

Emotional Intelligence – Know Thyself

By Officer Shelly Hamel, WSCJTC Instructor
Session Materials

When police recruits begin the Academy on day one they are asked to list words that they feel describe an outstanding police officer. Although each class is a different 30 people with varied backgrounds, age, and experience their list is often the same. Integrity, motivated, confident, service oriented, leadership, honesty, to name a few, consistently emerge. Few could argue that these traits are not crucial components of a successful police officer and leader, but where does a person acquire these traits? Are you born with them or can they be learned? The answer is both.

In 1990 psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer presented the theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI.) EI was popularized in 1995 in a book with the same title by Daniel Goleman. EI is the ability to interpret, understand, and manage one's own, and others' emotions. Daniel Goleman's research has shown that the most effective leaders have a high degree of EI. He states, "Although a person's IQ is important, without EI, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won't make a great leader.

In Goleman's work EI includes two competencies:

Personal Competencies

- Self-Awareness – The ability to recognize your moods, emotions and drives.
- Self-Regulation – The ability to recognize your emotions and control your impulses. Ability to think before you act. Ability to manage one's stress.
- Motivation – The ability to stay optimistic. Having a strong drive to achieve. Having a passion for the work that goes beyond money or status.

Social Competencies

- Conflict management – The ability to listen and incorporate others opinions. The ability to see both sides. The ability to come to reasonable conclusions.
- Empathy – Possesses an understanding of emotional makeup of others. Is able to provide service to clients or customers.
- Social skills – The ability to be persuasive. The ability to find common ground and build rapport. Effective in leading change and building networks.

How do we "learn" EI?

Goleman's research explains that emotions like fear or anger along with emotional responses emerge from the limbic system of the brain. Goleman calls this the "primal brain" and explains that we often unknowingly act habitually in response to primal emotions. Journaling is one technique to improve your EI. Journaling requires habitual self reflection. It involves reflecting on events and writing down your ideas and learning issues, with accurate self assessments of why you reacted or "felt" the way you did.

Even though you may not be sold on the idea of journaling, compare the journaling process for improving EI to a process that already exists in policing, debriefing. Take an incident that requires a SWAT response or a warrant service that requires preparation.



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The team assesses the situation. They discuss and list learning issues (what they need to know about the location, suspect, etc.) then they formulate an action plan. After the incident they evaluate the tactics and discuss the positive and negative outcomes. Each team member is able to reflect and learn from each incident. This same process is used in journaling to develop and improve your EI.

Everyone can think of someone in their organization past or present that they would describe as smart, graduates of well- known colleges who possesses countless degrees. Yet they are an ineffective leader or they have been fired due to an event directly related to human emotions. There is no doubt this person has a high IQ but IQ is not all there is, without EI true intelligence is in question.

References:

Goleman, Daniel: "What Makes a Leader" Harvard Business Review (Nov-Dec 1998)

Saville, Gregory: "Conquering the Hidden Dragon - Emotional Intelligence in the 21st Century Policing" Police Chief Magazine (Nov 2006)

