

## **Educating the Heart – Emotional Intelligence**

You will be familiar with the term IQ or intelligence quotient, which is a measure of your intellectual ability. Are you also familiar with EQ or EI? This term refers to emotional intelligence, and your ability to recognize and understand your emotions, and to realize how your emotions affect you and the people around you. Emotional intelligence also involves your perception of others. Understanding how you feel allows you to manage relationships more effectively. People with high emotional intelligence are very self-aware and acknowledge their feelings, but don't let their feelings rule them. They can control and handle their frustration, anger, sorrow, joy, annoyance and other emotions. They are usually motivated, and willing to defer immediate results for long-term success. They show a high degree of empathy, and have the ability to identify with and understand the wants, needs, and viewpoints of others. As well, they have good social skills, are easy to talk to, are strong team players and they encourage success in others. In short, they are the kind of people we love to have in our personal and work lives.

Is emotional intelligence a new concept? Not really. A quote from Aristotle, (384-322 B.C.E) states his belief that "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all". So, can these abilities be learned? Fortunately, the answer appears to be "yes". Although emotional intelligence is likely part of your nature, it can also be learned, nurtured and practiced.

Why would this be important? In addition to the benefit such skills would have on our day- to-day relationships, they are also of key importance in the workplace. A leading researcher in this field stated that success in the workplace has more to do with EI than IQ (Goleman, D. Working with Emotional Intelligence 2006). He summarized desired traits for entry-level workers as: listening and oral communication, adaptability, personal management, team player, effective worker, and competent at reading and writing. Only this latter was academic. Goleman found that "76 percent of the abilities thought to distinguish best performers were emotional competencies. This held true across all categories of jobs, and in all kinds of organizations in what set the stars apart from the average." These skills became of even greater importance in upper management positions.

Emotional intelligence skills can and should be taught in our schools. A student's ability to focus and learn at school is greatly impacted by his or her emotional state. A student who is able to cope with emotions is better able to learn. A student who develops empathy will find less need to bully. For adults as well, emotional intelligence can be taught and developed. Many books and tests are available to help you determine your current EI, and identify where you may need to do some work. You will find that increasing and honing your emotional intelligence will benefit not only you, but your community as well.

*This article was written by Janet Fowler, Open Mind Group member and retired Public Health Nurse. The "Open Mind" column is sponsored by individuals and organizations concerned with mental health issues in rural Wellington and Dufferin counties. Contact Canadian Mental Health Association at 519-766-4450 ext. 231 or [parkinsons@cmhagrb.on.ca](mailto:parkinsons@cmhagrb.on.ca). For access to all Open Mind columns and local mental health resources/ information, visit [www.cmhagrb.on.ca](http://www.cmhagrb.on.ca) or [www.communitytorchlight.com](http://www.communitytorchlight.com)*