



RAISING YOUR EQ at WORK

What do you do when someone jumps in front of you in line, cuts you off when driving or takes credit for your work? How you address these and similar situations constitutes your emotional intelligence (EQ).

“If you wish you had behaved differently in any of those situations, you may be a victim of ‘emotional hijacking,’” says Adele B. Lynn, president of the Adele Lynn Leadership Group in Belle Vernon, Pa., and author of “The EQ Difference: A Powerful Plan for Putting Emotional Intelligence to Work.”

An emotional hijacking is when the rational, thinking part of your brain is bypassed because of your intense emotions. When this happens, you’re so emotionally fired up you can’t think or solve problems.

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Balanced LIVING

PUSHING PAST YOUR PLATEAU

We promise ourselves we’ll change our lifestyles for better health. We start diets, launch exercise programs or try to quit smoking. And then we stall. We hit a plateau, putting us at risk of losing precious gains or quitting altogether.

A healthy lifestyle change is just that — change. “A lot of people believe that change is easy, but we are fundamentally conservative creatures, and we don’t change until we have to,” says Michael J. Mahoney, Ph.D., an American Psychological Association spokesman and professor at the University of North Texas. “It doesn’t take much to throw us off course because we are such creatures of routine.”

So sticking with a new routine is tough. Dr. Mahoney suggests you focus on being consistent, especially in the first six weeks of a change. That way, you build new patterns of behavior. Once that happens, odds are you’ll “begin to speak to yourself about the change in a more positive tone, instead of a negative one.”

MAKE A PLEDGE

Pledging to reward yourself if you meet your goals can be a great tool for getting past plateaus. The reward that awaits you can serve as a symbol of what you’re trying to do and give you something to look forward to. “The symbol could be anything,” notes Dr. Mahoney. It could be a piece of jewelry or a new golf club, for instance. Once you earn it, you can set your sights on a new reward for the next step.

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EQ at work

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How high is your EQ?

We all know that IQ measures a person's intelligence. But what exactly is EQ? Lynn defines emotional intelligence as your ability to manage yourself and your relationships.

Why do you think employers interview prospective employees when they could easily spend less time just testing them for their intelligence? **Here's why:** In interviews, employers are looking for personality traits. When doing interviews, managers can experience how people communicate, determine their personality and whether they'll fit in with the rest of the staff.

This is important, as one employee who can't get along can disrupt an entire workplace. At your office, you may know some very intelligent workers who can't get along with people, and whose emotions easily get out of hand. Their inability to handle their emotions makes them destructive employees, in spite of their intelligence.

Start with yourself

You don't have control over other people's behavior, but you can learn to control your own. Therefore, you need to start by raising your own EQ.

A notebook is an important tool for raising your EQ. Writing down your reactions to emotional situations will help you become aware of your behavior and think rationally.

In "The EQ Difference," Lynn discusses seven steps to improve emotional intelligence. Three of those steps are:

Observe

"Pay attention to your emotions. Try to observe while you're 'in the moment,' especially during conflict situations," says Lynn.

Observe both your feelings and reactions in difficult or stressful situations. Are you thinking only of yourself, or can you empathize with the other person? A person with a high EQ is able to think

not only of his own needs, but also empathize with others. Observe how others react in their words and body language or behavior.

Interpret

"Try to determine your triggers and other indicators that prompt you to lose your cool or become fearful," says Lynn. When you have intense negative emotions, they're usually related to your fears.

Write down any fears you believe may have triggered your reaction. Then go over them one by one and determine which, if any, are realistic in this situation. Most fears come from past experiences, so take this one step further and try to remember when this fear started. When you analyze your fears, you take away their power to control your emotions.

Pause

Engage in a long pause to help you regain your intentions. Without the pause, you may react without thinking. Many people avoid pauses because they feel uncomfortable when there's a silence. It's OK to feel uncomfortable and take that long pause anyway.

Next, when by yourself, write in your notebook what you observed, your interpretation and how you will handle a similar situation next time.

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PUSHING PAST YOUR PLATEAU

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When you're trying to get past a plateau, he recommends you focus each day on your behavior, your effort, rather than on your goal -- the amount of weight you'd like to lose, for instance.

One crucial skill you'll need is patience. This, more than anything, will help get you past plateaus.

“Most people don’t see a traffic jam as an opportunity to practice patience,” Dr. Mahoney says. But the skills that help you put up with a stalled interstate “will help you realize and understand that plateaus are a natural part of life and they’re going to occur, so if you learn patience you’ll get over plateaus.”

“Progress,” he notes, “is not always linear. If we understand this going in, it helps us be more patient with the plateaus, so that we can get past them and keep going.”

SIX STEPS TO PROGRESS

Are you stuck on a plateau? Here are six tips for pushing onward from Michael Mercer, Ph.D., co-author of the book “Spontaneous Optimism: Proven Strategies for Health, Prosperity and Happiness”:

STEP #1: Define your aim clearly.

“It’s impossible to hit your target if you don’t know exactly what you’re aiming at,” says Dr. Mercer, who gives about 50 speeches a year to executives and other audiences. Be sure to establish clear, defined goals.



STEP #2: Don't let laziness creep in.

“Sure, it’s easier not to do something,” he says. Instead, stay focused on your path. If you promised yourself you’d exercise at 6 a.m., don’t hit the snooze button when the alarm goes off. Remind yourself firmly about your goals and get moving.

STEP #3: Visualize the end goal.

When you don’t want to exercise or you want to quit your diet, take three seconds to picture how you want to look or feel at the end of your program.

A lot of people begin such programs because they want to look more attractive, while others are interested in improving their health.

STEP #4: Use a time-limit approach to your program.

“Give yourself, say, 12 weeks to accomplish a goal within your program,” he says. When you reach that goal, set a new one and give yourself another 12 weeks.

“This enables you to track your progress and helps you to define your target. Use the scale, measuring tape or other device to measure your progress in the time period and to help you set new goals. The best cure for putting things off is a deadline.”

STEP #5: Give yourself rewards for reaching your daily, weekly and monthly goals.

“For instance, tell yourself you’ll go to a movie you’ve been wanting to see if you get your exercise in that day,” he says.

STEP #5: Think about committing to a self-punishment if you fail.

“I worked with a group that had to write a check to charity and put it in my hands. If they didn’t reach the goal, which was well within their limits, I was to mail the check by a particular date,” Dr. Mercer says. “Every one of them reached the goal.”

Applying these steps can help you reach a variety of goals, not just weight loss. If you could use assistance identifying and removing barriers that are keeping you from achieving what you want to achieve, reach out to Continuum EAP.

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CAREGIVERS: Take time to care for yourselves



Providing round-the-clock home care to an elderly family member or ailing loved one can take its toll. Rearranging family schedules, ensuring that medical appointments are attended, and simply taking care of the daily responsibilities of cleaning, feeding and medicating can lead to caregiver burnout.

Knowing how to recognize the warning signs of burnout will help you find the assistance and support you need to seek help early and continue providing quality care.

Common symptoms of caregiver burnout:

Complications with your diet. Have you lost your appetite? Are you skipping meals? Are you experiencing noticeable weight loss or weight gain? Are you eating more junk food/comfort foods and ignoring your nutrition?

Feeling out-of-balance emotionally. Are you being overly sensitive to what people say? Do you respond to complaints by lashing out verbally or physically? Do you catch yourself crying at odd times or for no reason?

Feeling as if you can't keep up with everything. Do you feel overwhelmed by your responsibilities? Do you wonder how you're going to get everything accomplished? Do you feel like your daily tasks are mounting up?

Retreating from your life. Are you withdrawing from your family and friends? Do you hide concerns or problems from others? Do you avoid conflict with your care patient or your family?

Cutting off contact with friends. Are you avoiding the activities that used to make you happy? Do you put off contacting those who care about you? Have you made excuses for why you don't spend time with others?

Inability to focus at work. Are you falling behind at work? Are you having trouble focusing on your day-to-day projects? Do you take long breaks or vacation time to care for your patient? Has your manager or supervisor expressed concern over your work habits?

Letting yourself go. Have you stopped caring about your appearance? Do you wear the same clothes for days on end? Have you started bathing only a few times a week?

If you experience one or more of these warning signs, it's time to reach out to someone for assistance. As time passes, you'll only discover that you're exposing yourself to additional sources of stress. Getting help early helps you to relieve some of this tension and enables you to continue your caregiving responsibilities.

Taking care of your own needs is one of the most important aspects of caregiving. You can't sufficiently care for others unless you're healthy and happy yourself.

Consider meeting with a Continuum EAP professional who can help provide a place to share your concerns and recharge your caregiving energies. Keep up with your friends and reach out to those who can help you keep your life balanced and in focus while you care for another.

Dr. Delvina Miremadi-Baldino © 2020