

Emotional Intelligence: An Effective Way to Manage Stress

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Emotional intelligence (EI) is the “ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”.¹ Emotional intelligence has a strong impact on stress and psychological health. It facilitates the individuals to adopt effective coping strategies to deal with stress. There exists a significant association between higher EI and decreased stress levels.² Emotional intelligence acts as a stress buffer. It is related to positive life events such as psychological wellbeing, education, and success in the job. Individuals with higher EI show better adaptation with less reaction and fewer mood changes.³ It involves the ability to recognize emotions and feelings in oneself/others, and the use of that information to resolve problems, manage stress, and improve communication.⁴

Emotional intelligence improves job performance by promoting positive relationships, teamwork, and social connections. Various institutions and companies are familiar with the significance of EI and prefer those having high EI at the time of recruitment. It also has a positive relationship with job satisfaction and productivity. Emotionally intelligent individuals have a greater learning ability. It is a predictor of success in the job because individuals with higher EI can handle stressful situations of increased pressure, have effective communication skills, and self-control. Emotional intelligence promotes positive feelings and emotions which in turn increase optimism, motivation, innovation, and problem resolution at the workplace.⁵

The knowledge about the notion of emotional intelligence and coping with stress is essential as it strongly affects the growth and development of a person. It makes a person capable to understand his own emotions & feelings and helps him to act according to the situation.⁶ The person can control the negative emotions such as anxiety, low self-esteem &

anger and replace them with positive emotions of empathy, confidence, and friendship.⁷ It is difficult for persons with low EI to cope with stress-related issues and have aggressive behavior, conflicts, and poor compatibility.⁸ Stress coping ability of a person depends on different factors like empathy, self-monitoring, and emotional competence.⁶

The concept of emotional intelligence became evident in the 1990s as a set of abilities comparable to general intelligence. It has several distinct forms. Ability EI measures the theoretical understanding of emotions and emotional functioning of an individual. Trait EI determines the response of an individual in different stress situations. Mixed model EI consists of personality as well as behavioral items. It measures traits, social skills, and competencies.⁹ The model of emotional intelligence consists of four components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skill. Self-awareness is the awareness of one’s own emotions. Self-management deals with the management of one’s emotional responses to different circumstances. Social awareness is the capability to recognize other people’s emotions. Social skills consist of using the awareness of one’s and other’s emotions in the successful management of social interactions. A person with high emotional intelligence can manage stress effectively through effective coping strategies making him more resilient.¹⁰ It covers both intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional capabilities of an individual and is associated with mental wellbeing.⁵

Burnout syndrome occurs due to occupational stress for a long time affecting many healthcare professionals worldwide. It greatly influences their quality of life and the services they provide. It can be dealt with emotional management. Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in emotional management.¹¹ The training of physicians on the EI skills can protect them from burnout and maintain their wellbeing.¹² Literature has shown that educational training had improved the EI skills in students, doctors, and employees.¹⁰ There is a significant impact of EI training in groups on the recognition of emotions and their management. It also has a positive effect on health, psychological wellbeing, relationships, and employability. It plays a

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key role in effective performance & stress management and can be improved through training.⁵

Emotional intelligence has been emphasized as an important academic and practical construct. Developing skills of emotional intelligence is an essential but neglected parameter that needs to be focused on while designing medical education programs or workshops. The public, as well as private sectors, are emphasizing research on EI nowadays. It has significant importance in increasing the employee's happiness, productivity, satisfaction, efficiency, commitment, and interaction with other employees.⁴ Ability to cope with stress successfully is the foundation of mental health. An individual with high EI gives a better emotional response even in extremely stressful circumstances. Emotional intelligence helps the individual to cope with stress and thus contributing to a healthy life.⁵

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