

Concept Essay

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## Emotional Intelligence

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “intelligence”? Many people think of intelligence as a logical standard. For instance, someone’s intelligence quotient (IQ) measures one’s intelligence. Many people use their IQ to define themselves as smart or dumb. But let’s look at a different type of intelligence that is more relevant when it comes to the psychological point of view. This is “Emotional intelligence” (Cherniss). Humans look at emotions very distinctively; how we maneuver our emotions can have a big effect on ourselves and on others. Consequently, emotional intelligence is a very important skill to have when handling difficult emotions.

As stated by Cherniss in the *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology*, the concept of emotional intelligence was first based in Charles Darwin’s research into human and animal reactions to fear in 1872. This was built upon the idea that “emotions serve two important survival and adaptive functions” (Cherniss). The first of these is “energize and motivate” (Cherniss). For example, if someone walked in at school carrying a gun, one’s first instinct would be to run from the perpetrator. The second of these purposes is “conveying important information from one animal in a group of others” (Cherniss). One example of this Cherniss gave is that animals would warn their species to evacuate from danger immediately; humans react the same way. For instance, what if one day someone at the writing center smelled smoke and then the fire alarm went off. The writing tutors and students would run for safety, but some students would also alert others around them to call the fire department and run outside. Throughout the

rest of the 1900s many people studied types of intelligence, especially in social and emotional contexts. Researchers Salovey and Mayer coined the phrase “emotional intelligence” in 1990 (Cherniss). A popular and recent “model” of emotional intelligence is the Bar-On model, which is known as a “competency-based model. . . of five dimensions” (Cherniss). These factors included “Intrapersonal,” “Interpersonal,” “Stress management,” “Adaptability,” and “General Mood.” These concepts, and one’s level of proficiency in them, determine one’s level of emotional intelligence.

A perfect example of emotional intelligence based upon the Bar-On model is having empathy, which is part of the “Interpersonal” factor in the model (Cherniss). Within psychology, empathy is generally seen as “the intellectual or imaginative apprehension of another's condition or state of mind” (Stueber). For example, my friend Rachel’s dog, Honey, died four years ago. When she was telling me about this on the phone, she was crying in deep despair. I felt for her. I had feelings of sadness and emptiness in my heart. I told her that I was sorry for her loss and that she should tell me if there was anything I can do to make her feel better. If someone lacks empathy, that is a sign that someone does not have good emotional intelligence.

Stress management and its contribution to good mood, two more factors of the Bar-On model, are good skills to have when becoming proficient at emotional intelligence. Stress management “incorporates stress tolerance and impulse control” (Cherniss). When people are dealing with stressful situations in life, it is important to know how to appropriately deal with the stress. For example, when someone is stressed out about an upcoming final exam a way to show that they have good emotional intelligence is by using appropriate coping methods to reduce that stress. One of the ways I manage stressful situations is meditation, walking my dog, or listening to my favorite music. Someone without emotional intelligence would lash out at someone for no

reason because they are so overwhelmed with the amount of stress they have on their plate.

Impulse control is another principle skill that is a part of stress management. When emotions get too jumbled up and overwhelming, people's impulsivity increases. For example, in the past when I have been so stressed out about how I am going to do on a history test I would sometimes binge shop and then later regret how much I spent. Being better aware of how one is feeling inside and managing it by using some relaxation techniques is a more effective method of stress management and impulse control rather than going out to buy \$200 dollars' worth of clothes. Good stress management can save one money by working on reducing one's impulses and can also help one develop one's emotional intelligence. General stress management and impulse control can help add to general mood. General mood is described as "covering optimism and happiness" (Cherniss). Therefore, stress management is handy when it comes to becoming both more intelligent emotionally and a happier person.

The use of strong intrapersonal skills is another great way to show emotional intelligence. This "includes competencies such as emotional self-awareness and assertiveness" (Cherniss). This means that someone is aware of how they are feeling on the inside. It is always good to check in with emotions before acting on them. For instance, suppose someone gets an F on their math test. If that person had intrapersonal awareness they might say that they feel bad about how poorly they did on the test, but they would also calm themselves down effectively. Also, they might express that their failing grade just tells them what they need to work on and how they might prepare themselves more efficiently so they can do better next time. Someone without intrapersonal awareness might just see the F that they got on the math test and then go and yell at their professor saying that the grade is not fair that and that they deserved to get at least a C. They might even make a fool of themselves by storming out of the room and using profanity

towards the professor. This shows how important intrapersonal skills are to emotional intelligence.

Finally, adaptability is another key way of having emotional intelligence that is part of the Bar-On model. This “consists of flexibility, reality testing, and problem solving” (Cherniss). An example of this in action is when someone gets into a dispute about whether their boss should give them a bonus. The boss disagrees at first, but an employee uses their problem-solving skills by talking calmly and giving tangible reasons as to why they should receive the bonus, such as how long the employee has been working for the boss and how much effort the employee has been putting into their job. Being able to problem solve is very important when it comes to working for someone or being in a romantic relationship. Another example of this is a situation in which someone thinks their spouse has been cheating on them because the spouse has been coming home late every weeknight, but it was really for a work deadline. There are many ways to problem solve this, such as having the spouse take pictures of where he or she is at and text them to their spouse to show them proof that they are not cheating. These examples show why adaptability is important to building emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is a valuable ability to be skilled at, especially when managing complicated situations and feelings. The five main concepts of emotional intelligence are crucial in life. Whether it is having a good general mood, being able to manage stress appropriately, obtaining interpersonal or intrapersonal awareness, or being able to solve problems effectively, emotional intelligence plays an important role in one’s life. Humanity would be lost without emotional intelligence. It is very difficult to live the life one wants to live without it.

Note: I did not add a photo into the essay because I was not able to find one that included accurate and sufficient information related to my research.