more effectively during crucial decision-making moments. Thanks to the brain's plasticity, practicing emotional intelligence helps build neural pathways where the rational and emotional meet. It's like an EI mixer with synaptic handshakes. The rational side learns more about the emotional side and vice versa, leading to more balanced decisions and actions.

Taking Emotional Intelligence to the Gym

Emotional intelligence is highly dynamic and modifiable. You can think of EI as a muscle. Here are some exercises you can pass along to employees to help them pump it up.

Be Mindful of Your Emotions

Mindfulness is a powerful tool for staying resilient, and can serve as groundwork for all EI training. Try observing emotional responses mindfully and without judgement. For instance, consider how you respond when your boss sends you an e-mail setting up a surprise meeting at the end of the day, or if someone cuts you off mid-sentence. Does it make you anxious or angry? Being able to identify emotions and their triggers can help you gain mental distance, the first step in building better emotional control.

Get Outside Perspective

Because EI benefits us most when relating to others, it's valuable to get insight into how others perceive us. Think of someone you trust and respect, and with whom you had a recent interaction while you were in an emotionally heightened state. Ask this person, "What was my behavior like during this interaction? Did you feel I was respectful of your feelings?" Learn from this feedback, and use it to adjust future interactions.

Press the Pause Button

Have you ever had an angry or impulsive thought one moment, and in the next you've sent it as an email? We've all been there. Sometimes, by pressing the pause button instead of send, we can save ourselves from potentially costly or embarrassing mistakes. The next time you find yourself about to make a decision in an emotionally heightened state, pause, then step away for a few minutes until the emotion has passed. Revisiting the decision from a calmer perspective can help you decide how to proceed with a clearer head.

Ask Why

Empathy and compassion are essential components of EI, but stepping into someone else's shoes is sometimes easier said than done. We can work to better understand others' perspectives by asking why/what questions. Why does she feel the way she does? What is he going through that made him act in this way? Why do I feel differently about the situation? Remembering that others are carrying burdens you may not know about can help you to be more compassionate and understanding.

Look for Opportunity within Criticism

When receiving criticism, it can be easy to tense up or shut down. This is totally understandable. Being criticized is tough. But, it's important to remember that criticism—even when insensitively delivered—often carries valuable truths. Emotional intelligence can help us put our feelings aside and learn from our critics. The next time you get some tough feedback, try focusing on the message instead of the delivery. Take a few deep, calming breaths, set aside emotion and ask yourself what you can learn from the critic's perspective. Is there is anything in the feedback you or your team could use to help you improve?

Like any other skill or habit, the more we practice emotional intelligence, the more instinctive it becomes. By consistently practicing even just one or two of the exercises above, employees can harness the power of EI and learn to put their emotions to work for themselves rather than letting emotion be in control.



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