

The **E.I.** Coach

Coaching Skills for Emotionally Intelligent Leaders Creating an Emotionally Intelligent Workplace

The Crucial Process In Building Effective Relationships

**Awareness of choice, making the choice, and following through
with Emotional Intelligence (E.I.) and Mindfulness.**

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1. What's the connection between Emotional Intelligence and Relationships

Over the years we've provided many workshops with topics such as Communication Skills, Couple Communication, Collaborative Team Skills, Core Communication Skills, Relationship Building, Conflict Management, Coaching and Mentoring Skills for Managers, Mindfulness and Intentional Relating, and Emotional Intelligence.

Although these may seem quite diverse subjects, they are very much interrelated. Consider Emotional Intelligence and building effective relationships for example. No amount of skill development can make up for a weak foundation in emotional awareness and emotional self-management skills. There can be no effective relating without strong competencies in emotional intelligence.

2. What is Emotional Intelligence or E.I.?

The simplest definition of emotional intelligence we've ever heard is that Emotional Intelligence is being intelligent about emotions. What does this mean? It means being self aware ("mindful") and using the power of that awareness to effectively manage self and create positive, satisfying, and productive relationships. It's being purposeful and skillful in the way you express your emotions. It's effectively and skillfully creating a positive impact on others.

Working with others in an emotionally intelligent way is based upon caring and skill, not manipulation. It's about your ability to "tune in" to the emotions of others, with deep respect and empathy, creating an atmosphere of collaboration and trust. It's about your ability to manage your emotions, not stuff them. It's about your ability to use your emotions as a rich source of information upon which to base your best decisions. It's having powerful insight and intuition based upon a full integration of reason and emotion. It underlies the kind of communication that is the foundation of having motivated, committed, happy employees, high-performance teams, and dynamic, highly successful organizations.

Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, now groups 20 emotional intelligence competencies into four clusters (until very recently five clusters and 24 competencies). The clusters are:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social Awareness (particularly empathy)
- Relationship Management

For a more complete explanation of emotional intelligence, see our article entitled "Emotional Intelligence and High Performing Teams (www.AlternativeGroup.com)."

3. Why should I be interested in developing emotional intelligence competencies?

Think for a moment about where you are and where you are going in your life journey. What do you want? What do you value? What is it in your life that is really, really important anyway? If you're like most people, sooner or later you come to the conclusion that the quality of your relationships is high on your list of what's important, possibly in first place.

Now think of a specific relationship, a relationship that is important to you. Is it going well? Could it be better? Think of your role in the relationship. Are you making deposits in your relationship account--- or withdrawals? Are you effective in preserving and strengthening the relationship? Are you able to balance assertively taking care of yourself with genuine respect and empathy for the other person? Do you take responsibility for your influence on the relationship? Do you believe you have the power to make a difference? Do you choose to make a difference?

We think it would be a good idea to ask those questions of yourself for each and every relationship that is important to you, personal as well as work relationships. We believe you have the power to be a positive force in your relationships. We believe you can make that choice. We believe that, based upon your choice you can learn the skills to be powerfully effective in your relationships.

We're talking about strengthening relationships through development of the competencies Goleman includes in the four clusters cited above. These can be systematically developed once there is a basic awareness that there is a better way, followed by accurate

self-assessment, choice, and follow-through.

The payoff? Here's a partial list of what you can expect:

- Positive, productive, satisfying relationships
- Effective conflict management
- Skill in building and maintaining relationships
- Strengthening of leadership qualities
- Powerful networking ability
- The power to influence others
- Higher self-esteem, less anxiety, depression, stress.
- Greater effectiveness as a team member
- Greatly enhanced career progression
- More fun at work and at home

Before going on, pause and reflect. What would it be worth to you in the overall quality of your life, in total life satisfaction to be getting the benefits listed above?

4. What's the connection between Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness?

Emotional intelligence is a vital quality that involves being intelligent, and acting intelligently about one's emotions. It means managing your emotions, not stuffing and stacking them -- or avoiding them altogether. It means being in touch with your feelings and in touch with the feelings of others. It means not being threatened by emotions but seeing emotions as very useful in dealing with self or others. It means being able to not only be aware of feelings but able to verbalize feelings to others without fear or guilt. Emotional intelligence is far more important than IQ in being effective in career and relationships. The lack of emotional intelligence is often part of extreme inner distress, conflict with others, and addictions used to avoid painful feelings.

The idea of mindfulness comes from an ancient Buddhist practice of meditating to be fully conscious of the present moment and the choices that we face. We tend not to be fully present in the here and now, calm, and focused, able to purposefully make effective decisions. We're often living in the past, worrying about the future, bombarded by confusing and conflicted thoughts and feelings, and out of touch with our bodies and our emotions.

What we're left with is a feeling of tension, an uncomfortable state that we want to avoid or distance ourselves from. For many years we've been using mindfulness training in helping people cope better with their anxieties, their discomfort over dealing with difficult situations, and relationship difficulties such as not dealing well with conflict. Training in Mindfulness skill and even Mindfulness meditation has proven to be extremely helpful in building and strengthening Emotional Intelligence competencies such as the ability to be truly masterful in conflict management. The really good news is that combining mindfulness training and emotional intelligence training provides a rapid and powerful means for developing emotional intelligence, which unlike IQ can continue

to develop for a lifetime.

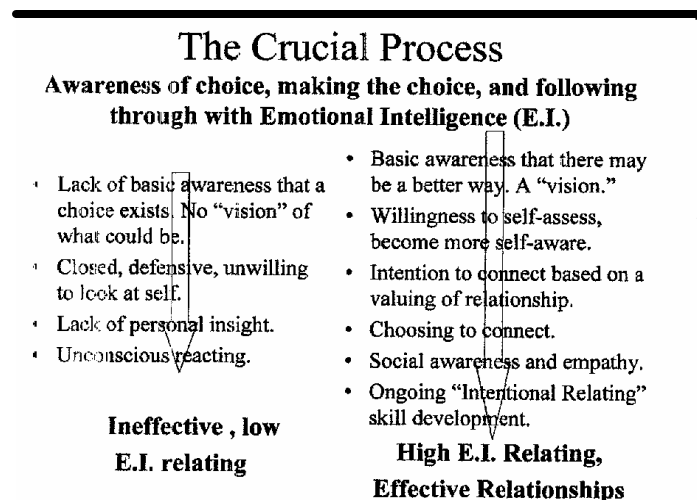
5. What is "The Crucial Process"?

There doesn't seem to be much success in relationships. Half of all marriages fail. Of course that means those in the remaining 50 percent are deliriously happy-- right? Of course not! Possibly only half of those are satisfied with their marriages, or about 25 percent overall. Work relationships are no better. In our clinical practice we listen to seemingly endless complaints about harsh work conditions, insensitive or incompetent supervisors, or bosses who are outright bullies. There are probably more stressed out workers today than ever before, and many organizations are known for an inhumane atmosphere and a brutalizing effect upon employees.

However, this doesn't have to be the case. Marriages can be nurturing and satisfying, an ideal place to grow toward wellness and wholeness. The same is true of work situations. Work can be a healthy activity, and workers can feel positively challenged, energized, fulfilled, and deeply satisfied by the work experience. Work can be fun. A work place can seem safe and enjoyable. An organization can feel like a healthy family.

Do you believe that things can be different? Do you believe that you can have a better family life, a better work life? Do you believe you have a choice? These are important questions. We believe that one of the most unfortunate things happening in our society, both in families and in organizations, is a lack of awareness of how we treat one another, a lack of awareness that real choices exist, and a lack of commitment to find a better way.

Consider the following chart. We see ineffective relating as characterized by a low level of competence in emotional intelligence and "mindlessness" rather than mindfulness. A major consequence is a lack of basic awareness that a choice exists. There is no vision of being more successful, a vision based upon self responsibility and self-management. In many cases, there is a strong belief that problems come from outside the self, that other people are the problem, and that there is little to be done to change the situation. Often, we're trapped in our own mental models, our assumptions of how things "really are."



We all have blind spots. An attitude of "I must be right, you've got to be wrong" results in being closed, defensive, and unwilling to look at self. Lack of personal insight leads to unconscious and habitual reacting rather than conscious choices to build effective relationships. Many, if not most people, simply continue along doing what they've always done and getting the same results, never imagining that one person could make a difference and that they could be that person.

High E.I. relating is based upon an awareness that things could be better, mindfulness about one's own thoughts and feelings, a vision of what positive and powerful relating would look like, and a commitment to make a difference. A vision of good personal and work relationships generates a desire to learn and grow.

At the same time, a belief that it's OK to be imperfect, to be "a work in progress" underscores a willingness to examine self. This commitment to be self-aware is a foundation for relationship growth and leads to an attitude of being open, non-defensive, and willing to listen and learn. A valuing of relationships along with accurate self-assessment leads to intention and choice.

Next, add to the mix Goleman's competency clusters of social awareness and empathy and all that is needed is learned and practiced competency skill development. These "Intentional Relating" skills are vital to effective relationships, but insufficient without the elements previously described.

If you have good relationships-- congratulations! Could they be better? You bet! Of course, not all relationships are the same. Some are valued more. Some are more problematic. Probably all relationships can be improved. Nothing else contributes to a sense of well-being as much as healthy, growth enhancing relationships. To the extent you have such relationships in your life you are demonstrating emotional intelligence competencies. Want more of a good thing? Make it a priority to learn about and systematically develop emotional intelligence based relationships.

6. OK, I'm convinced. How do I quickly increase my awareness, strengthen my intention, and choose to connect with social awareness and empathy?

These first steps are not easy but can happen rapidly. We're assuming at this point that your relationships are important and that building and strengthening those relationships is a priority to you. Decide to become a relationship expert. Decide to become the architect of relationships that are vital and deeply satisfying. Believe that relationships can always be improved and that you can make a difference.

Accept that sometimes you're the problem. Amazing but true! It happens. This doesn't mean that you're a bad person, or that you have failed. It simply means that you're human like the rest of us. If you can accept that, and you're willing to take a look at yourself, and accept feedback from others, your potential for growth is unlimited. If, on the other hand, you feel blocked and unable to proceed non-defensively, see an experienced relationship counselor or relationship coach and work on it. Left alone this is a serious

limitation that will severely limit your happiness, and the happiness of those who remain in relationship with you.

OK, willing to accept that you're a fallible, imperfect human being like the rest of us? Congratulations! You're ready to grow and you've removed the most important barrier. Believe that there is a better way and that you can make a difference? Congratulations again! Another barrier overcome. A fancy name for this very important quality is "self efficacy," the belief that you are not a victim but have power over much that happens in your life.

Now for self-awareness, a commitment to learn about yourself so as to have a foundation for all future growth. Since we're talking about effective relationships, an important starting point is self-assessment through various pencil and paper inventories that look at relationship skills. Our "Intentional Relating Skills Self-Assessment (IRSSA)" instrument (www.AlternativeGroupInc.com) offers a quick look at 10 vital areas of emotionally intelligent relationships skills. When we created this instrument, our intention was that it would be as much an educational device as a means of self-assessment. In the process of looking at yourself, you're also being given information on what effective relationship skills look like. The act of completing the IRSSA is a catalyst that starts changing your behavior. If you don't already have an IRSSA copy, or would like additional copies, please contact us at our Redlands office.

7. What is "Intentional Relating," and how do I develop skills?

Intentional relating is what we call relating with your eyes wide open, fully and non-defensively accepting your responsibility, being self-aware of your abilities, deficiencies, and the choices you make, and using that awareness along with learned skills to create the relationships you desire. The IRSSA will help you identify the skills needed. The profile sheet will show you the overall pattern of abilities and deficiencies. You might also consider being open to receiving feedback from others on the same qualities. Remember to be non-defensive. If you shoot the messenger you not only damage relationships but all growth comes to an end.

Other relationship skills are described in our article *Intentional Relating and Conflict Solutions* (www.AlternativeGroupInc.com). Additional copies may be obtained from our Redlands office. Additionally, there are a great many fine books on relationships and relationship skills. Again, decide to be a relationship expert. That means becoming well-informed on what makes for successful relationships. Do your homework. There is an abundance of printed information on how to improve relationships as well as classes and workshops. Of course, we're biased. We've designed one-day, two-day, and three-day workshops helping emotionally intelligent leaders coach others in creating an emotionally intelligent workplace. We help teams see a vision of a better way, make the shift, and commit to high E.I. relating. This shift is followed by intensive skill development in "intentional relating."

8. What's the next step?

It's a matter of priorities. If you agree with us that there's not much in life more important

than relationships, match that priority with a commitment of time. Take the time to learn and practice. Accept that this is not a one shot deal, something you will eventually finish. It's a work in progress, an ongoing process where there's always room for improvement. Don't be frustrated; Effort expended in learning and practicing relationship skills will continue to pay big dividends lifelong. Create and live the vision of being the architect of the relationships you desire. Commit to life-long learning and enjoy the journey.