

Module 1
Section 2

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Recognize, understand and manage
your own emotions and understand
and influence the emotions of
others.

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn about what Emotional Intelligence is and why it matters.

Discover how our brains work.

Understand what happens when our brain and body gets “hijacked”.

Find strategies to be emotionally intelligent.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

What makes someone smart or successful?

Think about two or three people who you think are smart or successful. Who are they and what qualities do they show that make you think they are smart or successful? Make a list of these qualities by writing them down.

When you look at your list, you probably will discover that the qualities will fall under one of the three types of intelligence:

General Intelligence is the ability to learn, to think, and is a reflection of education. It typically is demonstrated by how well people learn to read, do math or memorize things. Sometimes we call that 'book smarts'.

Technical skill or intelligence is the ability to build, create, and learn how things work. It is often shown by how well people can see and demonstrate how equipment works, how to build things, or how to create something new.

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to understand yourself and others and manage emotions. It is demonstrated by how well people know and manage their emotions and reactions to situations. Sometimes, we say people with emotional intelligence can adapt to people and situations positively.

Researchers looked at the same three areas and asked: "How much does each category contribute to a person's overall success?"

What they found is that there's more than one way to be "smart". Emotional (and Social) Intelligence is even more important to personal and professional success than either General Intelligence or Technical Intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence is about what happens in our brain and body when we are under pressure and how that reaction sometimes helps us and sometimes holds us back.

We define success in others and ourselves by how well we manage our emotions and handle interactions with other people.

Have you ever....?

- Experienced a situation where you mentally froze, but a few minutes later you thought of all the great things you should have said?
- Experienced a situation where you snapped at someone or lost your cool even though you knew it would probably make things worse?
- Met someone who was supposed to be "really, really smart" but found they were awkward socially?

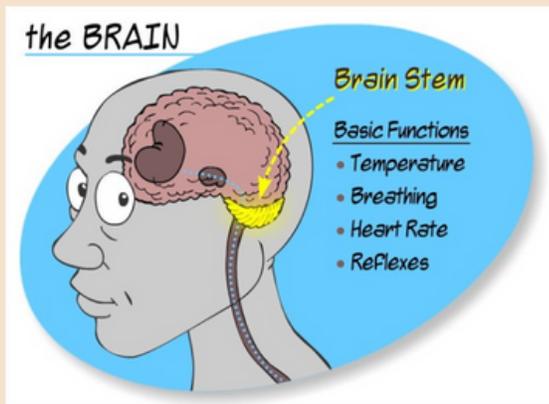
Well, these things happen because we are hardwired that way. It all starts with the brain.

What happens when you drive to work on an icy road and hit a slippery spot and you begin to spin out? You probably have shortness of breath, sweaty palms, and may even hit the break, or swerve out of control.

These are all examples of our brain at work.

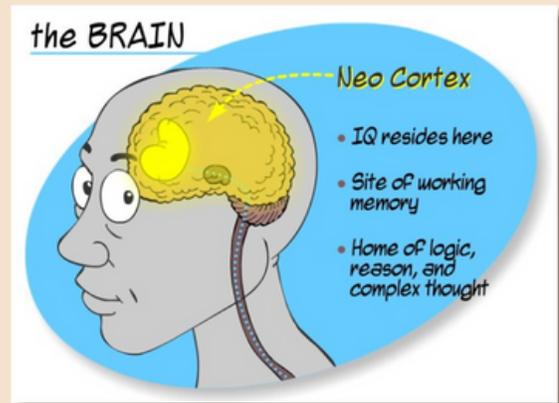
Parts of our Brain

The brain stem is like autopilot. It keeps doing all kinds of stuff for us, so we don't have to think about it. Can you imagine if you had to keep waking yourself up at night to breathe? Or, had to remember to make your heart beat?

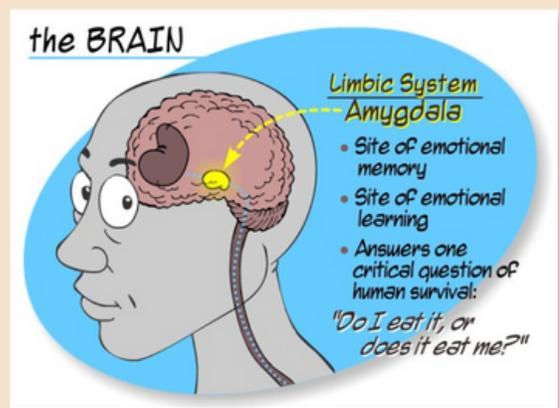


Neo Cortex is the Logical/Thinking Part of the brain. This is the largest part of the brain and is the big cap of gray matter. (like what you see in pictures) This is where we do some very important tasks, like problem solving, logical reasoning, creative thinking and complex thinking.

The neo cortex is the site of general intelligence and working memory. What's 2x2? What's 2x4? What does the word appetite mean? That's your working memory. You learned those by repetition and feedback and stored them in your long-term working memory, and you can now call upon them as needed.



The Limbic System is the emotional part of the brain. We're going to focus on one part of the limbic system call the amygdala. **Amygdala** is a Greek word that means "almond". This part of the brain is almond-shaped. (It also makes us seem a little nuts at times) The amygdala houses emotional memory.



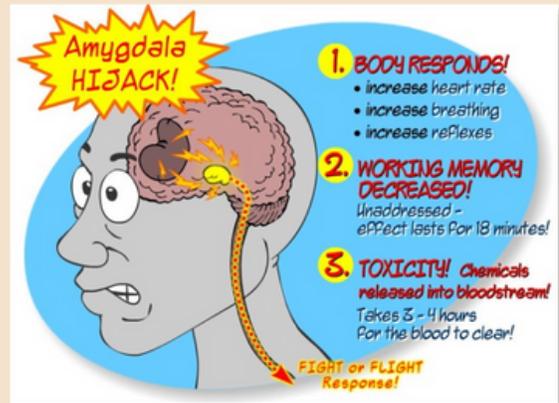
Emotional memory is helpful but different than working memory. For instance, if someone was 'attacked' as a young child by a rooster when they went in the hen house to gather eggs, they may experience fear when they see a rooster on a farm even when they are older. That is emotional memory which is an emotional response.

Emotional memory and emotional learning are very powerful. The amygdala instantly burns new neural pathways in the brain. A Significant Emotional Event (SEE) literally changes the way we SEE the world. Things like trauma of any kind, or events like 9/11. (most people can remember details about 9/11 even though it was years ago – but can't tell you what they had for dinner last Wednesday).

The amygdala deals with a critical question for human survival: Fight or Flight? Do I eat it, or does it eat me? Am I the predator or the prey?

The Amygdala Hijack

Let's take a look at what happens when our fight or flight response is triggered. Think of that time when you had a very close call while driving on an icy road... you spun out a bit over the center line before getting your car back under control. You likely had an instant response through your amygdala which showed through the sensory organs – immediately clammy skin, a rushing sound in your ears, your heart pounding, and an overall weak feeling in your limbs.



Once danger is detected (in milliseconds) – the amygdala releases a flood of chemicals into the neo cortex that literally DUMBS US DOWN. (we don't spend time reasoning through which way to swerve or how much pressure to apply to the brake).

Our breathing, heart rate, and reflexes all increase. Blood rushes to big muscles to prepare us for fight or flight. Our reflexes take over and we react - we swerve in the case of the icy road incident. It takes about 18 minutes for the chemicals to flush out of the neo-cortex.

A stress hormone gets released into the bloodstream. Prolonged exposure to those chemicals (hormones) is toxic for the body. It takes 3-4 hours for the bloodstream to clear. Think of how you feel physically at the end of a really rotten, stressful day.

What happens when we get "hijacked"?

So, is it helpful, at times, to be "hijacked"? YES, when danger is present! It helps us survive in life-or-death situations, like near misses on the road.

BUT, there are times that we find ourselves getting emotionally hijacked when it's not really a life-or-death situation.

The trouble with our brains is that even though one situation is truly life or death, and another is not - such as a disagreement with a co-worker or annoyance with the person in front of us in the grocery line who has 8 zillion coupons, OUR BRAIN REACTS IN THE EXACT SAME WAY. So, in one situation our brain is really helping out. And in the other, it is likely working against us.

Events are neutral. The event can be anything, but still - the EVENT IS ALWAYS NEUTRAL! Always. What is not neutral is how we react to events.

Why should we care?

Emotional intelligence impacts job performance, friendships, marriages, and children's emotions.

Signs of low Emotional Intelligence are:

- Being insensitive
- Outbursts of anger or frustration
- Blaming others for problems
- Relationship struggles
- Overreacting to small matters

People who have emotional intelligence are more likely to be feel successful, relaxed, and confident.

Learning Emotional Intelligence

Self-awareness and self-management are two of the first keys aspects of emotional intelligence.

Self-awareness strategies:

- Stop treating your feelings as good or bad.
- Know and label your emotions.
- Lean into your discomfort.
- Know who and what pushes your buttons.
- Get to know yourself under stress.

Self-management strategies:

- Take control of your self-talk.
- Count to ten or sleep on it.
- Set aside time each day for problem solving.
- Visualize yourself succeeding.
- Put a mental recharge into your schedule.

Increase your Emotional Intelligence. Set a goal! Select two strategies, one for self-awareness and one for self-management. Work on these strategies over the next two months. Tell someone you trust so you can receive feedback.

Emotional Intelligence is something we can learn. The more we learn, the more success we will feel and experience.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Have you ever behaved in a way that showed low emotional intelligence (such as outbursts or blaming)? How did it impact your relationships?

2

Can you think of a time when you had to control your emotions? How did you handle it?

3

Why do you think emotional intelligence is important in our daily lives?

4

Why is being emotionally smart even more important than being book smart or technically smart?

5

What pushes your buttons or causes you to feel stress? How can you handle it Emotionally Intelligently?

6

Think about a time your amygdala got "hijacked". What happened? Was it a dangerous situation or not?

7

What is the most challenging self-management strategy for you to use?

8

How has your level of Emotional Intelligence impacted your job, relationships, or happiness?

PRACTICE, ROLE PLAY, OR JUST MORE TO CONSIDER

1

Making Eye Contact

As the name of this exercise suggests, it involves using eye contact to better understand our own emotions and how we connect emotionally with others.

Stage One: Roam around the room as if you are in a public space while not making eye contact with anyone else. Allow one minute for this part.

Stage Two: For this round, seek out eye contact as you go about the room. However, as soon as you have made eye contact, break it and look away. Allow two minutes for this part.

Stage Three: In this round, seek out eye contact and as soon as you have made eye contact with anyone, pair up with that person. They should stand side by side and do not establish eye contact with anyone else. Allocate two minutes for this part.

Discuss how each stage made you feel.

2

Be the Fog (Regulate Your Emotions)

When you accept the criticism that is thrown your way (without actually taking it to heart), you will find that you disarm the person criticizing you. To practice, ask someone you know well to criticize you at rapid speed, one after the other, and employ the fogging technique to counter it.

If someone tells you something like:

Respond with:

"You just don't understand."

"Yes, I just don't understand."

"You are lazy."

"Yes, I am lazy sometimes."

"You are always late."

"Yes, I was late."

"You don't feel responsible."

"Yes, I just don't take responsibility."

3

Emotional Self-Awareness

Write down as many emotions you can think of on index cards (or use pre-made emotion cards). One person draws 2 cards and talks about what it would take to get from one emotion to the other. The others in the group can talk about what it would take for them. Then another person draws 2 cards and does the same.