Are You (Emotionally) Smarter Than a 5th Grader?

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 14, 2018
SESSION 10 - 1:45 - 2:30
ROOM 322
Your Presenter: Megan Lowe

* Director of the Library/Associate Professor, University of Louisiana at Monroe
* Transitioned from Reference/Instruction into Administration/Management
* Co-authored a non-fiction, research-based book with Lindsey Reno from UNO on the emotional dimensions of librarianship (*Examining the Emotional Dimensions of Academic Librarianship*)
* Started researching/publishing on emotions, emotional intelligence, and emotions in the workplace after a particularly difficult deselection project (which yielded other publications)
* NOT an actual fan of the television show “Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?”
* (Am an actual fan of forensics shows AKA murder-y shows)
* Not as much of a redneck as Jeff Foxworthy
A Context for This Discussion: Soft Skills

- Communication – oral, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening
- Courtesy – manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, says please and thank you, respectful
- Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable
- Integrity – honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what’s right
- Interpersonal Skills – nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic
- Positive Attitude – optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident
- Professionalism – businesslike, well-dressed, appearance, polished
- Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense
- Teamwork – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative
- Work Ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance

Figure 1. Ten soft skill attributes categorized from executive listings

Adapted from Robles (2012)
Another Context for This Discussion: Workplace Civility (or *Incivility*)

{AKA Workplace Bullying}

While the discussion of workplace civility/incivility/bullying is beyond the scope of this presentation, it is important to understand that (1) workplace incivility/bullying often takes the shape of emotional, verbal, psychological, or sexual abuse (not necessarily physical); (2) workplace incivility/bullying can have an affect on witnesses of the behavior, NOT just the victims; and (3) workplace bullies tend to exhibit low emotional intelligence – conversely, emotional intelligence is often cited as a means of dealing with workplace bullies.

Statistics and facts

- 1:5 workers bullied each week
- 2.5mil experienced workplace harassment
- 50% are bystanders, witness bullying
- 22% resigned rather than reporting
- 25% bullied in previous 6 months
- 74% bullied at some time in the workplace

Adapted from Chadwick (2013)
FIRST QUESTION (aka pre-test)

Emotional intelligence is a measure of a person’s:

A. Level of emotional-ness

B. Ability to recognize and manage emotions in themselves and others

C. Ability to describe a bunch of emotions

D. Ability to sing “Emotion” by Samantha Sang
But really...what is it?

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize and manage one’s own emotions and the emotions of others. It involves:

- the ability to recognize an emotion in various expressions (e.g., facial expressions or word choice)
- the capacity to modulate or control one’s own emotions (e.g., not punching that annoying co-worker or patron in the face and instead responding politely and patiently)
- the capacity to recognize and acknowledge one’s own emotions (e.g., recognizing that an encounter with someone has upset you and that you need a moment to recover – and taking that moment to recover from the encounter)

EI also involves other abilities and capacities, depending on what model one adopts. The two primary models are Goleman’s Five Processes and Salovey and Grewal’s Ability model.
American psychologist Daniel Goleman developed the Five Processes model to identify the key elements involved in EI. These five processes or capacities are:

1. Being self-aware
2. Being empathetic
3. Being able to self-regulate
4. Being motivated
5. Being socially adept

For Goleman, the highly emotionally intelligent person would be skilled at all of these abilities, integrating all of them into their thought processes and behaviors.
Salovey and Grewal consider emotional intelligence to be a tool used by an individual to manage emotional information which they in turn use to navigate social interactions and environments. Their model of EI involves four abilities or branches which are considered distinct but interconnected. Those four abilities are:

- Perceiving emotions
- Using emotions
- Understanding emotions
- Managing emotions

There are obvious overlaps and correlations between the Ability Model and the Goleman’s Five Processes. Whichever model you subscribe to, it is important to realize that (1) these are skills which (2) can be developed and refined if (3) you put in the time and effort.
One a scale of one (1) to five (5), with 1 = not a lot and 5 = frequently, how often do you consider the emotional aspects of your job?

On the same scale, how often do you feel that your job requires emotional labor (that is, work that has significant emotional value or impact)?

On the same scale, how often do you think of your job as emotional labor?

On the same scale, how often does your job leave you feeling emotional exhausted or drained?

On the same scale, how often do you think of your job as emotional labor?

On the same scale, how often do you think you’ll be thinking about this stuff from now on?

(And really to help you reflect on your own experiences)

NEXT QUESTIONS (it’s really a poll)
EI in Libraries

A quick search on Google Scholar (yeah, I know, don’t judge) on the phrase emotional intelligence and libraries yielded 118,000+ results. The same search in EDS yielded 127 results. Research reviewed and conducted by Lindsey Reno and I revealed that the library science literature seems...uncomfortable talking about emotions on the job.

Our theory about this lack of focus in the literature is built on the work of Laura Raphael, author of a fantastic article for In the Library with the Lead Pipe: “Killing Sir Walter Scott: A Philosophical Exploration of Weeding.” Obviously, Raphael’s article focused on deselection, and she addressed the emotional aspects of that process very well.

However, some of the observations Raphael made about how emotional weeding can be, for both stakeholders and library personnel, hinge on notions that go to the heart of what we do in libraries. And given how much of the literature on deselection actually focused on (1) mitigating the emotional impact on stakeholders (not library personnel) and (2) how to best use data to drive such projects effectively, the answer for why we avoid our emotions seems clear....
EI in Libraries

...justifying the value of libraries – what we do and how well we do it (often being pressured to do more with less, in ever-increasing amounts) – seems to have cultivated in the profession, in terms of both librarians and staff, an esteeming of the value of the quantitative.

In other words, we seem to shy away from talking about emotions because they fall in the realm of the qualitative, and our jobs seem to very much depend on clearly and numerically demonstrating the value of our services, resources, and personnel. We discuss value in terms of ROI, positive upward trends in statistics, and other measurable concepts. Metrics and visual data showing how well we’re doing what we do have emerged at the forefront of this profession as a whole.

That is not to say there isn’t value in such things. But the more we don’t talk about the emotional aspects of what we do – and there are many emotional dimensions to what we do – the more likely we are to value those things less, in turn neglecting them and losing sight of the fact that what we do in libraries is fundamentally people work.
Question the Third

True or false: Emotional labor (EL) can be job-focused or employee-focused.

This is TRUE!

Follow-up question – True or false: job-focused EL is often called “people work.”

This is also TRUE!
EI in Management & Leadership

While learning to work well with and respect the emotions of others is useful for your everyday, in-the-trenches personnel, EI is also an important component of effective leadership and management.

Remember, EI involves not only managing and understanding one’s own emotions. It also involves managing and understanding other people’s emotions as well. This can be quite important if one has an employee who has low EI (and we’ve all likely worked with someone who has low EI – show of hands?).

EI frequently falls into the notion of soft skills (as noted earlier), and research suggests that more and more employers are seeking employees who are adept in both hard and soft skills (Robles, 2013)*.

Cultivating EI in one’s employees – whether they are already pretty high in EI or need some development – can foster more self-motivated employees, not to mention an environment in which people feel supported and respected, both of which contribute to productivity and efficacy.

* Across a variety of fields and professions, including STEM.
Facilitating EI in Our Institutions

Therefore, it behooves leaders and managers to cultivate the EI of their employees (and themselves – there’s always room to grow). There is some debate as to whether IQ can be cultivated (some researchers think it’s a static quality while others believe it can be developed). However, EI can definitely be developed.

- Professional development opportunities for developing workplace EI (FREE)
  • edX offers the course “Empathy and Emotional Intelligence at Work” FOR FREE (enrolling NOW for January 2019!)
  • The Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace offers the resource “Building Emotional Intelligence” which connects users with many strategies and tips for dealing with EI in the workplace.
  • Managing Americans features a whole article on how to model EI in the workplace and how to develop one’s self and one’s employees and colleagues in terms of EI.
  • Simply learning more about emotions and EI itself can help – providing employees with resources on EI, encouraging them to watch TED Talks (like this one, or even this one by Goleman!), and having frank conversations about EI and its importance in YOUR workplace can make a difference.

- Paid-for opportunities can be found through resources like Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning, SkillPath, and Go1, which can provide courses, seminars, and webinars on EI. All of these resources offer various opportunities and price ranges for EI resources.
Facilitating EI Among Library Personnel

ALLLLL of the strategies and resources discussed on the previous slide can be used to develop library personnel in terms of EI. Professional development opportunities are good for everybody, and using professional development as an avenue to discuss EI makes sense for everybody.

Within the library profession itself, we need to have more discussions and do more research about how emotions affect different aspects of what we do – and not just in the obvious places, like the reference desk. Research suggests that people who do detailed (read: sometimes tedious) work, like individuals working in Technical Services, may often face boredom and isolation as a consequence of their work. These experiences can demoralize them emotionally, leading to emotional exhaustion and burnout which can manifest as negative emotions and behaviors and low EI. Helping support such individuals emotionally can make a real difference in their mental health and their productivity.

We need to be willing to admit that our work can be and often is emotionally exhausting and what kind of a toll that can take on us individually and as organizations – not just in terms of how that affects our ability to provide services and products but also how we are physically, emotionally, psychologically, and even spiritually affected by those experiences.
Questions, comments, suggestions?
So....

Were you emotionally smarter than a 5th grader?

Are you emotionally smarter than a 5th grader now?

How do you feel about EI in the workplace? Is it important?

Are there areas you can improve? Are there areas that your library or institution can improve?

What concerns do you have about your own EI or the EI of an employee or colleague?
References


References


Paid-for resources (these are direct links to EI-related seminars, courses, and content):

- Go1
- Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning
- SkillPath
THANK YOU FOR COMING AND PARTICIPATING!