

Module 1  
Section 3

# SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Understand and navigate social  
situations effectively.

# IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Learn the basics of Social Intelligence (SI).

Find out how Social Intelligence helps us  
navigate our social world.

Explore how Social Intelligence helps us  
connect more effectively with others and  
build healthy relationships.

Discover how Social Intelligence  
influences your personal success.

# SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

## Have You Ever...

- Had a really close friend, spouse, or partner who seemed to understand what you were thinking without you even saying it?
- Talked to someone and felt like the whole conversation was awkward and didn't match up?
- Met someone new and felt like you've known them for a really long time?
- Worked with someone who always made you feel in a bad mood?

## Neurons Are Where it Begins

There are 100 billion neurons in the human brain. Each neuron is believed to have around 10,000 connections. Scientists think that the human brain is even more complex than the whole known universe.

Just like Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence starts in the human brain. The human brain is really complicated. We still have a lot to learn about how it works, but just like we can tell the difference between galaxies, planets, and stars, our knowledge about the brain keeps growing.

Today, we will focus on two specific types of neurons: Spindle Cells and Mirror Neurons.

## Spindle Cells Are Wired to Connect

- They help us quickly react to things.
- They are always paying attention to our social surroundings and help us make quick decisions about them.
- They work like an internal WIFI.
- They give us a sense of how others are feeling.

Spindle Cells have been called "The Cells that Make Us Human". Even though they are mostly found in humans, they have also been discovered in great apes, elephants, whales, and dolphins - all animals that have big brains and complex social groups. Spindle Cells help us connect with others.

Spindle Cells give us a sense of our "personal space" - they create a field around us that can be felt by others and "light up" when someone enters that space.

They send really fast messages that tell us the mood of social situations (like when you walk into a room and instantly feel that something is wrong).

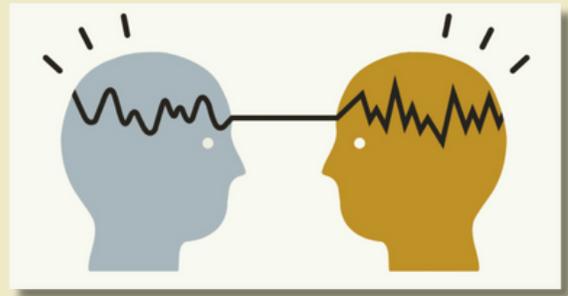
Spindle Cells allow us to connect with others, like how multiple devices connect to a WIFI network. They also, give us a feeling for how others are feeling (and why they might be feeling that way).

Here's an example how they work: Mike went inside the house and immediately felt that something was not right. Even though nobody was talking, there was tension in the air. He went up to his wife, Andrea, and asked her how she was doing. She replied shortly, saying "I'm fine, except your daughter is behaving badly." It turned out that their daughter had argued with Andrea because she wasn't allowed to go to a party that night. She had yelled at Andrea and stormed off, saying that she was being unfair.

Mike's special cells called spindle cells helped him sense the tension. This gave him time to gather information and decide how to handle the situation.

## **Mirror Neurons - Hardwired to Imitate**

Mirror Neurons are found in all people. They react the same way when we do an action and when we see or hear it being done. This helps us learn by copying. The brain (in some way) can't tell the difference between SEEING and DOING. This is thought to be the reason we feel empathy in our brains. Mirror Neurons were discovered by a



researcher from UC San Diego, V.S. Ramachandran. He showed how powerful mirror neurons are in his research. He used the kicking of a ball and found that:

- If you KICK a ball: the part of your brain that controls movement activates.
- If you SEE me kick the ball – the same part of your brain lights up.
- If you HEAR a ball being kicked (thunk!) – the same part of your brain lights up.
- If you hear someone SAY the phrase kick the ball – the same thing happens.
- If you READ the phrase "kick the ball" – your brain reacts the same way (anyone like to read fiction??)

This is how children learn to copy their parents. Remember, they may not understand the meaning of the words they hear their parents say, but they do understand the situation when the words are used. For example, if a parent accidentally drops a plate while serving and says, "oh crap," the child might say the same thing when they drop a toy in the future. It's because the neurons in their brain react to seeing something being dropped.

## Emotional Intelligence Review

You might remember this information from the section in this module about Emotional Intelligence. The top of the chart on the previous page focused on Emotional Intelligence. We specifically looked at how we become aware of our reactions when we're under pressure and the things we can do to control our responses.

The bottom half of the grid is about Social Intelligence. We are social creatures, so EQ is only half of what we need to be effective. To be really good at what we do, we also need to understand what happens when we interact with others. This means we need to learn some skills to navigate social situations better.

Do you remember the activity about the Qualities of Successful People? Many of the qualities identified in that activity had to do with how people interact with others. The competencies of Social Intelligence are what make someone a "Great Person/Successful Person Leader".

### Five Important Strategies for Building Social Awareness

#### **Watch body language.**

Look at people's eyes and facial expressions. If someone's eyes move calmly and they seem relaxed, it means they are open and honest. If their eyes move quickly or they look down, it may mean they are uncomfortable or hiding something.

Pay attention to other facial gestures as well. A smile or open face means you can start a conversation, while a frown or grimace shows discomfort.

#### **Live in the moment.**

Focus on what is happening right now. Don't think about the past or what you need to do later. For example, Rachel often has many things on her mind and thinks about what she needs to do instead of paying attention in meetings. She realized that taking notes during meetings helps her stay present and understand what her boss wants.

Being socially aware means being present in conversations, meetings, and life in general. You will learn more, be more interesting, and remember better if you focus on what is happening here and now.

#### **Plan ahead for social situations.**

Even if you are not in charge of a meeting at your church, a little planning can help. Know the meeting time and location. Understand the purpose of the meeting and bring any materials that are needed. Leave your day behind and be ready to listen and participate in the meeting.

#### **Practice the art of listening.**

Listening is a skill that requires a strategy. Let's look at some traits of a good listener.

Amy is seen as approachable because she has a calm face and looks at people when they talk. People also think she is a good listener because she doesn't interrupt or rush to talk when others are speaking.

Other good listener traits are repeating what someone says to make sure you understand, asking more questions to learn more, and showing respect by not being distracted (put your phone down!).

### **Catch the feeling in the room.**

Remember our friend, Mike. He could tell something was wrong when he walked into his house. Even though no one was talking, there was tension.



### **Ways to Manage Relationships**

Managing relationships includes understanding yourself, controlling your emotions, and understanding others. People who are good at managing relationships have better relationships with different kinds of people, like family, friends, and coworkers. Here are 5 ways to manage relationships:

1. Be Open and Curious
2. Build Trust
3. Get Mad on Purpose
4. Show You Care
5. Explain Your Decisions

## **Be Open and Curious**

What does it mean to be open and curious? Being open means you are willing to share information about yourself. Herb is always on time and gets upset when meetings start late. He told his team that he was in the military, and they had rules about being late. He asked them to be on time in the future.

Some people are naturally curious and ask questions. This can be helpful. Being curious shows that we are interested in others. Asking friendly questions like, "Wow Herb, I didn't know you were in the military. Where did you serve?" helps us learn about others.

## **Build Trust**

Trust is important in relationships. Trust comes from open communication, being consistent in what you say and do, and being reliable. Trust usually comes from being open and curious about each other.

Trust is built by keeping your promises. If you say you will pick up your friend from work, make sure you are there when their shift ends. If you promise your kids a trip to the park on Saturday, go even if you're tired and would rather stay home. A promise is a promise.

## **Get Mad on Purpose**

Sometimes it's okay to get angry, but it's important to direct your anger in the right way. Aristotle said that being angry with the right person, at the right time, and for the right purpose is not easy. For example, if your friend leaves you stranded without a ride home from work, you have a reason

to be mad. But instead of disowning your friend or calling them irresponsible, express your disappointment and let them know you expect better from them. This shows that you have expectations and believe they can meet them in the future.

Anyone can become angry –  
that is easy.

But to be angry with the right person,  
to the right degree, at the right time,  
for the right purpose, and in the right  
way, this is not easy. - Aristotle

## **Show You Care**

When you care about someone, show it through simple actions. Thank people when they help you, lend a hand to someone in need, or send a card or email to someone you haven't seen in a while. These small gestures strengthen relationships and make life easier. You will gain more than you invest!

## **Explain Your Decisions**

Instead of making decisions without explaining them, take the time to communicate your reasoning.

For example, Marshall decided to reorganize the messy shop and threw away some old clips and screws that didn't seem useful. The next day, his supervisor was angry because those clips and screws were needed to repair an old piece of equipment. If Marshall had told his supervisor about his plan to reorganize the workbench, this miscommunication could have been avoided.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Have you ever had a situation where you could sense tension without anyone saying anything? Describe what happened and how you reacted.

2

Think about a time when you felt like you really connected with someone you just met. What was it like? How did it make you feel?

3

Do you think it's important to be a good listener? Why or why not? Share an example of a time when being a good listener made a difference in a conversation or relationship.

4

Describe a situation where you had to manage a relationship with someone who had different expectations or values than you. How did you navigate the differences? What did you learn from the experience?

5

Reflect on a time when you imitated someone else's behavior or actions. Why did you do it? How did it make you feel?

# RESOURCES

## FOR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves (2009). Emotional Intelligence 2.0. TalentSmart; HAR/DOL EN edition (June 16, 2009)

Daniel Goleman (2005). Emotional Intelligence - Why It Can Matter More Than IQ. Bantam, 10th Anniversary edition (September 27, 2005)

# Christ Centered Corner

Extra encouragement from a Christian perspective.

Social and emotional intelligence is all about understanding and managing our feelings and relationships in a way that shows love and wisdom, just like Jesus taught us.

The Bible helps us learn more about ourselves and other people. It teaches us to be kind and caring towards others, just like Jesus said in Matthew 22:39. This means we should care about how others feel and what they go through.

Emotional intelligence is also important. It's about knowing and controlling our own emotions, as well as understanding how others feel. In Proverbs 16:32, it says that it's better to be patient and calm than to be strong or powerful. This verse reminds us to control our feelings and act wisely. When we know ourselves and can control our emotions, we can handle tough situations better.

The Bible also teaches us about the importance of good relationships and communication. In Proverbs 18:21, it says that our words have power. This means we need to be careful with what we say because it can either hurt or help others. We should listen to others, speak kindly, and try to make peace when there are problems.

When we use social and emotional intelligence based on what the Bible teaches, we can show love, empathy, and wisdom just like Jesus did. By practicing these qualities, we can have better relationships, understand each other more, and follow Jesus' command to love one another. So, let's remember to be kind, control our emotions, and use our words wisely, asking God for help when we struggle with this.