**EQ During C-19**

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I was an arrogant teenager when I first heard the term “emotional intelligence.” The concept was first developed by psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, and many who bought into the idea posited that EQ (Emotional Quotient) was more important in life than having a high IQ (Intelligence Quotient). I thought it was just an excuse made by people who weren’t very smart. I think it’s safe to assume that my teenage self could have benefited from emotional intelligence training.

Fast forward to today, and most of us are much more aware of the benefits of exercising emotional intelligence: better relationships (personally and professionally), increased wellbeing, a greater sense of purpose, and better problem-solving in all areas of life. It has also been reported that people with a high EQ earn more than those with lower EQ scores.

*Whether you realize it or not, the entire world just got a pop quiz on emotional intelligence … enter, Covid-19.*

Self-isolation, the threat of illness and death, fear and grief all came to the front door, forcing us into greater self-awareness, self-control, empathy for others and managing our interpersonal relationships.

**Here are just a few of the ways we’ve been challenged:**

1. **Emotional awareness and expression:** For some of us, this may be the first time we have been unable to sweep emotions under the rug. We have had to identify and understand how we feel and learn how to share our feelings with quarantine mates to make the close quarters more harmonious.

2. **Interpersonal relationships:** In addition to understanding and expressing our feelings and needs, we are also called upon to understand those in isolation with us, as we recognize that each of us grieves and manages stress differently.

3. **Empathy:** Beyond self-preservation, we self-isolate because we are keenly aware of what first responders, essential workers and those on the frontlines must be going through, and how we might feel in those same situations.

4. **Social responsibility:** We wear masks, volunteer (as we are able), and give to charities if possible, all because we want to contribute to the greater good and be a part of the solution.

5. **Flexibility:** More than just becoming *externally* adaptable to change (e.g. our working environment), we’ve had to scan our *internal* emotions and decide which ones are helpful and which are not, and learn how we can adjust our inner dialogue for the wellbeing of ourselves and others.

6. **Stress tolerance**: Many of us went into this with very different perceptions as to what we could, and could not, handle. Some found this more challenging than anticipated, while others are amazed at their own resilience. Like stress on a vine makes for better wine, developing our stress resilience has been a springboard to personal growth for many of us.

7.  **Problem-solving:** Show of hands, who has had to tap into the wellspring of their creativity to figure out how to manage remote working, homeschooling, grocery shopping at a distance and/or socially connecting in very active ways (e.g. family game nights over video chats and virtual art classes) while staying 6-10’ apart?

8. **Optimism:** It’s difficult to be optimistic in the face of extreme adversity, but we’ve been managing to look for silver linings, express gratitude for what we DO have, and see the light at the end of the tunnel. Once again, this is a testament to our remarkable resilience.

9. **Self-actualization:** For many, this became a time of personal growth and for assessing what is most important to us in life (and, by contrast, what isn’t).

A few months ago, it would have pained me to only have nine items vs. ten on my list (another lesson in flexibility). But there you have it, nine ways we’ve all bolstered our emotional intelligence these few of months … Congratulations, classmates. I think we’ve all passed.