

The five elements of emotional intelligence psychology essay



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Emotional intelligence is the area of cognitive ability involving traits and social skills that facilitate interpersonal behaviour. Intelligence can be broadly defined as the capacity for goal-oriented adaptive behaviour; emotional intelligence focuses on the aspects of intelligence that govern self-knowledge and social adaptation (Rouse, M. 2010, online)

In this essay I will be exploring emotional intelligence. I hope to gain an understanding of the five elements of emotional intelligence, how to improve your emotional intelligence and the role it plays in the workplace.

I feel it is important, especially as a Social Care student, to understand emotional intelligence and its characteristics, as I will be constantly working with other people. I chose those headings as I feel they are the most appropriate to my future line of work and it would be beneficial to me to understand them at a deeper level.

I hope to present a clear, well structured essay on emotional intelligence and provide an insight into how it shapes the people we are.

Main body

The five elements of emotional intelligence

An American psychologist called Daniel Goleman developed a framework that defined emotional intelligence using five elements.

The first element is self awareness. People with high emotional intelligence understand their emotions and can control their feelings and are comfortable with who they are. They are aware of what their strengths and weaknesses are and are confident as they trust their intuition. (Mind Tools, 2012)

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The second element is self regulation. Self regulation is the ability to control your emotions and not act impulsively. People who are able to regulate themselves don't allow themselves to get too angry, worked up, stressed, jealous or impulsive. They generally think before they act, and are able to say " no" to situations they don't feel comfortable with. (Mind Tools, 2012)

The third element is motivation. People with high emotional intelligence are generally highly motivated. They can stay focused on a long-term task in order to see results. They are highly productive and love being challenged. (Mind Tools, 2012)

The fourth element is empathy. Empathy is the ability to recognise and understand the feelings and viewpoints of others, even if they are different to your own feelings or viewpoint. Empathetic people can also identify feelings in others when they may not be very obvious. Because of this, those who can empathise can manage relationships, are excellent listeners, don't stereotype or judge and live openly and honestly. (Mind Tools, 2012)

The fifth element is social skills. Those with good social skills are easy to talk to and usually come across as " team players". They will typically help others to succeed before focusing on their own success. They are good at building and maintaining relationships, can manage disputes and are confident communicators. (Mind Tools, 2012)

What the above list describes is a person who can manage their emotions and needs less cognitive strain to deal with personal issues. An individual with high emotional intelligence tends to avoid negative, self destructive

behaviour such as excessive drinking, drug use, smoking and violent interactions with others. (Mayer, JD. Salovey, P. Caruso, D. R 2004).

How to improve your emotional intelligence

It takes more than just understanding the five elements of emotional intelligence to improve yours. Your emotional intelligence is a life long journey that is being developed and improved constantly through practice and encountering new situations, learning to control your emotions better, learning how to identify the emotions and needs of others, while depending on motivation, empathy and social skills to build stable relationships.

(Lauber, D. 2010)

To improve your self-awareness and self-regulation in order to improve your emotional intelligence, the key is to identify the emotion you are feeling and make a choice as to how to deal with the emotion appropriately. (Lauber, D. 2010)

Motivation is an important characteristic of those with high emotional intelligence. It is the individuals want to succeed beyond their expectations. Some people find it hard to keep themselves motivated if they are not interested or passionate about the task at hand. Those with high emotional intelligence work in areas they are passionate about and desire to succeed; they push the boundaries to learn new skills all the time. If you find yourself working in a job that you don't feel passionate about, consider finding the right job. If leaving that job isn't an option for you, find a new hobby or activity that consumes all your interest and passion, one that will make you feel fulfilled. Set out a list of goals and aim to meet them. (Lauber, D. 2010)

Empathy is a very important trait to have, especially for those going into social care. It is the ability to understand people's feelings and seeing things from their point of view. It can be a difficult trait to improve upon. It involves becoming a deep listener to others, reflecting back with others on what they have disclosed, and taking the time to step back and try to understand others perspectives. (Lubar, D. 2010)

Social skills are obtained by having a good grasp of self-awareness, self-regulation and empathy. Improving your social skills could involve being aware of your subconscious communication, ie body language. Some people aren't aware of how much they give away without realising, through their body language, and this can cause problems, as negative body language is easily noticed. Empathy can help you to realise people's boundaries and know what is and what isn't appropriate to say or do.

I think it is clear from the above list that obtaining high emotional intelligence can help individuals have a happier life. I say this because it would be easier for the individual to speak to others, and also understand why people react the way they do to certain things. I can imagine it would be confusing, and perhaps upsetting for someone to not know why someone gets upset or angry over a situation. I can understand now why those with high emotional intelligence can manage relationships better than those with lower emotional intelligence.

The importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace

The term emotional intelligence is a term that is being used more and more frequently within human resource departments. Employers are looking for

employees with high emotional intelligence, seeing it as more important than personality and even IQ.

The difference between emotional intelligence and personality is that personality influences a person's tendencies and behaviours, while emotional intelligence can identify the individual's pattern of thinking and allow them to make appropriate, sound decisions. (ZeroRiskHR. com, 2012, online)

An employee with high emotional intelligence can communicate well with others, can cope with change, can manage their feelings and impulses, can stay calm in stressful situations, have empathy, remain optimistic in the face of adversity and can manage customer complaints.

I was a bit shocked to learn that emotional intelligence was such an important aspect of employment, especially learning that it was more important than IQ and personality. I can understand why it would be important in the workplace, but never thought it was to that extent. If there are people working in a job that requires them to work with other people, I think it is very important they have high emotional intelligence, otherwise people can be left feeling uncomfortable or offended, even by accident.

Conclusion

Having identified the five elements of emotional intelligence, how to improve your emotional intelligence and the importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace, I feel I have gained an insight into its importance in everyday life.

I thought it was particularly interesting to find out that employers look for emotional intelligence over personality, although it does make a lot of sense. I also found it interesting that emotional intelligence is something you can build and develop, it isn't something you are either born with or not. I don't see any harm in people always trying to improve their emotional intelligence, even if they consider themselves as someone with high emotional intelligence.

On reading the online forums on Moodle, I noticed that a lot of the focus was put on empathy, self-regulation and motivation. Not that many seemed to connect self-awareness and social skills to emotional intelligence.

I would have liked to go into the different elements in more detail as I thought it was very interesting that all those little parts of everyday life joins together to make a big chunk of who we are.