

Emotional Intelligence in Medical Education

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Emotional Intelligence is “the ability to understand and manage your emotions, as well as recognize and influence the emotions of those around you.”

This concept has been linked to success in business, in the classroom, and is now a concept being implemented in medical education curricula as data support that EI can be a factor in improved academic performance in undergraduate medical students as well as prevention of burnout. Emotional intelligence in medicine is linked to empathy not only for patients but for navigating challenges, prevention of burnout and effective integration in multidisciplinary teams.

The four components of EI include:

Self awareness: the ability to recognize your emotions, strength and weaknesses, and how they affect others around you.

Self management: the ability to maintain a positive outlook despite challenges or hurdles, based on management of your own emotions and expectations; less “reactive” responses and more based in reflection

Social Awareness: recognizing others’ emotions and how this influences the environment (whether in the classroom, on rounds, or in the office); this is related to empathy, and is considered one of the most important leadership skills.

Relationship management: the ability to impact others and prioritize respect, whether in mentoring, teaching or team interactions.

Harvard Business School offers the following tips on how to build on your Emotional Intelligence Skills:

- **Journaling**
- **Seeking feedback from colleagues**
- **Practicing active listening, including minimizing distractions and attention to nonverbal cues**
- **Reflect on your own emotions**

It is now also increasingly recognized that skills of EI required differ at stages of learning or career and that a continuing process of reengagement is required.

Emotional intelligence (EI) can be a key factor in effective teaching, as it can help create a supportive and engaging learning environment for learners, peers and colleagues., and has been shown to improve student performance. It can also foster greater well-being for educators, and serve to prevent burnout.

How to Implement Emotional Intelligence in Teaching:

Build a sense of safety: Create a safe and accepting environment for learners with clear expectations, a consistent routine and a focus on inclusion.

Foster emotional expression: Encourage group discussion, role playing and feedback to encourage students to express their feelings in a setting of mutual respect.

Modeling EI: Model vulnerability, empathy, emotional regulation. Soliciting (in addition to providing) feedback in a leadership/educational role can promote emotional intelligence.

Further reading/listening:

Roth, Christine, et al. Twelve tips for the introduction of emotional intelligence in medical education. Medical Teacher 2018.

Harvard Edcast. Why Emotional Intelligence Matters for Educators.

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/edcast>

Wijekoon, Chandrani Nirmala et al. Emotional intelligence and academic performance of medical undergraduates. BMC Med Educ. 2017.