

Newsletter

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In my second newsletter, I am analyzing the topic of Emotional Intelligence.

“Emotional Intelligence is the ability to make your emotions work for you instead of against you.”

At the very core, emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, name, understand, and regulate our feelings, rather than allowing out of control emotions to mindlessly influence choices, actions, and relationships.

Emotional intelligence means the capacity to reflect on and understand our emotional life. Because the clearer you can see your emotions — what they are and how they work — the better you’ll be able to manage the most difficult and painful ones.

Therefore, building emotional intelligence means learning to see and understand your emotional life as it really is, with clarity and confidence.

How exactly can you make your emotions work for you?

But before making your emotions work for you, first, you need to acknowledge your feelings.

By employing the **“RULER”** process created by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence— **R**ecognizing, **U**nderstanding, **L**abeling, **E**xpressing, and (most importantly) **R**egulating the emotion – you can make that feeling work for, rather than against you.

Once you’ve recognized and acknowledged those feelings, the task is to avoid placing any value judgment on them.

Emotional intelligence requires focus, conscious choice, and constant practice.

Regulating requires the development of strategies like—

- mindful breathing;
- celebrating your own and others’ positive emotions;
- being the first to apologize, forgive or initiate joy;

- rejecting negative “self-talk”; and
- taking a moment each morning to consider what it would look like for you to be your “best self” that day.

Even after employing the above strategies when you feel like “losing it,” it’s time for a **“meta moment”**: Pause, picture your best self and strategize how to **swap your negative response** for a reaction that will be more beneficial both for you and those around you.

If you decide to take that moment to pause and reflect, you will respond more helpfully.

Because it pays to be aware of our own and others’ feelings, highly emotionally intelligent people do this all the time. Like any other, it is a skill that can be developed and which is well worth acquiring.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”— Maya Angelou.

How to improve your emotion management skills?

Emotion management is an enormous topic. And doing it well is always subject to differences within people (personality, history), their unique struggles (procrastination, perfectionism), and the type of work (writing, public speaking, studying).

That being said, some general principles of emotion management are beneficial no matter the details of your situation.

1. Pay attention to your self-talk

Cognition always precedes emotion. Practically speaking, this means that if your efficiency and productivity are getting derailed by negative emotion, that means there’s some subtle but powerful self-talk operating behind the scenes.

Learning to identify your self-talk and then change your unhelpful thinking habits is a hugely important part of effective emotion management.

2. Improve your emotional vocabulary

Most of us have relatively poor emotional awareness for the simple fact that we lack a sophisticated vocabulary and framework for even thinking about our

emotional states.

By expanding and refining your emotional vocabulary, you can become more emotionally self-aware and improve your ability to tolerate and manage difficult emotions:

3. Practice mindfulness

I know...the term *mindfulness* is often thrown around all over the place these days. So much so that it's at risk of losing its actual meaning. That being said, if rightly considered and practiced, few things are as beneficial for building your emotion management skills and overall mental health than a consistent mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness is simply the art of training your attention. The stronger your capacity to regulate your attention, the better you will be at navigating difficult thoughts and feelings, which puts your effectiveness (and wellbeing) at risk.
