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The Benefits of Emotional Intelligence

By Susan Dunn

The Benefits of Emotional Intelligence by Susan Dunn, MA, Emotional Intelligence Coach

While we all, at some level, understand that we're motivated by pain and pleasure, it's amazing how we can learn, especially in our Western culture, to ignore the concomitant fact that moving toward pleasure makes us feel good, and is good for our health, while moving toward pain does the opposite.

Yes, "no pain no gain" has its place. It fits for cognitive learning experiences, like struggling to learn a new language, or new theory; and physical endeavors, like weight lifting and increasing your ability to jog, but when it comes to emotional experiences, we don't benefit from the negative. It takes a tremendous toll.

One of the immediate goals of emotional intelligence is to increase your self-awareness. Not to the point where you spend all your time analyzing yourself and looking inward, but enough so you can assess quickly your emotional states, and, more importantly, the cost they have for you.

WHAT DO YOU FEEL?

At the rudimentary level, you can learn by asking yourself several times a day, "How am I feeling?" Don't answer it superficially, but rather at the level of how you're feeling physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. In this way, you can learn the physiological signals to your own emotions. For instance, I have talked with people who didn't realize their stomach was "in knots" because it always had been, and that's the way they thought it should be. Or you may not connect that sudden pain in your neck with the proper antecedent. I remember driving back to town with a friend after a weekend away, and as we got closer to home, she started talking about her boyfriend, and not in very positive ways. As she did, she started stroking, twisting and `cracking' her neck, which was evidently getting tighter due to the fact that her boyfriend was sounding to me, at any rate, like the proverbial "pain in the neck," though she wasn't aware of it until I put the two together for her. Up to that point in the trip she had been pain-free. This is not a good sign re: the relationship!

WHERE DO YOU FEEL IT?

The Benefits of Emotional Intelligence

When you begin to recognize the physical signs quickly, you can do what it takes to protect yourself. We say that certain people "drain us," and this means drain important energy we could be using elsewhere to better advantage.

WHY DO YOU FEEL IT?

The next step is to ask yourself WHY you feel that way. Emotions are often complex and when you learn to sort through them, you find that some variables that contribute to them can be changed or avoided, such as being too hot, or too lonely; but that in other cases, there's nothing you can change, such as a person or situation that continually drains your energy. No matter how else you're feeling, even if you're completely rested and feeling great, you find this person or situation always has the same result. In that case, if the toll is high, and you pay the price every time, the wise choice would be

to eliminate this situation or person.

In this way you can identify which situation and people bring you pleasure, and which bring you pain, and make wise decisions.

In the case of my friend in the car, she might have had that experience also if her boyfriend were currently facing a bypass or cataract surgery. You need to be able to sort out what's causing what. Is it pain about someone you love, or is someone you love causing you pain?

This is important because being able to experience and process a negative emotion gives you more confidence in your ability to manage them. The better you understand what's going on, the more you realize you have a choice. If you study how to process a certain negative emotion, such as anger, you'll come to know your trigger-points, and your patterns of response that aren't productive. These you can always change. You can also choose which things are worth the energy it takes, and the physical stress toll it takes, to get angry.

Understanding your ability to change things gives you personal power. You always have a choice. You have the option to avoid things that make you angry, to avoid criticizing yourself when you do feel angry, to learn how to calm yourself more quickly, to change how you respond when you get angry - both internally and externally - and to eliminate people who constantly make you angry.

The more you learn about emotions in general, and yours in particular, the more options you have. You will become less puzzled in the grip of an emotion, less rigid in your responses, and better able to think and respond (or not) rather than feel and react mindlessly. This makes you a full and complex human being, not an input-operation-output machine.

We generally acquire more emotional intelligence throughout our lifetime, but it's not a given if you aren't processing and becoming aware. If you find yourself swamped by the same things over and over, take a look at what's going on, do some reading, and work with a coach. If a certain situation always triggers a reaction from you that gets you in trouble, understand this is something you can change. You can learn to bring about a different outcome. After all, not everyone who gets angry hits someone, gets hot under the collar, shouts, becomes passively defiant, or sings a happy tune. Of all

the responses out there that are possible, you can learn to choose the best one for you at the time.

Susan Dunn, MA, Emotional Intelligence Coach, <http://www.susandunn.cc> . Offering coaching, Internet courses, ebooks and coach training for your personal and professional development. For FREE EQ ezine, <mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc> with "ezine" for subject line.

Is It Possible to Have Too Much Emotional Intelligence?

By Susan Dunn

Is It Possible to Have Too Much Emotional Intelligence? by Susan Dunn, M.A., The EQ Coach

Someone emailed me recently, "Do you think it's possible to have too much emotional intelligence going on? To the point that perhaps logic takes a backseat?"

Good question. The fact is, we need both IQ and EQ. You can't have "too much" emotional intelligence, but that doesn't mean at the expense of logic.

It's time to use logic, for instance, when figuring out a budget, or making a timeline for a project. Then there's a time to use emotional intelligence – using leadership skills, for instance, to get those people to make that timeline and project happen.

Emotional intelligence means using all your faculties, including logic and reason, to bring about results that are favorable. It means having the flexibility and creativity to see alternatives.

Say you're presented with a highly-charged emotional situation, for instance. You're furious with your partner and would like to hit him. Your EQ would tell you to manage that emotion, to stop and think. Your "thinking brain" would then consider the possible consequences of your act — seriously hurting him, going to jail, harming the relationship irreparably, feeling shame and guilt afterwards, and other things that are not in your best interest. At the same time, you could use your empathy to try and see things from their point of view.

There are times when logic does need to take a back seat, for instance when we need to use our hearts in managing a misbehaving toddler. Logic and reason aren't of much use with a two year old. They also aren't of much use in figuring out the big questions in life, like why bad things happen to good people.

Emotional intelligence means managing emotions so you can take action in the best interest of all concerned. This also requires using your thinking brain!

To learn more about emotional intelligence, go here: <http://www.susandunn.cc/EQ.htm>

Susan Dunn, The EQ Coach, offers personal life coaching, transitions, career, relationships, emotional intelligence. Visit her on the web at www.susandunn.cc and <mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc> .



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