

Interpersonal I.Q.: How Smart Are You?

GOOD NEWS. In a downsizing, fast-paced, globally competitive market there *is* something you can do to stay ahead of the competition. It's called emotional intelligence, and new research tells us that it may be more important than I.Q. in determining success.

In the past people skills weren't considered very important at work. In fact, if workplaces had hit songs, they might have had titles like: "Stick to the facts," or "Leave your emotions at home," or "Nice guys finish last." All of a sudden professionals are realizing dancing to these old tunes can ruin or stall your career.

What do people with E.Q. know? Why should I care and how did these other people get so smart? These are natural questions since it appears this interpersonal edge may be the critical factor in our current careers.

Research tells us that the ability to be aware of and express feelings, sense unspoken feelings, read non-verbal signals and feel empathy for others are all part of E.Q. People with E.Q. are psychologically insightful about themselves. They know how to communicate in a way that encourages cooperation and they are perceptive about other people. Being smart can get us into good business opportunities but E.Q. is the difference between succeeding or failing at these opportunities.

Studies show that E.Q. doesn't just impact individuals on the job. Although we know an enormous amount of team productivity is also lost through lack of people skills on the job and it's estimated that 65 percent of all performance problems are the result of conflicted work relationships. We also know that the high divorce rate, many parenting problems, and family issues could be resolved if people just had some basic people tools.

Now to find out how E.Q. geniuses became so smart. People with high E.Q. aren't born with great interpersonal skills. They are willing to work at learning to improve their communication. They tend to be open-minded, able to admit they don't know something, curious, have a sense of humor, humility about mistakes and are tenacious. They see life as their personal classroom and keep learning. They cherish their personal relationships as one of their best seminars in interpersonal skills. They read, attend seminars, seek out people they admire to learn from and often do therapy (intensive emotional education). They know the difference between a feeling and a behavior. For example, when they are mad, they're aware they are upset and they know why but they think carefully about the language they use and the actions they take. They know that being mad doesn't have to mean acting like a jerk.

I can see the new corporate songs now, "Just stick to the emotions", or "Bring your feelings to work" and "Nice guys finish first". Dancing to these new melodies won't feel natural and will take some training, but between you, me and this page, have you ever really had much luck leaving your emotions at home anyway?

Daneen Skube, Ph.D., is Director of Interpersonal Edge; a firm specializing in helping people achieves peak performance through communication skills. She provides executive telephone coaching, speaking, and conducts management training. She's an internationally syndicated columnist for Tribune Media and author of, "Interpersonal Edge: Breakthrough Tools for Talking to Anyone, Anywhere, About Anything," published by Hay House. To receive her free newsletter or submit questions for her column go to: www.interpersonaledge.com.