

Developing Mental Health Awareness with Emotional Intelligence

May brings Mental Health Awareness Month, and this reminds each of us to take a moment and reflect on our own mental health. As people venture back into social settings and reconnect, it is important to prioritize our own situation. Reconnecting to our emotional state can be one of the most powerful tools to maintain healthy mental health; this emotional recognition helps to develop a sense of emotional awareness and is often referred to as Emotional Intelligence (EI or EQ). Most days we go through the day without noticing how we feel, unless we make a point to stop what we are doing and check-in with ourselves. It almost takes moments of silence, mindfulness, or a conscious decision to see what feelings lay beneath our surface. Taking just a moment to pay attention to our feelings or even someone else's feelings can truly improve our daily functioning.

In developing Emotional Intelligence, we create an ability to recognize and manage our daily emotions. The more we practice EI, the easier it becomes to regulate emotions, which contributes to a more balanced mental wellbeing (*Develop Your Emotional Intelligence to Give Your Mental Wellbeing a Boost*). To practice EI, we simply need to identify the emotions we are feeling by doing a self-reflection or even an emotional check-in. Secondly, use the emotions you feel to promote certain thoughts (i.e. a sad mood can promote analytical thinking and a happy mood can often encourage creative thinking). Next, we begin to understand our feelings and what exactly contributes to the way we feel; lastly, we want to manage our emotions and do what is necessary to regulate whatever feelings we are experiencing (*Develop Your Emotional Intelligence to Give Your Mental Wellbeing a Boost*).

We all have decisions that we have made in the past and later thought... "What was I thinking?" A lack of Emotional Intelligence could be to blame for these bad decisions. When we make emotional decisions versus intellectual decisions many times we regret the outcomes. EI can help us identify, process, and manage emotions in the most efficient and positive way. When our practice of EI becomes stronger, we can see benefits such as, our ability to "communicate better, reduce their anxiety and stress, defuse conflicts, improve relationships, empathize with others and effectively overcome life's challenges" (Durlowsky, 2015). Developing this self-awareness with Emotional Intelligence helps create intention, autonomy, and purpose in our thoughts and behaviors. Then we are able to make more effective decisions and take appropriate action when needed.

Emotions truly are a fundamental part of the human experience and having the ability recognize and deal with emotions can impact some major areas of our lives. These benefits can be felt in our work-life, personal and professional relationships, and our physical health. Even if we just take a moment to listen to our emotions each day, this emotional awareness can reduce our stress level, help us communicate better with others, and boost our social skills.

References

Develop Your Emotional Intelligence to Give Your Mental Wellbeing a Boost. HealthHub. (n.d.). https://www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/579/mental_health_emotional_intelligence_pdf.

Durlofsky, P. (2015, October 29). <https://psychcentral.com/blog/the-benefits-of-emotional-intelligence#1>.

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