

In the workplace, EQ as important as IQ

The first time I hiked in Arches National Park as an adult, the air temperature already had crossed the three-digit threshold. My husband and I were on vacation from Seattle looking for a little sun and warmth. Climbing to Delicate Arch in 105-degree heat was no problem, he assured me repeatedly. By the time I'd made it two-thirds of the way to the narrow ledge, I was sure I was going to slip and die and never see the acclaimed formation portrayed on Utah license plates.

Last winter, we hiked the same route with our college-aged daughters. It was amazing that in five years that narrow ledge seemingly had become as wide as a highway.

Adele Lynn, author of the book, "The EQ Difference: A Powerful Plan for Putting Emotional Intelligence to Work," recalls in vivid detail the story of a drunk driver broadsiding her car. Her point: Emotions alter perception. Anger and fear, in particular, cloud our eyes and close our ears to the reality of a situation.

While we might not scale rocks in sweltering heat or survive car accidents at work, we encounter many situations that create anger and fear. With plant closings, layoffs or a new boss on the scene, we often live with a river of angst flowing through our veins.

Emotional intelligence in the workplace has grown from an emerging subject in the mid-1990s with Daniel Goleman's groundbreaking book, "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ," to a bottom-line topic in today's business climate with more than 250 books available on the subject. Check out the selection offered at the Mesa County Public Library.

There are many definitions of emotional intelligence. Pioneer researchers Mayor and Salavey defined it as the ability to perceive emotions, access and generate emotions to assist thought, understand emotions and emotional knowledge and reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Lynn offers a definition that's more succinct and easy to remember: "Emotional intelligence is managing ourselves and our relationships with others so that we can truly live our intentions."

I've presented talks on emotional intelligence in the workplace for four years to various organizations. In addition, emotional intelligence was the topic of my project for my master's of organizational psychology degree. I'm passionate about

spreading the word to those who spend the majority of their week working for a living.

Emotional intelligence in the workplace is truly everyone's responsibility. It's been my consistent experience that those in positions of power have the most ability to create the context of workplace health and wholeness. The emotional health of an organization rises only to the height of the emotional intelligence of its key leaders.

Supervisors who exhibit emotionally intelligent behaviors recognize that most adults want to be the captains of their own ships. Everyone wants to feel valued and respected for their capabilities and intelligence. A supervisor with high EQ recognizes, respects and encourages this. It feels empowering when an employee works with a supervisor who believes and practices the concept of self-directed choices. This approach often increases employee satisfaction and productivity.

Conversely, the emotionally intelligent employee accepts direction and takes responsibility for expressing his or her needs or concerns to the appropriate person when an issue arises. As I remind people who attend my presentations, everyone has a boss.

There are many ways to improve EQ. The first step is to read more on the subject. Such journals as the *Harvard Business Review* have published a number articles, many of them available online. Many Web sites are dedicated to the topic of emotional intelligence. Trainings offer a good introduction, as does working with an executive or life coach.

Only you can improve your EQ, and we're all leaders in some area of our life. As Bill O'Brien of the Hanover Corporation reminds us: "...the manager shoulders an almost sacred responsibility to create conditions that enable people to have happy and productive lives." As parents, bosses, community leaders and citizens, how we choose to manage our emotions and whether or not we truly live our intentions affects us all.

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