

Can Emotional Intelligence Lead Us to Healthy Relationships?

With the arrival of spring, the natural world turns our focus toward new life. Whether we're now in a relationship or wanting to be in one, it's a good time to take inventory of our relationship skills and determine where we might need to improve. Emotional Intelligence—a popular concept in the business world—gives us some basics to begin.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is essentially the “street smarts” of success; it's our ability to evaluate a situation and respond to create the best possible outcome. In relationships, this can mean the difference between a short-term fling and a long-term commitment.

Start with Self

We start with examining our “intrapersonal” skills, meaning the world inside us—our own thoughts, emotions, and actions.

SELF REGARD: This is the way I see, think, and feel about myself. Before I can be ready to be in a balanced relationship, I must have a healthy self-regard, and not be dependent on another person to provide all the positives I need in my life.

EMOTIONAL SELF AWARENESS: This is the ability to recognize exactly WHAT I'm feeling and WHY. This is an essential first step to communicating effectively in a relationship.

ASSERTIVENESS: This is the skill I have in knowing what I need in a relationship, asking for it, and setting good boundaries for myself and others. Without assertiveness, people often become “doormats”, always putting others before themselves, which leads to imbalance.

INDEPENDENCE: This competency is related to our ability to think, make decisions, and act without the constant need for input from a partner or other person.

How can I develop good “intrapersonal skills”?

- **Take inventory:**
Examine your own relationship history on these four points. Ask yourself some tough questions, get input from someone you trust, take on online inventory—there are several available if you search “emotional intelligence”.
- **Choose one area at a time to start building skills:**
Identify what you want to work on, and find a class, read a book, work with a therapist or coach. Then PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.