Emotional Intelligence

Introduction

Dealing with the topic of emotions at the office can be awkward and difficult. Many organizations have come far in their efforts to recognize, understand and embrace the role and impact of emotions on work and in the workplace. By their nature humanitarian environments are emotionally fraught. Aid agencies, aid workers and coordinators in humanitarian environments can’t succeed over time without understanding the role emotions play in professional environments and how to manage them.

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to assess and manage one’s emotions, and the emotions of others. Emotional Intelligence requires acute observation of and sensitivity to emotions. It underpins the communications, meetings management and negotiation skillsets in this toolkit. Coordinators can and should learn to develop their emotional intelligence.

Defining Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to recognize and manage emotions. That requires the following:

- **Identifying** our emotions and those of others
- **Expressing** our emotions in appropriate ways, and helping others to do the same
- **Understanding** our emotions and those of others
- **Controlling** our emotions and responding to the emotions of others
- **Using** our emotions and applying these four skills in the workplace

Many people do some or all of things. Many don’t.

Emotions are mental reactions to an action or event experienced as strong feelings. Emotional “reactions” are physiological and behavioral changes. They are essential bodily functions.

Anger, fear, sadness, surprise, joy and disgust are the six basic emotions. They all have triggers and responses. There are also requirements to meet to address emotional reactions. The diagrams on the following page provide capture these processes.

Emotions and reactions to them don’t manifest in the same way for all people. However, whatever the emotional response, it precedes our mental evaluation.

![Diagram of Emotional Response Process]

When we don’t handle our emotions, our behaviours in reaction to them may not be appropriate or proportional.

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1 Adapted from “Emotional Intelligence Fundamentals,” provided to UNHCR Learn and Connect through the Cegos Group.
Developing Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is not just an intellectual concept. Emotional Intelligence is a tool. Used properly it gives coordinators an advantage. When approaching problems with emotional intelligence, once can more readily adapt, and thus ensure a wider range of success.

In developing emotional intelligence, a coordinator must connect with his emotions and the emotions of those he coordinates for and with. Healthy social interaction benefits the coordinator and the coordination environment. Below are some steps for developing personal and interpersonal emotional intelligence.

Appraisal and Expression of Emotion

In Self:

The most important step in developing emotional intelligence is identifying the specific emotions. When one has a feeling, it is important to attribute value to that feeling. For instance, if one feels a pang of sadness, she should recognize and label that emotion rather than ignoring or looking for a distraction from it. This might seem intuitive, but consciously studying your emotions can have long-lasting benefits.

After identifying the emotion, the next step is expression. There are both verbal and non-verbal ways of expressing emotions. One could say out loud the type of emotion he is feeling, state it to himself or have a conversation with someone about it. Speaking about emotions with others can be difficult, but it is essential to building emotional intelligence.

In Others:

Identifying emotions in others can ensure smoother interpersonal relationships. The central pillar of Emotional Intelligence is empathy in the presence of others. To practice empathizing, or identifying with the emotions in others, coordinators apply to others the same rules for understanding emotions that they apply to themselves.

First, identify what another person might be feeling in a given situation. To do that, imagine how you would feel in that given scenario. Using this role reversal helps a coordinator understand the other’s emotion. The second step is to use that information to respond appropriately.

This type of interaction can greatly enhance efforts of a coordination group by improving understanding among members, leading to increased satisfaction in the work place and lowering stress in the humanitarian environment.

Regulation of Emotion

We experience a number of emotions every day. We have little control over some but others can be subdued or accentuated using particular practices. For example, when we participate
in a positive activity, our bodies automatically experience positive emotions. The activity causes the emotion. Identifying activities to use as tools to pull oneself out of a negative mood or support a positive mood is an effective, relatively simply way to regulate emotions. Another way is to augment frames of thought. Negatives mood can cause long-lasting damage to a person’s emotional well-being. One can acknowledge the emotion but manipulate the point of view that caused it, reframing a problem as painful but transient. By changing the outlook, one can develop a new outlook on the situation and stimulate a positive mood.²

Applying Emotional Intelligence

The “Team member: 4 dimensions” figure outlines four main aspects of Emotional Intelligence.³ The top two relate to “self” and the bottom two aspects relate to others:

1. **Self-awareness**: the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions.

2. **Self-management**: involves controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances.

3. **Social awareness**: the ability to sense, understand, and react to others' emotions while comprehending social networks.

4. **Relationship management**: the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others, while managing tensions and sources of conflict.

Though we work with coordination of systems, those systems are composed of people. Developing Emotional Intelligence can have far reaching benefits on the way coordination systems work.

Applying emotional intelligence begins with the self. If we are not able to recognize and regulate our own emotions, translating these skills to the coordination group is impossible. The two “Personal Dimensions” above speak to this.

When we can take into consideration our emotions and the emotions of the group, then separate individuals can function much more efficiently as a unit. If each member of the working group has in mind, the emotions and attitudes of the other members, and is able to communicate them, achieving common goals and strategies become significantly easier. By, applying these “social dimensions,” emotional intelligence serves as lubricant for overall system coordination.

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³ The figure was prepared for the IASC/UNHCR Emergency Team Leadership Programme (ETLP) by Interworks, USA. It is based on is based on ‘Goleman’s model’.
Conclusion

Coordination requires intense inter-personal engagement in volatile, high-stress environments. Recognizing and managing emotions is essential to professional success and personal stability. Emotional Intelligence can help. This brief introduction provides elementary concepts but interested coordinators will find plenty of resource material on the subject in addition to the few sources provided below.

Reference Materials

-(Myers Briggs Personality Test)
jw2f2hBRCdg76qqNXfkCsSJABYAycPVBtQ6d4oAaKyhWogxpYJgQPiGE7SIKJQEWJ74
tPf-RoCbunu_wcb
-(Emotional Intelligence Maps)
http://www.essystems.com/services/eq_map/
-Care Academy Participant Guide Competency-Based People Management Program: Emotional Intelligence
http://www.eiconsortium.org/
-(Depaul University Emotional Intelligence Manual)