

An Introduction to Emotional Intelligence

A perspective from *mch: positive impact*

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Increasing the positive impact of individuals and third sector organisations through staff development

Overview

Emotional intelligence is a massive area. Furthermore there is on-going debate around fundamental issues relating to emotional intelligence such as:

- (i) How do we define it?
- (ii) Does it really exist?
- (iii) How do we measure it?
- (iv) What can you do about it, if you do believe it exists?

As a consequence, it is beyond the scope of this briefing to provide an in-depth overview of emotional intelligence and so this document should be considered as a very selective appraisal of the topic. However, in *mch's* experience the emotional intelligence framework outlined in this briefing has the right combination of being well respected, easily understood and practically useful. As a precursor to introducing emotional intelligence, the areas of emotions and intelligence are briefly summarised.

Emotions

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an emotion is;

“Any agitation or disturbance of mind, feeling, passion; any vehement or excited mental state.”

The word's derivation is also insightful as its root is in the Latin *motere* which means “to move” and the “e-” prefix signifies “move away”. In *mch's* view, the definition and derivation implies that emotions are essentially *impulses to act*.

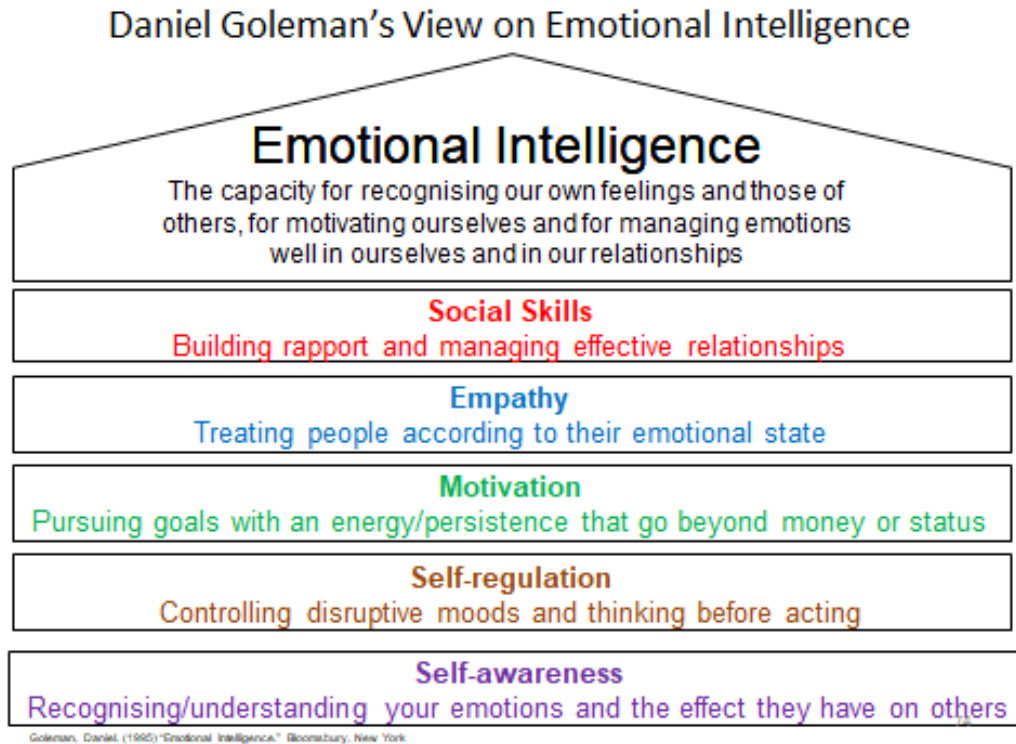
In terms of what qualifies as an emotion, *mch* urges you to leave this to psychologists and philosophers to argue over! They have been doing so for hundreds of years, and a consensus has still to be reached. Fortunately, the vast majority of us can readily appreciate an emotion when we see it/experience it.

Intelligence

Until the late 20th Century, the dominant view held was that intelligence was driven by rational thought and that intelligence and emotions were completely separate. Then in the 1980s, an academic called Howard Gardner introduced the idea of their being multiple intelligences.(1) In addition to logical intelligence, he proposed other intelligences such as spacial, linguistic and interpersonal. While the concept of emotional intelligence had been introduced prior to the 1980s, Gardner's work promoted the idea and in the early 1990s the academic, Daniel Goleman, published a best-selling book, 'Emotional Intelligence'.(2) In *mch's* view this remains the best book for those interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence

The chart below outlines one of Daniel Goleman’s frameworks of emotional intelligence.



As indicated above, emotional intelligence is built upon the five key elements of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. These five elements can themselves be broken down into 25 components. It is important to appreciate that you do not have to be ‘good’ at all 25 components in order to be considered emotionally intelligent. Six to eight components spread across the five elements is often sufficient.

Criticisms of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence has attracted criticism in some quarters, notably around its ever changing definition, the fact that it can encompass many unrelated elements and the lack of rigour with which it can be measured. Some also argue that what Daniel Goleman proposes should be referred to as a set of skills, rather than a form of intelligence.

As a former scientist, *mch*’s Director, Dr Mark Hughes, appreciates many of these criticisms. However, regardless of whether emotional intelligence is actually an intelligence, he believes that Daniel Goleman’s model is a useful means of considering the prevalence and impact of emotions on the decisions we make and the way we act.

Emotional Intelligence's Importance and How it is Often Neglected

Studies have shown that the successes of high achievers are more likely to be due to emotional competencies than cognitive abilities.(3) Consequently, developing emotional intelligence can be a real career asset.

It is important to appreciate that the components required to be emotionally intelligent vary according to role. For example, the components required to be an emotionally intelligent youth worker are likely to be very different to the ones required by the youth worker's manager. Consequently, if the youth worker were to be promoted to manager, they would have to develop a new range of emotional competencies to succeed in their new role. In *mch's* experience, insufficient consideration is given to such scenarios, which is one of the reasons why individuals often struggle when they are promoted to new roles.

Developing Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be developed. For more information on *mch's* emotional intelligence training, please visit our website: www.mchpositiveimpact.com Alternatively, feel free to contact *mch's* Director, Mark Hughes on +44 (0)7932 918 767 or via: info@mchpositiveimpact.com

References

1. Gardner, Howard. (1983) "Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences." New York
2. Goleman, Daniel. (1995) "Emotional Intelligence." Bloomsbury, New York
3. Spencer and Spencer. (1993) "Competence at Work." and McClelland, D. C. (1998) "Behavioural event interviews as an alternative to traditional ability tests as a way to identify personal competencies associated with top executive success.", Psychological Science