



5 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE





We know how hard it is to deal with disengaged team members and unresolved conflict. It's frustrating, exhausting, and keeps you from getting real work done. If it seems like you've already tried everything to solve the problem and nothing seems to work, you might need a new approach.

You might want to try boosting your emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is now widely recognized as a vital leadership skill.

But how exactly do you become more emotionally intelligent?

What behaviors are the most important to change?

Why should you focus on building emotional skills when it seems like everyone around you is only concerned with the bottom line?



1

Disengagement = Hidden Conflict

Sometimes conflict is obvious: it can show up as angry outbursts and loud confrontations. At other times, conflict hides underground and takes the form of stonewalling, sabotage, or passive-aggressive behavior.

Disengagement is a form of hidden conflict. When people disengage, they quietly withdraw from a situation or people that make them feel uncomfortable. The conflict is still there but it is not openly addressed.

You may believe you don't have a problem with conflict on your team simply because you never hear anyone openly arguing or fighting about issues. But if your people seem disengaged, the problem may be bigger than you think.

Emotionally intelligent leaders recognize that disengagement is a form of hidden conflict.



2

Keep Your Balance

You can learn to keep your emotional balance even when the other person becomes angry, critical, or distant. The trick is to realize that the two of you are caught in a negative cycle and that the cycle itself is the enemy.

Most of this cycle happens at the subconscious level. Here's how it works:

Rachel and Dave have been working together on a project for the past several months and it's not going well. Rachel frequently criticizes the quality of Dave's work. Her angry facial expression and harsh words cause Dave to shut down. He ignores her emails and avoids her. But his stonewalling just makes Rachel more angry. And her anger causes even more stonewalling. Round and round it goes...

Do you see the negative cycle?

If Rachel and Dave realized they were trapped in this cycle, they might be able to do something about it. Research has shown that by simply describing the negative cycle, you can restore emotional balance and reduce the level of conflict.

Emotionally intelligent leaders recognize the negative cycle and know how to describe it.

3

Name the Emotions

For many of us, the emotional realm is unknown territory. We don't have the language to describe what we feel, so we default to simple words like "stressed", "tired", or "angry". But in reality, we experience dozens of complex emotions each day and because we can't name them, they often sabotage our working relationships.

Science gives us a simple solution to that problem. Recent research by Lisa Feldman Barrett shows that the more we can pinpoint and name our emotional experience with clear specific words, the more we'll be able to deal with emotions themselves. We'll experience less anger, tension, and depression in our personal lives, and we'll be better equipped to resolve conflict at work.

Emotionally intelligent leaders are able to name specific emotions and can help others identify their emotions as well.



4

Be Emotionally Responsive

Emotionally responsive leaders are able to connect with people at a deep level. They know how to remain accessible, responsive, and engaged in challenging situations. Because these leaders form an environment of trust and psychological safety, they are able to build creative, collaborative, and highly productive teams.

Emotional responsiveness is not about offering people advice or quickly trying to solve their problems. It's the special skill of emotional attunement that can be acquired through observation, study, and practice.

Leaders who are emotionally responsive know how to tune in to the emotions of others. They aren't afraid of the emotional realm because they've developed the ability to describe their own emotions, and know how to help others identify emotions as well.

Emotionally intelligent leaders are skilled at emotional attunement and regularly practice using it at work.

5

Emotional Connection is Key

Some people allow themselves to get sucked into the details of a conflict. Team members might produce a long email thread to prove who is to blame, or complain about a colleague's performance in order to convince others to take sides.

But beneath the surface of every conflict, there is a broken emotional connection. The conflict is a symptom of a deeper hurt that was caused by a negative cycle. When you repair that emotional connection, many of the other surface problems go away.

Emotionally intelligent leaders understand this dynamic. They don't get distracted by the details of a conflict. Instead, they focus on solving the underlying emotional connection issues which are the root of the problem. This is how they are able to engage team members, resolve conflict, and transform organizational culture so their team can be productive again.

To take your emotional connection skills to the next level:

Visit emcleaders.com and register for the
Emotional Connection Master Class

(HR, SHRM, and ICF credits are available)