

Using Emotional Intelligence at Work

– Activity Summary –

1. **The Emotional Side of Business Success: The Hard Case for Soft Skills**

This activity is an overview of the exciting development in people management – Emotional Intelligence. It develops understanding about how Emotional Intelligence can transform the way we conduct our business, by the way we handle our most valuable asset – people. Also, participants will be able to assess themselves on the key Emotional Intelligence competencies and spot ways to enhance their personal effectiveness.

2. **Learned Optimism For Success: See the Doughnut, Not the Hole**

To do more than survive – to thrive in a world of accelerating change and uncertainty – we need to respond well to adversity. This activity uses self-assessment, pair work, and small group work to develop a more positive and purposeful emotional response to difficulty, so participants can build a better future for themselves and their teams.

3. **Controlling Negative Thoughts: Talk Yourself Out of Defeat**

The way we talk to ourselves can affect our sense of well-being and our ability to motivate ourselves in the face of challenge. This activity demonstrates this in a powerful way.

A combination of self-assessment, personal experiences, and brief presentations will enable the participants to respond more purposefully to difficult events. They will learn how to replace negative self-talk with motivational self-talk. This will help to bring about a positive and creative climate at work and help participants to be proactive and take control.

4. The Art of Letting Go: You'll Never Be a Butterfly if You Can't Stop Being a Caterpillar

This activity tackles the essence of coping effectively with change and letting go of old ways of thinking and doing. Challenging existing concepts enables the participants to understand their own resistance to change. An exercise provides them with a practical tool to help them take appropriate risks and move forward.

5. Anger Control: It's Not Awful Not Getting What You Want

Many people have difficulty dealing with anger – both their own and other people's. Frustrations build up in the fast-changing workplace, where roles are ill-defined and the security of hierarchy has gone. This sometimes leads to destructive anger.

Anger usually results from frustration. Frustration results from people feeling unable to control and improve their situation. A sense of control is a basic human need. Frustration behaves like an emotional virus, infecting everyone. This activity uses pair work practice to look at anger and how we deal with it, an emergency self-calming procedure, and an imagination exercise where participants rehearse various response options to anger provoking situations to help them to eliminate the anger that stands as a barrier to success.

6. Emotions and Complex Decision Making: Don't Make the Same Mistake as Descartes

We can't negotiate complex and unpredictable change effectively by logic alone. We need to get in touch with the feeling side of ourselves. We need to feel the rightness and wrongness of decisions. This activity uses a series of practical exercises to demonstrate how we can use our imagination and senses creatively to help us assess complex situations, and make rational and effective choices.

7. Increasing Sensitivity: Surveying the Emotional Landscape

In today's busy work environment, it's all too easy to ignore the mood and morale of those around us. People don't necessarily communicate how they feel. However, being insensitive to the needs and feelings of others makes it hard to gain their support and enthusiasm. The powerful experiential exercises in this activity increase sensitivity to the verbal and non-verbal indicators of underlying feelings and needs. They also help to develop emotional literacy; that is, the ability to recognize our own emotions and the emotions of those around us.

8. Empathic Inquiry: Investing in Understanding Before Being Understood

In difficult times, people often want to be rescued by an all-providing, all-knowing manager, or parent figure. This is only ever advisable in cases of immobilization by trauma. In normal difficulties, the way forward is for people to help themselves. The key skill is to show empathy. This means 'feeling with' – being able to move around in the other person's world without being sucked in. This activity teaches the basic empathy skills of generative listening, reflecting and challenging. From this, participants will be able to demonstrate their understanding, which will help others to recognize their own resources and be able to draw upon them.

9. Expressing How We Feel: Playing the Music Behind the Words

We all know that feelings have a profound impact on success or failure. Yet the typical work environment doesn't seem to acknowledge this. Feelings seem to be treated as irrelevant to the core purpose of the business. We need to get across what we feel in a way that is business enhancing, rather than business limiting.

Good leaders are good communicators. Not only do they say what they mean clearly and concisely, they also inspire commitment by communicating with passion and by telling stories that tap into people's deeper feelings. They also need to express discomfort, frustration and disagreement in an assertive way, without invalidating the other person.

This activity develops the skill of expressing difficult feelings in a way that clears the air, inspires others, and moves things forward.

10. Developing Trust: You Only Get It If You Give It

In the new boundary-less organization, hierarchies no longer control relationships. Everyone at every level needs to develop networks, partnerships and alliances across the organization. The skill is to build relationships of credibility and trust quickly, and to influence without hierarchical authority.

By using a stimulating combination of physical trust exercises, facilitated discussion, and a trust-network exercise, this activity looks not only at how we can build trusting relationships, but also at the underlying feelings and beliefs that block or facilitate the building of trust. It shows how we can establish win-win relationships when we start from different positions.

11. Managing Conflict: Resolving to Resolve

Conflict in itself is not bad. However, it is business limiting when it's driven by self-interest, 'pay back' games and the desire to protect territory.

People get attached to their own ideas and may protect them fiercely – rather than let new ideas flow in – to merge with, modify or replace the old. You sometimes get raging conflict instead of a stimulating cross-flow of ideas.

The faster things change, the more likely people are to cling to the old because it seems more secure; it becomes even more important to create a climate where a variety of viewpoints is welcomed. If difference leads to conflict, it needs to be faced – managed, not avoided. This activity uses a self-assessment exercise and a powerful simulation to help participants understand their own response to conflict and help them to engage in constructive discontent rather than destructive animosity.

12. Building Stress Immunity: Adjusting Our Sails to the Wind

Employees are faced with more and more information. At the same time, situations are less predictable, and their boundaries less clearly defined. This creates uncertainty and stress. To operate effectively in a fast-moving world of increasing pressure, people need to be in command of their emotional responses.

By using a series of self-assessment exercises, this activity helps people recognize the signs of stress and develop effective stress-prevention and management strategies.

13. Helping Difficult Customers: Using Difficulties as a Source of Continuous Improvement

When customers are dissatisfied and start venting their feelings, they can unnerve the most placid of employees.

If you aren't in touch with your own feelings, you may have difficulty dealing with strong emotions, and start being defensive. This just makes things worse. You need to defuse the situation, as well as ensuring that the customer gets and appreciates the best possible service. This activity uses role-play with skills practice to look at emotionally intelligent ways of helping difficult customers.

14. Healing the Wounds: Understanding and Handling the Emotional Side of Change Brought About by Downsizing

Changing market demands, mergers and acquisitions and the need to reduce costs will continue. This means that downsizing and major restructuring will be part of our working lives for the foreseeable future. This has a major impact on the morale of the survivors. There are decrements in performance that can last a surprising amount of time.

This activity gives an overview of the key issues involved. The focus is on the emotional fall-out, how to minimize the adverse effects, and how to make a success of restructuring. A combination of story telling, role-play, and brainstorming exercises are used to help participants to play a positive part in change caused by downsizing.

15. Surviving Office Politics: Navigating the Dark Side

People spend a great deal of time on internal politics and game-playing in many organizations, often to the detriment of the business and working relationships. However, people also need to use informal communication channels to be effective. These positive and negative aspects of the informal side of the organization represent the its emotional

‘shadow side’. Emotions add depth and colour to our working lives, but inappropriate expressions of emotion can be very damaging.

This activity addresses the question of how to behave in an emotionally intelligent way, being neither naive nor acting with cynicism, in the shadows of the organization. A powerful exercise is used to amplify the issues around co-operation versus self-interest. Participants will also assess their own political shrewdness and conduct an exercise on dealing with the difficult boss.

16. Managing Diversity: Valuing Differences and Getting the Best From Diversity

Managing diversity is a people management process that uses the diverse attributes, skills, backgrounds and talents of the workforce to deliver greater productivity, growth and innovation.

The activity focuses on the emotional issues associated with diversity. Through a process of discussion and self-assessment, it shows how we can overcome resistance to valuing differences and create a climate of inclusion – not exclusion.

17. Creating the Future: What We Do Now Leads to Where We Will Be

With the increasing uncertainty in today’s workplace, people have to be able to deal with the tension between managing the present and creating the future. With so much information to process, and so many tasks and opportunities, the sense of urgency can feel like tyranny. This is not a healthy feeling. People need to take time out to establish what’s important, and what needs to be done to build the future. At the same time, they need to be able to produce results on a day-to-day basis. How they use their discretion in managing their time, both day-to-day and to build for the future, will be crucial for their own success and the success of their organizations.

This activity uses a time management exercise and a visioning exercise to help the participants resolve this dilemma.