Emotional Intelligence - Building Stronger, More Peaceful Connections

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Guest: David Lowry, Don Drew

Resources

David Lowry: 0:30

Hello everyone and welcome to Peaceful Life Radio. I'm David Lowry along with my good friend Don Drew. How are ya?

Don Drew: 0:36

Doing good, David.

David Lowry: 0:38

Today's gonna be a great show. It's on emotional intelligence.

Don Drew: 0:44

Well, good. Our topic today is about the concept typically called, as David said, emotional intelligence, and our goal is to better understand what it is, how it can impact our lives, how can we acquire greater levels of emotional intelligence and how doing so can enhance our ability to find more peace in our relationships.

David Lowry: 1:03

Don, this is going to be a great show, but I want to remind our listeners to download our program, share it with others, subscribe to it, do all of those good things, because that'll help our program so much.

Don Drew: 1:15

Emotional intelligence, otherwise known as EQ for emotional quotient, is all about understanding and managing emotions, both your own and other people's. It's a set of skills that helps you navigate the complex world of feelings. Some key aspects of emotional intelligence are increased self-awareness, enhanced self-regulation, using emotions to achieve our goals, sometimes referred to as motivation, finding greater levels of empathy, and developing more effective social skills. Note that the first two are internal, or self-focused, the last two are others-focused, and the middle one motivation bridges self and others. Let's consider a manager with low emotional intelligence. We'll call him Sean. Sean is a mid level manager who constantly yells at his team members when they make mistakes. This shows a lack of self-regulation, as Sean isn't managing

his anger in a constructive way. He takes all criticism personally and becomes defensive, indicating a lack of self-awareness. This means Sean isn't open to feedback that could help him improve. Sean doesn't recognize the stress his behavior, in this case his yelling, is causing his team. He demonstrates a lack of empathy by not considering the emotional impact of his actions on others. And Sean's blaming his team for project failures and taking no responsibility for his own shortcomings reflects poor social skills, as Sean is actively hindering a collaborative work environment. Sean also struggles to communicate effectively with his team and colleagues, negatively impacting his ability to build strong relationships and navigate conflict. Now we've probably all come across managers or people at some point in our careers that exhibit at least some of these aspects, and it always hurts them in their relationships and their team performance. In this case, Sean's behavior likely creates a tense and unproductive work environment. By developing his emotional intelligence, Sean could become a more effective leader, and create a more positive work environment for everyone.

David Lowry: 3:14

I've worked for Sean's, and I'm sure you have too, and maybe I have been Sean at one time or another.

Don Drew: 3:21

Good point. Increased self-awareness allows us to better understand our own emotions, how they affect us, and our emotional strengths and weaknesses. Self-regulation is managing your emotions in healthy ways so they don't control you. Motivation is using your emotions to achieve your goals. Empathy is understanding and sharing the feelings of others. And last, social skill is communicating effectively, building relationships, and resolving conflict.

David Lowry: 3:49

Don, we've talked that people who display high levels of emotional intelligence are really good at reacting to others and communicating and managing stress and diffusing conflict. But it's something that develops over the years too, right?

Don Drew: 4:03

If emotional intelligence was something that just naturally developed in its fullness, all the various aspects, both the internal self and the external others focus, then all of us would have probably developed a pretty decent level of emotional intelligence just as a byproduct of growing up. But I think what happens to us in our growing up years, can hinder the development of emotional intelligence, self-awareness, things of that nature. It's not a level playing field necessarily by the time we're young adults. Now, many of us, because of our experiences and so on, will learn how to get better at managing our emotions and being aware of the emotions of others. But we all know people like Sean,

the example I gave, who don't seem to be able to manage their emotions very well at all. So, it's not just a natural process. I think it actually takes effort and work to grow and expand and improve. It's not that you don't have any emotional intelligence, it's just that emotional intelligence is somewhat flexible and it can be grown, can be learned. Your question to me was how have I developed it over time? Well, I can tell you that at times I display amazingly low levels of emotional intelligence. I am embarrassed to say that, but it's true. It's me being real about myself. And I would say that statement in and of itself demonstrates a certain level of emotional intelligence to be aware that I know that I don't always exhibit it well. My wife, Christy, did a TED talk a few years ago in which she talked about Catch Yourself Catching Yourself and it's related to that. It's the idea of being self-aware to recognize when you're not being self-aware. I think that comes partially from my upbringing, but also comes from years of professional experience and a lot of mistakes.

David Lowry: 5:42

Don, I've noticed that people who have a high EQ, or emotional quotient, have, good, abilities to communicate clearly. They relate well with others. They're motivating, both for themselves and for others. They're very good at managing stress. And, of course, what this program is all about, defusing conflict. So, it's important for success in all areas of your life and your personal relationships, even your career. And as you know, these are great people to be around. Wouldn't it be great if we could all be around an emotionally intelligent person? Don, why haven't we heard more about this?

Don Drew: 6:21

It's a relatively new concept in the world of social science and psychology. Its development has been a collaborative effort. Peter Salovey and John Mayer coined the term emotional intelligence in their 1990 article entitled, Emotional Intelligence, in the journal Imagination, Cognition, and Personality. Their work focused on the role of emotions in social intelligence, but Daniel Goleman is largely responsible for popularizing the concept. He brought EQ into the mainstream in his 1995 bestseller, Emotional Intelligence, Why It Can Matter More Than IQ. Goleman presented complex research on emotional intelligence in a clear and understandable way, making it relatable to a broad audience.

David Lowry: 7:05

One question our listeners might have is how can I know if I have emotional intelligence.

Don Drew: 7:11

That's a good question, David. Why don't you give us a few examples?

David Lowry: 7:14

I do know that it's something that you have to spend a lifetime acquiring and that most of us don't start off with it. Let's start with the notion of self-awareness. If you're self-aware, you can identify your emotions as they arise, and you can understand how they affect your thoughts and your behaviors, and so you're able to recognize your strengths and weaknesses emotionally, and you're open to feedback about your emotional responses. Next is what we call self-regulation. That's where you manage your emotions in healthy ways, even in challenging situations. We don't want to let our emotions control us, right? You have the ability to bounce back from setbacks and maintain a positive outlook. Then, of course, there's empathy. You can understand and share the feelings of others and you can see things from others perspectives. And this means that you're a good listener and you can validate the emotions of others. You also have strong social skills. That means you can have effective communication, both verbally and non verbally, you can build and maintain positive relationships with others, and you manage conflict effectively when it's necessary. So, emotional intelligence is a skill set and it's like any other skill. It can be developed over time. It's not about being perfect but it's about being aware of your emotions and using them to your advantage. To better understand, let's go back to a concept more of our listeners are probably familiar with, which is the IQ, or Intelligent Quotient. A higher score suggests a greater ability to learn and reason quickly. So we know about, IQ, or intelligence. But can IQ change? Well, there's some debate on how much it can change. The brain is most receptive to development in early childhood, so experiences like education and enriched environments and mental stimulation positively influences our cognitive skills during this time. But, there is good solid evidence to suggest that once the brain matures, It becomes a little less flexible. So, while some improvement is possible through training and practice on specific skills measured by these IQ tests, we find that significant increases are usually uncommon in adulthood. Emotional intelligence possesses some of the same development processes as IQ, especially in early childhood. But it appears that unlike IQ, EQ can be further developed well into advanced developmental stages, and that's the good news for all of us. So there are ways to improve your emotional intelligence and you can start by noticing your emotions as they arise, instead of simply accepting your negative emotions as inevitable. One positive action is to journal your experiences so that you can evaluate the effect of your emotional response. Journaling demands greater levels of mindfulness and awareness, and writing down your experiences allows you to meditate on the experience and develop strategies for more effective future encounters. It's also important to identify those triggers that result in unfiltered emotional responses because, the more you know your triggers, the better you can manage or avoid them.

Don Drew: 10:36

Once you understand your own emotions, you can develop healthy ways to manage them. When faced with uncomfortable emotions or situations, you might try relaxation techniques like like deep breathing. Sometimes the best emotional response is no immediate response. Years ago I a habit of writing an immediate response to any email I found irritating or that brought out negative emotions in me. Then I would wait 24 hours

before rereading the original email, unsent. Then, I would wait 24 hours before re reading the original email again and my drafted response. Inevitably, I would find things in the original email that I missed because I had been emotionally charged when I read it and wrote the response. So, I could then re write my response with the emotion removed. This one practice has saved me a lot of pain and trouble in my professional life. David, one of your EQ strengths that is obvious to me is your talent for showing empathy. Can you tell us more about that?

David Lowry: 11:31

I think it's really important to pay attention to verbal and nonverbal clues. You can understand people better and how they're feeling if you do that. Whenever possible I try to validate the emotions that I see in others. And I also try to see things from their perspective. But to do this, you have to be willing to listen, actively listen, and, that means that you want to hear not only what people are saying, but you ask clarifying questions, avoid interrupting, and seek feedback.

Don Drew: 12:01

Yeah, emotional intelligent person actively seeks feedback, positive and negative. Try asking trusted friends, family, or colleagues for honest feedback on your emotional intelligence and resulting behaviors. This can give you valuable insight into areas for improvement. You have a very high sense of awareness of where others are at. I know that when I express frustration or something like that, you never tell me how that thinking is wrong or anything. Instead, you start off empathizing with it. Where do you think that comes from?

David Lowry: 12:33

I think it comes from having lived it myself. When we all are honest about the things that we feel inside, we all know what it feels like to feel frustrated. We all know what it feels like to feel misunderstood. I think all of us know what it feels like to feel like we're not enough. If we can recognize those feelings in ourself and how it makes us feel when we have it, then we have the basis of recognizing in others as well, Don. And one of the things that has happened to me over the years is I feel a kinship with people who express their frustrations because I felt that way. But I've also learned that we all need a bit of hope, right? It's one thing to feel frustrated. It's another thing to be without hope. So, the emotional intelligence piece of it for me would be to empathize with the person who needs the empathy and understand and feed that back to them, but always leave hope as well. Not this phony baloney type of hope, but the idea that things do get better. I've been in really desperate situations in my life, but they didn't stay that way for ever. But at the time I didn't know how I was going to get out of it, if it would change, or when it would change. But it did change. And if our own experience teaches that good times don't last forever, and the bad times don't last forever. That's emotional intelligence too.

Don Drew: 14:00

These are all good suggestions, but how can having greater emotional intelligence help our listeners find more peace in their life?

David Lowry: 14:06

Emotional intelligence, or EQ, can be a powerful tool for helping you find more peace by helping you manage stress, navigate difficult situations, and build stronger relationships. When you're self-aware, you can recognize emotions like anger, anxiety, or frustration as they arise. This allows you to take steps to calm yourself down before they spiral out of control. Emotional regulation techniques like deep breathing or mindfulness can help you further manage stress in healthy ways and promote a sense of calm. EQ allows you to understand the perspectives of others and communicate effectively. You can approach disagreements with empathy and find solutions that work for everyone involved, resulting in less conflict, negativity, and more peace in your life. When you understand and respond to the emotions of others, you build stronger, more trusting relationships, leading to a greater sense of connection and belonging, which are essential for overall well being and peace of mind. As you become more aware of your strengths and weaknesses, you can start to accept yourself for who you are. This self acceptance can lead to greater self-esteem and a more peaceful inner state.

Don Drew: 15:22

I think we also need to point out that stronger emotional intelligence can lead to better decision making since emotions can cloud our judgment so that we can make choices based on reason and logic rather than being ruled by impulsive reactions. But maybe the best of what EQ does for our peace is it results in increased resilience. Life throws a lot of curveballs. When you're emotionally intelligent, you're better equipped to handle challenges and setbacks. You can bounce back from difficult situations with more grace and find peace in the chaos. Overall, emotional intelligence empowers us to take charge of our emotional landscape. By understanding and managing your emotions effectively, you can create a more peaceful and fulfilling life for yourself.

David Lowry: 16:04

Don, this program is predicated on the idea that all of us can grow. To learn more, helps you be more. And, as we've studied things on this program about peacemaking, peaceful assertiveness, adult intelligence, and all of these areas we talk about on this show, when you know to do better, you can do better. Sometimes it's getting the knowledge you need, listen to a podcast here or there, read a book here or there, and if you're willing to have a cumulative effect over time you might be amazed at how emotionally intelligent you get over in a few years. It can really build up quickly. Another thing I'd like to bounce this off of you. You can't be everybody's hero.

Don Drew: 16:46

Mmm. Yeah, I've tried that. It doesn't work too well.

David Lowry: 16:50

I have too, and one of the ways I fail the EQ test at times is there's just something in me that wants to be pleasing to other people. People pleasers, many times, aren't emotionally intelligent. In fact, if anything, they might be a bit manipulative because they want you to like them, right? And so instead of telling you straight up what they're thinking or feeling, they shade it or try to match it to something that you might find more pleasing and everything. But I'm working on that.

Don Drew: 17:17

So, I could give you the professorly, scientific response to that, but I'll give you my very personal response. I'm a doer. I don't think of myself terribly much as a people pleaser. I'm pretty good at self-management, self-regulation, and others management. I am heavily invested in the success of the program or whatever it is I'm working on. And I expect everybody else to be there too. What I'm trying to get done is important. I'm emotionally invested in it. I am mentally invested in it. I think its critical and important and valuable. Why don't you? I can see how that came through my father, probably, my upbringing, because that's the way he was. But I am aware of it, but one of the side effects of that is a weakness in my emotional intelligence. Empathy is probably one of my weaker points, which is one of the reasons why I admire it so much in you.

David Lowry: 18:05

You've hit something that is this little fact, your strength is also your weakness. If you're a humorous person, most people enjoy being around a person with a good sense of humor, but if that person is humorous in a situation that doesn't call for it, it's not appreciated at all. Sometimes we need gravitas. Or we need people to behave seriously. Task orientation is a wonderful trait. But if we're not careful, it could be a damaging trait.

Don Drew: 18:34

You bring up a great point. People who are closer to my age are going to remember the TV series Mash and it was very humorous, very funny in a very dark way. They're in a military hospital in Korea during the Korean war. People are dying all around them. The surgeons and the nurses all have blood on them and yet they're cracking jokes and making fun. They are trying to manage what is a really bad situation using humor to do that. And I learned when I went to work at a hospital just off the emergency room in Parkland Hospital in Dallas, and that's where John F. Kennedy was taken when he was shot. I saw a lot of really bad things come through there. And we did the exact same thing. We joked, we were always making fun of things. We were trying to take that

emotional load off of ourselves and create an atmosphere where we could emotionally deal with that.

David Lowry: 19:23

Context is important. You knew that you couldn't go out of that situation and meet the person who was waiting to hear about their loved one and be that way. Absolutely. Part of EQ is knowing context.

Don Drew: 19:37

Recently I used a term that I grew up with. I'm not going to share with what it was, but I used a term and it was just my wife and I talking and she pointed out to me what that term meant and how inappropriate it was. And it had never occurred I'd used it and I hadn't used it in years, but she said, you don't need to be saying that. And I immediately recognized she was right and I haven't done it since. So, it increased my self-awareness to say I am now more aware of the words that I use. And now I'm also more aware of my responsibility to manage that in myself. To me that is a form of emotional intelligence.

David Lowry: 20:17

Don, there's this attitude that some people have is like, Hey, that's who I am. I'm going to say what's on my mind. I don't care. That's not emotional intelligence.

Don Drew: 20:26

What it is to som e small extent is they are self-aware about who they are and so forth. They're missing half the equation. Emotional intelligence is both self and others. High levels of emotional intelligence require both of those areas.

David Lowry: 20:40

We can be ourselves, but we don't have to be ourselves at other people's expense.

Don Drew: 20:45

At the end of the day, having a peaceful life at least in, in the universe in which we're talking today is important to recognize there are two parts to it. We talk a lot about the self part, and we do talk about a lot of the relationship from the self to others, but having a peaceful life really demands that we be at peace with ourselves and find ways to be at peace with others. And there is a direct relationship between emotional intelligence, I think, and finding peace in your life and in your relationships.

David Lowry: 21:15

You and I have talked about there's you, there's me, and there's our relationship. It's not enough for me just to advocate for myself and it's not enough for me just to advocate for you. But the common ground is our relationship. I shouldn't expect you to believe everything that I believe, but our relationship can be a negotiated place where it's safe for both of us to be and to hang out. In other words, we find a negotiated place where we can enjoy each other's company, what we have to offer and share because we're so much more than just those points of view.

Don Drew: 21:47

In today's episode, we've explored the concept of emotional intelligence. We discovered that emotional intelligence could actually be developed even into adulthood. We found that by learning how to better manage ourself, our own emotions, be aware of those emotions and then manage them and also how to be aware of the emotions of others to identify times when empathy can really serve us well in our relationships and to express ourselves in effective ways in our relationships. All of this is helpful to us finding peace in our lives and being peacemakers.

David Lowry: 22:20

Well, as you go about your week this week, I encourage you to be more mindful of emotional intelligence-- both in yourself, and of course, in others. Try implementing some of the ideas that we've talked about today. And if you found this episode helpful, please share it with someone who might benefit. And please don't forget to subscribe to Peaceful Life Radio for more practical strategies on conflict resolution and fostering emotional intelligence. Until next time, this is David Lowry and Don Drew reminding you that peace begins with each one of us. So, take care and join us again next week.