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RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES


Most people have a spring in their step and put their best foot forward when they are in a new relationship (work or otherwise), but they stumble and lose their footing trying to maintain relationships over the long term. Reality soon sets in that the honeymoon phase is officially over.

The truth is, all relationships take work, even the great ones that seem effortless. We've all heard this, but do we really *get* it?

Working on a relationship takes time, effort, and know-how. The know-how is emotional intelligence. If you want a relationship that has staying power and grows over time, and in which your needs and the other person's needs are satisfied, the final EQ skill—relationship management—is just what the doctor ordered.


Thankfully, these relationship management skills can





be learned, and they tap into the three other EQ skills that you're familiar with—self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. You use your self-awareness skills to notice your feelings and judge if your needs are being satisfied. You use your self-management skills to express your feelings and act accordingly to benefit the connection. Finally, you use your social awareness skills to better understand the other person's needs and feelings.

In the end, no man is an island; relationships are an essential and fulfilling part of life. Since you are half of any relationship, you have half of the responsibility of deepening these connections. The following 17 strategies will help you work on what's critical to making relationships work.



RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1. Be Open and Be Curious
2. Enhance Your Natural Communication Style
3. Avoid Giving Mixed Signals
4. Remember the Little Things That Pack a Punch
5. Take Feedback Well
6. Build Trust
7. Have an “Open-door” Policy
8. Only Get Mad on Purpose
9. Don’t Avoid the Inevitable
10. Acknowledge the Other Person’s Feelings
11. Complement the Person’s Emotions or Situation
12. When You Care, Show It
13. Explain Your Decisions, Don’t Just Make Them
14. Make Your Feedback Direct and Constructive
15. Align Your *Intention* with Your *Impact*
16. Offer a “Fix-it” Statement during a Broken Conversation
17. Tackle a Tough Conversation

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Be Open and Be Curious

We can imagine a few readers thinking, “Oh brother, I have to be open and curious with people at work? Can I just work on my projects and what I was hired to do, minus the touchy-feely stuff?” Actually, establishing, building, and maintaining relationships are all part of your job—even if you work with just one other person. Maintaining relationships may not be on your job description and may not have even been discussed, but for you to be successful, being open and curious is absolutely, unequivocally part of your job.

Let’s explore what “open” means in terms of relationship management. Being open means sharing information about yourself with others. You can use your self-management skills to choose how open you are and what you share, but know that there’s a benefit to opening up that may help you with your choices: when people know about you, there’s less room for them to misinterpret you. For example, if you are particularly sensitive about showing up five minutes



early to meetings, and get annoyed when people stroll in at the very beginning of the meeting or even a little late, some people might interpret you as being uptight and rigid. If you shared with these same people that you were in the Marines for the first years of your career, your coworkers would understand and maybe even appreciate your sense of timing and courtesy. Who knows, your punctuality might even rub off!

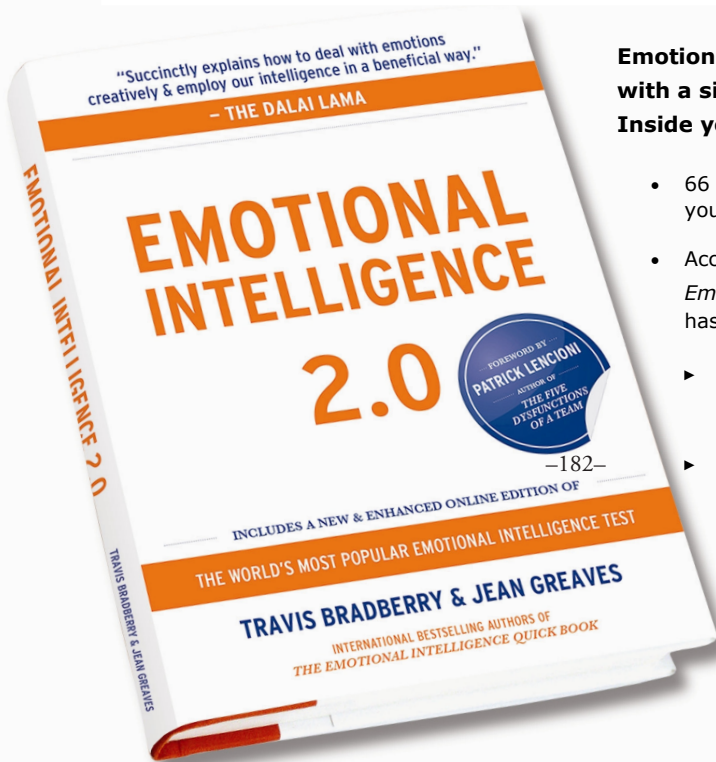
Being an open book on your end isn't the whole story with managing a relationship—you also need to be interested in the other person's story as well. In other words, you need to be curious. The more you show interest in and learn about the other person, the better shot you have at meeting his or her needs and not misinterpreting them.

When you ask questions, draw from your social awareness skills to choose an appropriate setting and time. Be inquisitive in your tone—similar to how Santa Claus asks a child what he'd like for Christmas. The opposite tone is judgmental—think of someone who's ever asked you a question like, “Why on earth did you buy a motorcycle?” or “You majored in philosophy? What did you plan to do with THAT?”

When you ask questions and this person opens up, you



will not only learn information that will help you manage the relationship, but the other person will also appreciate the interest shown in him or her. If you are beginning a new relationship, in an established one, or even if you're in a rough patch, take a few minutes out of your day to identify a few relationships that need some attention, and make time to be open and curious with these people.



Emotional Intelligence 2.0 is a new book with a single purpose—increasing your EQ. Inside you'll find:

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