



MANAGEMENT CONNECTION

USING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

IN YOUR PRACTICE

BY KRISTIN KLINEFELTER, MS, RDN, LDN

YOU HAVE LIKELY HEARD THE TERM Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and know that it relates to how smart a person is, based on their performance on a standardized IQ test. We use this term loosely and assume everyone knows we are talking about a very smart person if we say “They have a high IQ.”

If someone said, “That person has low EI,” would you know what they meant? Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the “capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically” (dictionary.com). Other characteristics of an emotionally intelligent person include self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, and strong social skills. You may see the concept of EI described as EQ or “Emotional Quotient” as well.

Does emotional intelligence matter in food service? The quick answer is yes! We need our team to be emotionally intelligent and we need to lead by example. We all can sharpen our EI skills and by the time you are done reading this article, you might have one new EI skill to use immediately!

A study of 2,600 hiring managers found that 75 percent were more likely to promote a candidate with high emotional intelligence over one with a high IQ (Ink.com). Dr. Travis

Bradbury conducted a study through his company TalentSmart, finding 90 percent of top performers in business had high EI. He also found that EI accounted for up to 60 percent of the job performance for supervisors up to CEOs.

While there are tools to assess EI, most of us do not have interview or performance review dialogue to assess the EI of potential candidates or employees. We might say, “*She is much better suited in the back of the house*” or “*I put him in front of customers because he is so kind and empathetic,*” which are unofficial ways to assess EI. There are four skills for emotional intelligence that we can relate to our work in nutrition and food service.

FOUR SKILLS FOR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The Ability to Identify Emotions

The skill of identifying emotions may seem basic, yet most of us admit that we are not sure what drives our actions. You might wonder, “What is wrong with me?” or “Why am I acting this way?” If we step away from the situation and really look at what is fueling our actions, we might

recognize how we are feeling. If we perceive that a strong emotion causes us to say or do certain things, we can begin to respond appropriately.

According to emotional psychologist Paul Ekman's initial work in the 1970s, there are six basic human emotions. He identifies them as happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, surprise, and anger. In later work, he added other emotions such as shame, pride, embarrassment, and excitement.

You may have seen the Pixar movie *Inside Out*, where five of the main characters are the core emotions of Joy, Sadness, Disgust, Fear, and Anger. The characters are consistently true to these emotions as they respond to the situations in their young girl's life. Brené Brown, professor and researcher, wrote a beautiful book that explores 87 human emotions and experiences. She asked over 7,000 people how many emotions they can identify. The research found that a typical human can identify just three emotions! Just for fun, turn to someone near you right now and ask them to verbally report how many emotions they can name. Did they do better than the average person?

As humans, we struggle to identify our emotions, which makes it challenging to use them for good; to engage our resources, consider options, and respond appropriately. How can we work on this as a manager, director, or boss? If we are trying to understand our own emotions, it is OK to take some time to step away from the situation before we respond. Try using this language:

- *"This situation is going to take some time to sort out. Is it OK if I think about it and we circle back next Tuesday to discuss further?"*

- *"I'm not sure what I think about that right now. Can I do some checking and get back to you tomorrow at the beginning of your shift?"*

This time away from the situation will give you a chance to use resources, consider options, and respond (vs. react). Your emotions might be giving



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—Ink.com

you clues on what other information you need to gather.

To practice your ability to identify your emotions at the beginning of your workday, ask yourself:

- *"How do I need to feel today to be most effective?"*
- *"What strategies do I need to use to get myself in a positive headspace and bring my best self to the team today?"*

- *"How will I model positive emotions to my team members?"*

The Ability to Use Emotions

Emotions are helpful guides if we take the time to identify and listen to them. They spotlight what we need to pay attention to. For example, fear can ignite the action of fight, flight, or freeze in dangerous situations.

In food service, this might simply be recognizing when someone needs a break or is unsure of their job duties. Let's imagine this scene: It is day 14 of running the breakfast shift short-staffed. Joe, the breakfast manager, overhears the two breakfast servers elevating in a conversation that the residents can hear. Joe has a decision to make. Option 1: Joe continues making omelets and ignores the brewing situation because he has too much work to do and there are hungry people to serve. Option 2: Joe takes three deep breaths, and asks to speak with the servers. They meet by the walk-in cooler and Joe states: *"I noticed tension in your conversation. I would like to help sort this out. Can we circle back after we serve our guests and talk about it?"* Joe is not engaging in the heated discussion, rather, he is simply acknowledging what is happening and letting them know that he cares about solving the problem. He is using his perception to notice and address the situation.

In the scenario of Joe and the servers, the high emotions of the servers might have driven them to act rudely to a customer or be distracted and drop a platter of food. By Joe giving them a moment to pause, hopefully they will use their emotions more productively and come back to solve the problem later.



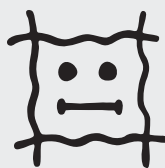
EI IS MORE
IMPORTANT THAN
IQ? TELL ME MORE!

Practical Tips:

- Practice saying “*I feel frustrated*” (vs. “*I am frustrated*”).
- Journal your emotions and thoughts but do not reply to that email when upset!
- Take a break from difficult conversations when emotions are strong (and set a time to return to them).

The Ability to Understand Emotions

Understanding our emotions, or the emotions of others, allows us to figure out the best way to respond to them. The key word here is *respond*, not *react*. Going back to Joe, he might be giving the servers an opportunity to understand how they are feeling and create an appropriate and productive response. Their heated discussion was clearly *reacting* to their emotions. To



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practice understanding your emotions:

- Decide if your emotion matches the current situation.
- Get yourself in the right headspace to use the emotion and respond.

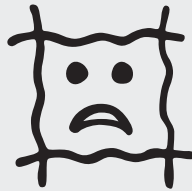
If we can understand our emotions, we might have a better idea of where others are coming from. For example, if Mrs. J is upset at breakfast and yells at your morning crew daily, you might identify that she is working through grief and her favorite part of her day used to be having breakfast with her husband. You might be able to notice this and ask her questions about her husband to show empathy. You can say something like, “*Oh Mrs. J this must be so hard for you. I am sure you miss having breakfast with your husband. What was your favorite breakfast food to eat together?*” You are acknowledging her pain and loss while showing empathy.

While many people have innate social skills, others require training. ANFP will be releasing an online course in January 2023 titled “Hospitality and Customer Service Fundamentals.” This five-hour CE course will reinforce core principles of customer service and hospitality essentials.

The Ability to Manage Emotions

Aristotle said, “Anyone can become angry—that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not easy.” Strong emotions can be a challenge to manage, but again, they can guide our actions. If emotions are causing our brain to perceive stress, the part of our brain that serves to help us survive, the amygdala, is enacted. If the amygdala is working for us, we are not using our frontal lobe, the logical part of our brain. To simplify, if we are stressed, the amygdala sends messages to our body to fight, flight, or freeze.

Fighting or flighting from a situation that brings us strong emotion will not result in a positive outcome. We need to enact our frontal lobe to logically



STRONG EMOTIONS


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respond to a situation. How do we get there? There are many ways to self-regulate, manage emotions, and engage your logical brain (frontal lobe) to respond appropriately:

- Take three deep cleansing breaths (in for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, out for 8 seconds).
- Get 20 minutes of physical exercise every day.

- Get good sleep/rest (at least 7-8 hours per night).
- Practice gratitude.
- Smile and laugh every day.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Tree bathe (be in nature!).
- Limit mindless screen time.
- Identify stressors you can change.
- Seek social support and accountability.

SUMMING IT UP

Practicing our EI skills will result in both professional and personal rewards. We will experience less conflict, deepen our relationships, and be the person our coworkers want to model after. In most situations, we can take the time to identify, understand, use, and manage our emotions. Rarely do we need to use our amygdala and react with our fight, flight, or freeze brain. If we do need to react urgently, we have training for that too, which is another article and in-service altogether! 



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Kristin Klinefelter has practiced in the nutrition and foodservice field since 1998. She recently started social-emotional work, both professionally and personally, collaborating with colleagues to conduct small and large group training and education on emotional intelligence. Her favorite self-regulation tools are daily exercise and cleansing breaths.

CE QUESTIONS | MANAGEMENT CONNECTION



This **Level II** article assumes that the reader has a thorough knowledge of the topic. The desired outcome is to facilitate application of knowledge into practice by drawing connections among ideas and using information in new situations.

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Reading *Using Emotional Intelligence In Your Practice* and successfully completing these questions online in the ANFP Marketplace has been approved for 1 hour of continuing education for CDM, CFPPs. To earn 1 CE hour, visit www.ANFPonline.org/market and select **Edge CE Articles** within the Publications section. Purchase the article and complete the quiz.

1. According to Ink.com, 75 percent of hiring managers were more likely to promote a person with high EI over someone with high IQ.
A. True
B. False
2. Which are the core emotions?
A. Happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, surprise, anger
B. Excited, fuming, embarrassed, giddy
C. Thankful, grumpy, miserable, moody
3. According to Brené Brown's research, how many emotions can a typical human identify?
A. 7
B. 12
C. 3
4. What part of the brain engages the fight, flight, or freeze reaction?
A. The frontal lobe
B. The amygdala
C. The hippocampus
5. Which statement describes the ability to better manage emotions?
A. We should ignore challenging or uncomfortable feelings
B. We should self-regulate to respond rather than react to strong emotions
C. We should immediately react to high stress situations so we don't forget how we feel
6. We should not bring up sad emotions such as grief, because it makes people uncomfortable.
A. True
B. False
7. Which are characteristics of emotionally intelligent people?
A. Egotistical, selfish, slow, fussy
B. Empathetic, self-aware, motivated, self-regulated
C. Demanding, impulsive, stubborn

