

Emotionally Intelligent Leadership Tips

Do not underestimate the demands on any Leadership role. Taking on a Leadership role means managing more stress events on a daily basis. In 8 milliseconds your stress hormone system can be activated by a stress event. This means you feel, before you can think. Not only are there operational task driven stress events. There are many behavioural stress events that require excellent Emotional Intelligence including; influencing, negotiating, relating to staff, motivating staff and managing conflict. Managing behavioural events can be more complex due to the complexity of human functioning.

Below are some tips to use emotional intelligence to enhance leadership performance in any setting;

Practice Mindfulness

Being fully present in the moment can be done anywhere anytime, it trains the mind to stop and observe internal chatter and emotional states. As a leader, this allows you to check your thinking for incorrect reactivity and make a decision for the specific situation at hand. Mindfulness can help avoid conflict by checking potential inaccurate pre-wired biases and stereotypical judgements.

Build Relationships

Over 55 years of research into personality and motivational needs by Birkman international clearly identifies some basic human characteristics. Leaders need to have more 1:1 meetings and listen to their staff, no matter the emotional content. People on average have a basic need to feel their manager can relate to their issues and emotions. The leader does not have to be their best friend or solve the issues, just relate to their staff. High emotional intelligence managers have staff who are more motivated, engaged and productive.

Control your Diary

Emotional intelligence is defined as thinking and reasoning with emotion (Mayer & Salovey 1990). The mood you are in impacts how well you do any task. Negativity or lower key moods enhance your ability to do detail, make quick decisive action, look at things critically. More upbeat emotions enhance well-being, help you stay open to new ideas and help you relate to others better. Line up your diary so tasks match the mood. As it can take time to shift your mood, do not analyse a massive spreadsheet and then immediately expect to 'wow' a crowd with a passionate presentation. You will need to read your mood quickly and deploy a mood shifting technique in readiness for the next task.

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Vision - A sense of purpose

Having a long-term purpose and vision concordant with your strengths and values improves resilience to times of stress, and improves well being. Leaders who establish a clear purpose create a sense of HOPE for their teams. Having a sense of hope has been shown to decrease stress response in people. Not only should the leader have a clear vision but also help each of their staff members to create a personal vision for their time in the work group.

Operationalise Goals

Being able to break a vision in small steps and achievable milestones has a clear effect on staff. Creating achievable practical goals helps staff manage potential limiting negative feelings when faced with a challenge.

Enhance your Presentation Skills

People form a quick judgement, accurate or not, based on how they perceive you. If a leader is nervous and doubting themselves when they present, all in attendance will pick up this emotion and connect it with that leader. Our mirror neurons have been shown that they help humans feel what the other person is feeling, including picking up on their intention (Dr Marco Iacoboni 2008). This branding can follow you everywhere and effect all further interactions. The emotional Intelligence system connects an event with an emotion and then draws back the same emotion every time a similar event is presented.

Expressive Writing

Understanding your emotions through writing forces engagement of the logical left pre-frontal cortex. The act of writing improves problem solving and more accurate diagnosis of why you a feeling a certain way. Writing down your thoughts, worries and challenging your own negativity has amazing effects in your brain. Our brains do have a negativity bias due to the reactive stress response system. People who write using more positive emotion words about themselves show increased wellbeing, better sleep and improved emotional intelligence.

(Pennebaker, 2006)

Go for a Walk

Get some air and breathe deeply, breathing deeply improves cortical blood flow to our brain, meaning it functions better. Breathing deeply reduces stress. Regular aerobic exercise for more 25 minutes at a pace at 70% of your maximum increases serotonin levels naturally. Lack of serotonin leads to negative loop thinking and more stress hormone and less effective decision making. Thus walking not only improves breathing, gives you exercise it also gets you outside nearer nature. Being in or near nature reduces stress and anxiety.

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For more techniques see our handout "Better Brain Ideas" downloadable at;

www.positiveintelligence.com.au