

BTB

27 pages of self-improvement curriculum for anyone inside prisons to READ - STUDY - REFLECT on to ward emotional maturity. - Please make copies for loved ones.



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Regulating Emotions, Relating to Others, and Cognitive Restructuring



ANTI-RECIDIVISM COALITION

March, 25, 2019

Mark A. Taylor, Johnson Le

INTRODUCTION

The Anti-Recidivism Coalition is proud to present its rehabilitative course, *Emotional Intelligence: Regulating Emotions, Relating to Others, and Cognitive Restructuring*. This course was written by prisoners for prisoners. Emotional ineptitude is one of the root causes of crime. Consequently, we decided to focus our efforts on understanding, regulating, and expressing emotions in a healthy manner.

In 1990, psychologist John Mayer and Peter Salovey offered the first formulation of a groundbreaking, paradigm-shattering idea known as emotional intelligence. Five years later, in 1995, psychologist Daniel Goleman popularized the concept with the release of his best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence*. We have synopsised the works of these three psychologists and tailored them to fit the criminogenic needs of prisoners who are striving to change their lives.

By no stretch of the imagination are we authorities on the matter. None of us has Ph.D.'s. We are just a group of prisoners who have studied the applicable material, gleaned from it what we could, and are now sharing it with our fellow prisoners. We hope that by sharing this vital information we will be able to cultivate healthy emotional repertoires so that we can free our minds of the kinds of unhealthy thoughts that gave rise to our criminal inclinations.

This course is not cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). This course employs the Socratic method throughout in order to encourage introspective healing and personal growth.

During our own journeys of personal transformation we realized that our past transgressions were due, in large part, to our lack of empathy, our poor impulse control, and our overall failure to establish the fundamentals of emotional competence. This course seeks to plant the seeds that, if nurtured, will rectify these deficiencies.

As recovering criminals, we can never reach our full potential without some level of emotional intelligence. Developing emotional wisdom fuels motivation and gives us the emotional fortitude needed to turn our lives around and to turn our dreams into reality. Developing emotional wisdom also helps individuals weather the emotional storms that they inevitably experience throughout life.

Prisoners who can manage their lives with calm and self-awareness have a distinct and measurable advantage when navigating the emotionally tumultuous environment in which we find ourselves. They also perform better in high-pressure, intellectually demanding settings like parole hearings, which makes it imperative that we develop this skill set. We hope you attain whatever it is that you are seeking by taking this course. In addition, for those who are seeking emotional, mental, and physical freedom—Godspeed.



CONTENTS

Introduction	iii
Note to Facilitators	iv
<i>Session 1</i> — Emotional Intelligence Defined	1
<i>Session 2</i> — Emotional Self-Awareness	5
<i>Session 2</i> — Emotional Self-Awareness	5
<i>Session 3</i> — Emotional Self-Management	8
<i>Session 4</i> — Self-Motivation	12
<i>Session 5</i> — Social Awareness (Empathy)	15
<i>Session 6</i> — Handling Relationships (Interpersonal Communication)	18
<i>Session 7</i> — Cognitive Restructuring	20
<i>Session 8</i> — Big Picture Philosophy	23



NOTE TO FACILITATORS

Each session has sequentially numbered *REFLECTION* questions. These questions, which are designed to stimulate critical thinking, should be posed to the participants. In the case of inadequate or wrong responses, the Socratic method should be utilized until the correct response is reached.

Famous quotations appear throughout this course. Exploring the meaning of these quotations will test the student's comprehension level and will help them gain a deeper understanding of the material being presented.

For all those who facilitate or participate in this course, your interest is appreciated.

Respectfully Yours,

Mark Anthony Taylor



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Relating to Others, Regulating Emotions, and Cognitive Restructuring

THREE SACRED GROUND RULES

- What is said in here stays in here.
- One person talks at a time.
- Everyone's opinion is respected.

INTRODUCTIONS

1. What is your name?
2. How much time do you have? Add everyone's time up and reveal the combined total later.
3. What do you hope to get out of this class?

"Tell me and I'll listen. Show me and I'll understand. Involve me and I'll learn".—Tetan Lakota Indian saying

Explain how this is an interactive course that requires group participation. Learning is a change in behavior that results from experience; therefore, all genuine learning is active and not passive. Use the preceding quote to illustrate the point.

This course is designed to give you foresight into your future and insight into who you are as a human being.


Foresight: The act or power of knowing beforehand

Insight: The ability to see the true or hidden nature of things

REFLECTION 1.1 How many of you still would have committed your crime if you would have known with absolute certainty that you would have been arrested for that crime and sentenced to prison as a result?

REFLECTION 1.2 How many of you have engaged in violence as a direct result of being angry?

There is an inherent lack of foresight in criminal activity. Your destiny is defined by your ability, or inability, to control your emotions and to channel these emotions toward a productive end.



Unhealthy anger is one of the leading causes of crime and a lack of emotional intelligence is one of the leading causes of anger. Emotional ineptitude leads to uncontrolled anger, violent crime, and long-term imprisonment.

Note to facilitator: Look at the second question under the introduction section. Add up the time of all the participants and then fill in the blank. Share the answer with the group to illustrate the relationship between emotional ineptitude and crime.

The men in this room have been sentenced to _____ years of incarceration as a result of our emotional ineptitude, which is why establishing emotional intelligence is absolutely essential for recovering criminals.

The Socratic Method

"The unexamined life is not worth living." —Socrates

Socrates was a Greek Philosopher who died for his beliefs. He was charged with, and executed for, corrupting the minds of the youth, when in reality all he was trying to do was to get the youth to see the truth, which is what this class is about—the truth. We will utilize the Socratic method throughout the duration of this course.

The Socratic method is a method of hypothesis elimination, in that better hypothesis are found by steadily eliminating those that lead to contradictions. The Socratic method searches for general, commonly held truths that shape opinion, and scrutinizes them to determine their consistency with other beliefs. The Socratic method will be used throughout this course to explore *Emotional Intelligence*, to expose untruths, to reveal the truth about crime, and to promote positive change.

Simply stated, the Socratic Method is used to stimulate critical thinking and to promote personal growth. Today we will be using this method to examine the key moral concepts of courage, endurance, and wisdom.

REFLECTION 1.3 "Courage is endurance of the soul."

Do you believe that the preceding statement is true or false? Socrates believed that the statement was unequivocally false. He argued that courage is a fine thing, while ignorant endurance is not. Therefore, courage is not just endurance of the soul. Courage is *wise* endurance of the soul. [Add *wise* to the quote on the board. Use recidivism rate to illustrate ignorant endurance.]

- Ignorant endurance: A person comes to prison, does absolutely nothing to change the behavior that landed him in prison, is released, re-offends, and returns to prison as a result.
- Wise endurance: A person goes to prison, changes drastically, is released and goes on to live a productive life, never returning to prison.



Statistically speaking, approximately 67% of people who are released from prison in the great state of California re-offend and return to prison within three years. [Have 67% of the class stand to illustrate the point.]

REFLECTION 1.4 Why do so many people return to prison once they are released?

POSSIBLE ANSWER: People return to prison because they continue to do the same things (i.e., commit crimes) and expect a different result, which is the very definition of insanity.

REFLECTION 1.5 In order to achieve the change that we seek, do we need to be courageous and endure wisely?

"A wise man is not a slave to his emotions". —Author Unknown

REFLECTION 1.6 Is the preceding quote true?

POSSIBLE ANSWER: Yes. A wise man is not a slave to his emotions. He is the master of his emotions.

In order to understand emotional intelligence, we must first understand what emotions are and how they affect us. So let us examine the definition and linguistic roots of the word *emotion*.

EMOTION

Webster's dictionary defines *emotion* as a strong feeling, such as love or hate. That definition, although accurate, is somewhat superficial. Emotions are in essence, impulses to act. The root of the word *emotion* is *movere*, the Latin verb for "to move", which suggests that a tendency to act is implicit in every emotion. The truth of the matter is that emotions can be incredibly powerful and can move us in one way or another. For instance, our love for our family can move us to do extraordinary things. How many of you would take a bullet for your son or your daughter?

Although emotions can be incredibly powerful, they can be controlled if you understand the dimensions of anger. The three dimensions of anger are:

- Physiological changes/biological signatures: Elevated blood pressure, racing heart, perspiration, tense muscles, dilated pupils, etc. [Explain the fight or flight response. Use a secret service agent to illustrate the point. Secret service agents are trained to jump in front of bullets in order to save the president, which goes against their survival instinct.] Even human instincts can be overridden, as is the case with secret service agents.
- Body language: Facial expressions, posture, gestures, clinched fists, etc.
- Verbal expressions: We experience most emotions with different degrees of severity. For instance, an angry person may say that he is slightly annoyed, or he may say that he is furious, depending on the degree of anger he is feeling.

Are there any questions about the dimensions of anger before we move on?



REFLECTION 1.7 When you think about someone being "intelligent" what personal characteristics come to mind?

Humans can and do display multiple intelligences. The following are three distinct intelligences that humans display.

1. Intelligence is the capacity to acquire and apply knowledge.
2. Social intelligence refers to the ability to communicate and relate effectively to others.
3. Emotional intelligence refers to our ability to recognize our own emotions and the emotions of others and to behave in ways that has a positive impact on how others feel. *EMPATHY*

Of all of the intelligences, emotional intelligence is one of the biggest predictors of success. The five domains of emotional intelligence will be covered in the next five sessions.



First Component

Emotional Self-Awareness

- *Emotional Self-Awareness*
- Emotional Self-Management
- Self-Motivation
- Social Awareness (Empathy)
- Handling Relationships (Interpersonal Communication)

"Know thyself" – Socrates

THE BELLIGERENT SAMURAI

A belligerent samurai asked a Zen master to explain the concept of heaven and hell.

The monk replied with scorn, saying "You are nothing, a nobody; I have no time to waste with the likes of you".

Infuriated, the samurai pulled his sword and yelled, "I will kill you for your disrespect!"

"That" the monk calmly replied, "is hell."

Suddenly aware of his agitated emotional state, the samurai calmed himself, put his sword away, bowed and thanked the monk for his insight.

"And that" the monk said, "is heaven".

WE'RE ALL DOING TIME.

REFLECTION 2.1 What is the moral of the preceding story?

POSSIBLE ANSWER: This is not heaven and hell in the biblical sense. It is heaven and hell in the emotional sense. The moral of the story is that if we do not control our emotions we will create our own personal hell.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DEFINED

- Intelligence is the capacity to acquire and apply knowledge. *Emotional intelligence*, on the other hand, is the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions while being sensitive to the feelings of others.

There are five domains associated with emotional intelligence. We will be covering the first domain today.



EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS: Awareness of one's feelings as they occur is the foundation of emotional intelligence and is fundamental to effective decision making and personal growth. Thus, people who are keenly aware of their changing moods are better pilots of their lives. Those who are unaware of their true feelings are slaves to their emotions. Socrates injunction "Know thyself" is the essence of emotional self-awareness.

REFLECTION 2.2 Do you truly believe that you know yourself?

REFLECTION 2.3 Describe yourself—both the good and bad qualities. Not the physical attributes, such as height, weight, and skin tone, but the psychological characteristics such as I am friendly, honest, and reasonably intelligent. [Ensure that everyone understands the directions before you start proceeding.]

POSSIBLE ANSWER:

Good Qualities—I am empathetic, compassionate, honest and humble. I am even tempered and extremely driven. I enjoy helping others regardless of race, color, creed, culture, or religion.

Bad Qualities-I am pessimistic and I tend to doubt myself more than I should. At times I tend to expect the worst of people. If someone offends me, I am quick to cut them off permanently.

SELF-PERCEPTIONS

Self-concept is an organized collection of beliefs about the self. It is basically what you think about yourself. Our self-concepts are based on our self-perceptions. There are three possible selves:

1. Actual self—the qualities that you actually possess.
2. Ideal self—characteristics that you would like to have.
3. False self—a false image that you knowingly project.

The ideal self serves as a personal standard that directs behavior. For example; if I value integrity I will attempt to be honest when I interact with other people. If I fall short and I am dishonest, then a discrepancy exists.

Self-discrepancy: Consists of a mismatch between the self-perceptions that make up the actual self, ideal self and the false self. Self-discrepancy will always exist as long as you feel the need to project a false self. Self-discrepancies are measurable and have consequences for how people think, feel and act.

REFLECTION 2.4 How many of you have projected a false image to get something you want?

Discrepancies between the different selves can cause a wide range of anxiety related disorders such as, sadness, depression, disappointment, irritability, guilt, etc.

Take me, I profess to love my family and yet I led a lifestyle that caused me to get a life sentence.

Consequently, I have been separated from my family for going on two decades. That separation caused my family a significant amount of emotional pain, and for that I feel incredibly guilty. That sense of guilt is derived from the contradiction that exists between my ideal self and my actual self.



If we live up to our expectations we are at peace with ourselves. If we do not live up to our expectations we experience anxiety.

REFLECTION 2.5 Do you feel guilty for the pain that you have caused your family by getting locked up?

REFLECTION 2.6 Have you apologized to your family for the pain that you have caused? If not, why not?

REFLECTION 2.7 Have you apologized to the victims of your crime? If not, why not?

COPING WITH SELF-DISCREPANCY

Dealing with self-discrepancy can be difficult. This can be accomplished in one of two ways:

1. A positive way to alleviate self-discrepancy is to align our actual self with our ideal self. For instance, if we just got a D on a test and our ideal self values good grades, we can study more to improve our grades.
2. Another less positive approach is to avoid situations that increase our self-awareness. Instead of studying more we can drop out of school altogether so that we don't get bad grades. Problem solved, right? Wrong! To do this would defeat the purpose of why we enrolled in school in the first place. It would also limit our future opportunities. Or we can get drunk or high, thereby diminishing our self-awareness in the fog of substance abuse. Problem solved, right? Wrong again! The detrimental effects of abusing drugs or alcohol far exceed those that arise from the feelings associated with self-discrepancy. Using drugs or alcohol to cope with problems only makes those problems exponentially worse.

The bottom line is that we should live up to our expectations in order to decrease self-discrepancy and increase our emotional intelligence.



Second Component

Emotional Self-Management

- Emotional Self-Awareness
- *Emotional Self-Management*
- Self-Motivation
- ~~• Social Awareness (Empathy)~~
- Handling Relationships (Interpersonal Communication)

"Anger is never without reason, but seldom a good one."

Benjamin Franklin

Flew kite, proved lightning is electricity

"Anger unhampered by reason easily erupts into violence."

Daniel Goleman

Author of Emotional Intelligence

STOPP

EMOTIONAL SELF-MANAGEMENT: Managing personal emotions empowers people to make wise choices despite the pull of strong emotions like fear or anger. For example; emotional self-management allows one to maintain his or her composure when they are angry or scared.

STOPPED 11/24/2021

REFLECTION 3.1 Why is it absolutely essential that those of us who are incarcerated manage our emotions at all times?

POSSIBLE ANSWER: For those of us who are incarcerated, a single solitary lapse in emotional self-control can have catastrophic consequences, including a chain reaction of violence amongst the prison population, additional time added to our sentences, or even new charges with an additional sentence.

Remember, as we discussed in our very first session, emotions are in essence, impulses to act. Wise men possess the unique ability to control these impulses.

There are two kinds of emotions—*primary* and *secondary*.

PRIMARY EMOTIONS—Include anger, sadness, fear, surprise, disgust, happiness, contempt, etc. Primary emotions are shared across cultures and are associated with specific physical states. For instance, a smile represents happiness in all cultures.



Primary emotions mix to create secondary emotions in the same manner that primary colors mix to create other colors. The three primary colors are BLUE, RED, and YELLOW. When mixed, the primary colors create other colors. For example:

BLUE + YELLOW = GREEN

RED + YELLOW = ORANGE

In much the same manner, primary emotions mix to create secondary emotions. For example, imagine that your girlfriend accuses you of neglecting her. Your primary response may be one of ANGER for being accused. As reality sets in you may begin to feel SAD that you inadvertently hurt your companion's feelings. In this scenario, your ANGER and SADNESS may combine and cause GUILT.

SECONDARY EMOTIONS—Include remorse, anticipation, guilt and shame (RAGS).

STRESS AND MOOD MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Stress is an inevitable part of life. It ebbs and flows. Decreasing stress is one way to increase emotional intelligence. That being said, reducing stress requires high levels of self-awareness.

REFLECTION 3.2 What are some of the techniques that we can use to management our emotions?

One of the most common emotions we must monitor and manage is stress. Stress has its roots in the "fight-or-flight" response—an automatic reaction wired into the body that enabled our human ancestors to engage in fight (attack) or flight (run away) when confronted by life-threatening predators. This response can be life-saving in life-threatening situations. When this response is repeatedly activated for prolonged periods of time it can affect both your physical and psychological health. The following techniques can be utilized to counteract the flight-or-flight response:

NEVER RUMINATE—Thinking about or dwelling on the source of your frustration is counterproductive. Rumination makes bad situations exponentially worse. For instance, if someone does something to offend you and you continue to focus on that person your stress will increase.

DISTRACTION—Engage in an activity that takes your mind off of the source of the stress. For example, if you continually overthink a big speech that you have to give in the near future the consequences can be catastrophic. Instead of dwelling on the speech, do something to take your mind off of the speech.

HUMOR—Remember that "Laughter is the best medicine". Although laughter at a funeral may seem inappropriate, a funny story can lift the spirits of people in an understandably distressing situation.



COOLING DOWN—Cool off physiologically by waiting out the adrenaline surge that feeds anger. For instance, if you are arguing with your spouse, walk away in order to clear your head.

CONTROLLED BREATHING—Although breathing is somewhat involuntary, with some concentration and effort, we can control our breathing by controlling our diaphragm. The diaphragm is the muscle that enables us to expand and contract our lungs. High stress levels induces fast, shallow, and irregular breathing patterns that come from the mouth rather than the chest. Relaxed breathing originates from the stomach and is slow, deep, and steady. Relaxed breathing, even when forced, reduces stress.

12/8/21

Significantly reducing stress is one of the most effective ways to increase emotional intelligence. The four most common symptoms of stress are overwhelm, anger, anxiety, and depression. If we reduce these symptoms, we will reduce our stress levels.

For those of us who are trying to get out of prison, it is easy to become overwhelmed with the demands we place on ourselves. Self-management strategies, such as prioritizing our activities, can help reduce our feeling of being overwhelmed.

When you become angry, ask yourself one simple question, "If I release my anger will it help me or will it cost me dearly?" Respond accordingly. If you are in prison for violence and you continue to engage in violence you are proving that you pose an unreasonable risk to society. Therefore, you are a high risk to reoffend. Some additional ways to reduce anger include:

- Separate—go off and be alone.
- Exercise to reduce anger fueling hormones in your body.
- Remind yourself, "This, too, shall pass."
- Channel your anger in a positive direction.
- Forgive—Let go of toxic feelings of resentment

WARPED BELIEF EXTINCTION

change
core beliefs

REFLECTION 3.3 How can we ensure that our stress does not turn into violence?

For those of us who bear the mental scars of having perpetrated violent acts, we have a moral obligation to challenge and eradicate the warped beliefs that led to the violent act. If we believe that violence is justified when we feel offended, then we are destined for failure. We must challenge these types of beliefs. Warped beliefs are the epitome of ignorance.

REFLECTION 3.4 What are some examples of warped beliefs that may trigger violence?

WARPED BELIEFS FIGHT BACK - BULLY

We must see violence for what it is, a feeble-minded response that inevitably leads to pain and suffering for both the perpetrator of violence and the victim. If we truly love our families and are willing



to sacrifice for them, then we must refrain from violence so that we can get out of prison and return to them. We need to live up to our own expectations instead of living down to the expectations of others. Remember, violence is the ultimate expression of weakness while humility is the ultimate expression of strength.

STOPPED 12/15/21



Third Component

Self-Motivation

- Emotional Self-Awareness
- Emotional Self-Management
- *Self-Motivation*
- Social Awareness (Empathy)
- Handling Relationship (Interpersonal Communication)

"All that a man achieves or fails to achieve is the direct result of his own thoughts. A man can only rise, conquer, and achieve by lifting up his own thoughts". —James Allen, author of *As a Man Thinketh*

"Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal. Nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude." —W.W. Ziege

"The human spirit can transcend any condition." —Nelson Mandela

SELF-MOTIVATION (INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION): Using emotions to achieve a productive end is the master aptitude. Optimism and hope, like helplessness and despair, can be learned. Those who believe they can handle everything that life throws at them are more optimistic. Those who worry excessively tend to create counterproductive self-fulfilling prophecies that propel them toward the very disaster that they predict. For those of us who are incarcerated, we must find effective ways to motivate ourselves if we are to achieve the freedom that we seek.

REFLECTION 4.1 How motivated are you to get out of prison?

REFLECTION 4.2 What are you willing to sacrifice to regain your freedom?

"Goal directed self-imposed delay of gratification is perhaps the essence of emotional self-regulation and motivation". —Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*

REFLECTION 4.3 What is the meaning of the preceding quote?

• THE MARSHMALLOW TEST

In the 1960's, Stanford University psychologist Walter Mischel posed the marshmallow challenge to a group of four year olds. This test was designed to test the subject's level of impulse control. Each child was told that they could either have one marshmallow right now or, if they could wait until after the person administering the test ran an errand, they could have two marshmallows. A relatively simple test that was sure to try the souls of the four year olds.



The marshmallow test was able to accurately predict the trajectory of the subjects' lives. Those who showed restraint and waited for the two marshmallow reward fared better than those who did not.

When the subjects were located some twelve to fourteen years later, the kids who exercised self-restraint and waited for the two marshmallow reward were:

- Able to perform better under stress
- Embraced challenges
- More self-reliant, confident, and trustworthy
- Still able to delay gratification in pursuit of goals

Not only were the kids who showed little restraint and ate the one marshmallow more likely to have criminal records, they were more likely to be:

- Stubborn
- Indecisive
- Easily frustrated
- Resentful
- Irrational
- Quick tempered

Additionally, the subjects who ate the one marshmallow scored, on average, 210 points lower on the SAT's than those who waited and ate the two marshmallows.

Simply stated, those who can face temptation and resist the urge to succumb to temptation achieve greater levels of success. Self-restraint is a characteristic of the strong.

REFLECTION 4.4 If the marshmallow represents temptation, what marshmallow will you have to resist in order to achieve your goals?

STINKING THINKING

Anxiety has the potential to compromise our ability to think clearly. Chronically high anxiety sabotages our goals. For example, if a person is too anxious when they go to a job interview they may perform poorly and not get the job as a result. This could have catastrophic financial consequences that last for years. The consequences of stinking thinking can be disastrous. Consequently, we must develop clearly defined strategies to combat stinking thinking in all its heinous forms.

REFLECTION 4.5 Are there any past situations that you can think of where you performed poorly as a result of anxiety?

REFLECTION 4.6 What can you do to reduce your anxiety?



OPTIMISM

An unshakeable belief that you can achieve whatever goals that you set for yourself is one of the greatest predictors of success. Strong expectations and success go hand in hand. If you believe you can achieve then you will achieve.

~~REFLECTION 4.7 How optimistic are you that you will be able to get out of prison, stay out once released, and live a fulfilling and crime-free life?~~

Regardless of how you answered the preceding question, you are right. You are who you think you are. Elevate your thoughts, expand your consciousness, and actualize your full potential. You can rest

~~assured that proving critics wrong is one of the most gratifying feelings you can ever experience, one of the most grati~~

Every decision that you make should push you closer to your goals. Decisions should be based on pure strategy not ego. For many of us the egoic mind led to a lengthy prison sentence. Using the strategic mind will inevitably lead to freedom.

Do not let the encroaching darkness of imprisonment break your spirits. Instead, emerge stronger with stronger convictions. Liberate yourself from the psychological chains that may have limited your ambition in the past. Do whatever it takes to motivate yourself to achieve your dreams.

"Prison is a kind of crucible that tests a man's character. Some men under the pressure of incarceration show true mettle, while other reveal themselves to be less than what they appear to be." —Nelson Mandela

REFLECTION 4.8 Are you going to let prison break you or do you have the mettle to not only endure but to emerge stronger?

Use the power of emotion to achieve your goals. Do not be deterred by setbacks. Learn from them and come back harder. Keep trying until the goal is achieved. The end result will be worth the effort.



Fourth Component

Social Awareness (Empathy)

- Emotional Self-Awareness
- Emotional Self-Management
- Self-Motivation
- *Social Awareness (Empathy)*
- Handling Relationships (Interpersonal Communication)

“It is often when wondering through the emotional carnage left by the worst of humankind that we find the best of humanity as well.”—Bruce D. Perry, M.D. Ph.D. author of the *The Boy Who Was Raised a Dog*

“If a soul is left in darkness, sins will be committed. The guilty one is not he who commits the sin, but he who causes the darkness.”—Victor Hugo

SOCIAL AWARENESS: Empathy is an integral part of social awareness. In fact, it is probably the most important component of social awareness. Empathy is a fundamental human capacity that underlies virtually everything that makes society work, like trust, altruism, collaboration, love, and charity. Failure to empathize (i.e., antipathy) is a key part of most social problems like crime, violence, gangs, war, racism, etc.

Empathy is standing in another person’s shoes and caring what it feels like to be there. Empathy is not feeling sorry “for” someone, it is feeling sorry “with” someone. Those with empathy treat others the way that they want to be treated and they are more attuned to the subtle social signals that reveal what others want and need.

REFLECTION 5.1 Why is it important to empathize with other people?

REFLECTION 5.2 Is empathy a natural human emotion or does it have to be learned?

REFLECTION 5.3 Is it possible to commit a violent crime against someone while feeling empathy for them at the same time?

POSSIBLE ANSWER: Absolutely not. All crime is antipathetic and wrong.

It is not possible to commit a violent crime against someone while feeling empathy for them. In fact, there is no such thing as a victimless crime so there is an inherent lack of empathy in all criminal activity. Those of us who commit crimes are not inhibited by how our offense affects the victims.

REFLECTION 5.4 What are some of the root causes of antipathy?

- Maladjustment: Poorly adjusted to one’s environment or circumstance.
- Warped Beliefs: Unhealthy belief systems that are used to rationalize hurtful behavior.



- Childhood trauma: When individuals experience traumatic events during their formative years they are more likely to engage in hurtful behavior later in life.

Although being abused as a child does not excuse violent or hurtful behavior later in life, traumatic experiences have the potential to adversely affect the way those who sustained the trauma interact with other people. Simply stated, childhood trauma can compromise a person's ability to empathize with other people. The following is a true story that child psychologist Dr. Bruce D. Perry wrote about in his book *Born to Love*:

Terrell grew up in a violent Chicago neighborhood. His grandfather, father, and later, his step-fathers were all gang members. His mother was a crack addict who turned to prostitution to support her habit. Eventually Terrell began to float in and out of foster care. There are at least six documented cases of childhood neglect filed on Terrell's behalf. At 12 years old Terrell shot a boy over a pair of Nikes and then collected the shoes from the victim's dead body and was wearing the shoes when he was arrested.

When I asked Terrell what happened he said "I capped him". He said this without remorse, pride, or any emotion at all. It was as though he was talking about doing or not doing his homework. Through furthering questioning, I learned that John, who was about twice Terrell's size, had somehow insulted Terrell and that Terrell decided to take his sneakers. Terrell never went anywhere without his gun and he knew that if he showed it, he had to use it or he'd be seen as a punk. There was apparently no gang-related beef, just two angry teenagers whose conflict escalated before either could consider the consequences.

Terrell was unprepared to respond in any other way. His childhood of neglect and chaos had made him hyper vigilant to threat. He could see even the tiniest hint of aggression in someone's face, voice, or manner. In Terrell's world, failure to react quickly to threat was indeed potentially fatal, as it turned out to be for his victim.

So when John said "fuck you" instead of giving us his sneakers, Terrell didn't hesitate to shoot him in the chest. In his world this wasn't senseless, it was necessary. Terrell moved in a world where he had to act, or be acted on.

Terrell knew his victim played by the same rules. He knew he might die in the same way if bad luck or poor judgment about an adversary put him on the wrong end of a gun. He was fatalistic. It was just how it was. He had seen people stabbed, seen people shot. If it was your time it was your time. He had never known anything else.

Terrell had adapted to a cruel world that cared little for him, or for his victim. His lack of empathy echoed the lack of care with which he had been treated. And so, his gang became his family. Like a family it provided shelter, companionship, and an established set of values. Although this put him at odds with both the law and other gangs, it was one of the few visible ways boys like him could get any of their social needs met. What may be most shocking about his story is not the way he behaved



but perhaps that violence isn't more common in neighborhoods where there are so few alternatives for boys in his situation.

Human beings are unalterably social beings. We need family, friends, and when children are raised in tough neighborhoods these needs become even more important, not less. Terrell's story reminds us that when children's needs for care are not met, they don't just go away. Teenagers will find somewhere to belong.

REFLECTION 5.5 Terrell lived by an established set of values, most of which contributed to his antipathetic perspective. Did you have any similar values when you committed your crime?

REFLECTION 5.6 Is it possible to develop healthy belief systems if you grow up in an unhealthy environment?

Terrell's tragic story clearly illustrates how childhood trauma can lead to violent behavior. Unfortunately, Terrell's experiences as a child made it hard for him to empathize with his victim.

REFLECTION 5.7 Can you identify any warped beliefs that make it difficult for you to feel empathy for your victims?

REFLECTION 5.8 How can you transform your apathetic warped beliefs into empathetic healthy beliefs?

REFLECTION 5.9 Can you utilize empathy to explain how your crime affected people?

"There have been many people for whom pain in whatever form turned out to be their greatest teacher. It taught them to let go of false self-images and superficial ego-dictated goals and desires. It gave them depth, humility, and compassion." —Ekhart Tolle

REFLECTION 5.10 Has being incarcerated increased your empathy?

A vast majority of people who commit crimes experienced some form of childhood trauma when they were young. Simply stated, victims become victimizers because they were unable to process the pain associated with the trauma in a healthy manner. Although processing such pain can be incredibly difficult, we do have to find a way to come to terms with our past experiences and push past the pain so we can actualize our full potential. Doing so will help us live life in a manner that respects the dignity of all human beings. Cessation of habitually self-destructive behavior patterns is the essence of rehabilitation—an essence that we must embrace if we are to live enriched, fulfilling lives.



Fifth Component

Handling Relationships (Interpersonal Communication)

- Emotional Self-Awareness
- Emotional Self-Management
- Self-Motivation
- Social Awareness (Empathy)
- *Handling Relationships (Interpersonal Communication)*

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live life in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." —Nelson Mandela

HANDLING RELATIONSHIPS (INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION): The quality of our social relationships will be determined by how well we communicate when interacting with others and how well we relate to and treat others. Responding to the emotions of others with skill and harmony enriches relationships beyond measure. People who handle relationships well excel at things that rely on interacting with others smoothly.

REFLECTION 6.1 For those of us who are in prison, why is it essential that we interact with everyone that we encounter in a healthy manner?

POSSIBLE ANSWER: Prison is filled with emotionally inept people who are accustomed to lashing out violently when things do not go their way. It is in everyone's best interest that those of us who are skilled at the social arts be the voice of reason when tension arises.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Developing a strong social support network is particularly important for prisoners because we exist in one of the most high pressure environments imaginable. Prisoners with stronger social support networks are able to resist pressure to engage in self-destructive behavior. Additionally, a healthy support network will ensure that we do not recidivate once we are released from prison.

REFLECTION 6.2 Who are the people that you tend to turn to for support when you are experiencing stress or need personal encouragement?

REFLECTION 6.3 How often do you thank these individuals for being a source of strength?



INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

How well we communicate when interacting with others and how well we relate to and treat others will determine the quality of our relationships. Communication is a two-way process that involves skills not only for delivering information, but for receiving it as well, which means we must be active listeners and focus our full attention on speaker's messages. We must fully engage in the listening process and ensure that we understand the message being conveyed, express interest in that message, and encourage elaboration. If someone is taking the time to deliver a message then the very least we can do is take the time to receive that message.

BODY LANGUAGE / ACTIVE LISTENING

Body language often communicates stronger and truer messages than spoken language. More than two thirds of communications is non-verbal. When communicating with another, your body language will convey either disinterest or, on the other end of the spectrum, interest in the message and respect for the speaker.

REFLECTION 6.4 Are you an active listener?

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Disagreement and conflict among people are inevitable aspects of prison life. Interpersonal conflict is something we can't expect to escape or eliminate. The best we can do is defuse it, contain it, and prevent it from reaching unmanageable levels. Handling someone at the peak of rage is the ultimate measure of emotional mastery. The following strategies may be used to handle interpersonal conflicts constructively and compassionately.

Make your point assertively not passively, not aggressively, and not passively-aggressive. Although passivity and aggression are at opposite ends of the communicative spectrum, both are counterproductive. Handling conflicts passively tends to lead to resentment and contempt. When handling conflicts aggressively the recipient of that aggression is likely to feel bad. Passive people are too submissive, allowing others to trample on their rights in order to avoid conflict. There is a drastic difference between avoiding conflict and resolving it—the latter being preferable. Resolving conflict is to find an equitable solution. Avoiding conflict allows the conflict to persist unnecessarily.

Passive aggression, although more subtle, is still a hostile action that increases conflict instead of alleviating it. Ignoring a person, withdrawing attention or making mean-spirited sarcastic remarks are all forms of passive aggression.



Cognitive Restructuring

THE POWER OF THOUGHT

Our thoughts cause our feelings. Consequently, if we choose new thoughts, we can create new feelings.

The rational-emotive approach is based on the idea that the best way to change feelings is to change unproductive thinking. Cognitive psychologists argue that it is not events that cause people to feel

poorly; it is the beliefs that people hold about the events that affect people emotionally. The following

are examples of how people's interpretations of events determine their feelings.

ACTIVATING EVENT	⇒	THOUGHT OR BELIEF	→	EMOTION
Sarcastic remark	→	mean-spirited attempt to humiliate	→	hurt, anger
Sarcastic remark	→	pathetic attempt to be funny	→	pity, sympathy
Going to board	→	I will be denied, no matter what	→	depressed
Going to board	→	I may be found suitable	→	excited, optimistic

Our thinking rarely stops. Our job is to ensure that we are thinking rational, productive thoughts.

REFLECTION 7.1 How can you change unproductive thoughts to healthy ones?

REFLECTION 7.2 Can cognitive awareness enhance our emotional health?

POSSIBLE ANSWER: Yes. When we remain cognizant of our thoughts we can adjust those thoughts in a manner that enhances our emotional well-being.

Emotions, whether healthy or toxic, can be expressed in two ways: *destructively* or *constructively*. The way that we express our emotions will determine the quality of our lives and the overall health of our social relationships. Emotional geniuses have complete control over how their emotions manifest.

Emotionally ignorant people are at the mercy of their emotions and usually express them in destructive ways. The following scale represents the different ends of the emotional expression spectrum.



Emotional Expression Scale

DESTRUCTIVE		CONSTRUCTIVE
Violently	↔	Peaceful
Irrational	↔	Rational
Abuse Themselves	↔	Love Themselves
Abuse	↔	Sober
Impulsive	↔	Logical
Antipathetic	↔	Empathic
Desire	↔	Self-Control
Self-Gratification	↔	Restrained

We all exist somewhere on this scale. Few exist on the extreme ends of the scale. Those who exist on the left end of the scale have low levels of emotional intelligence. Those who exist on the right side of the scale have high levels of emotional intelligence.

REFLECTION 7.3 Given the importance of healthy emotional expression, how can we ensure that we express ourselves in an appropriate manner regardless of the tribulations that we experience?

THE TWO MINDS

In a very real sense we have two minds; one that feels (our emotional mind) and one that thinks (our rational mind). The emotional mind is far quicker than the rational mind, springing into action without pausing for even a minute to consider what it is doing. Its quickness precludes the deliberate, analytic reflection that is the hallmark of the thinking mind.

Ordinarily there is a balance between the emotional mind and the rational mind. At times our emotional mind can overtake our rational mind and compromise our ability to think clearly. These emotional explosions are called neural hijackings because in these moments a center in the limbic brain declares an emergency and recruits the rest of the brain to deal with the emergency.

At times these neural hijackings can be lifesaving, as in situations where you react to an event before you fully understand what's happening. The primary objective is to preserve one's life and/or well-being. For example, an object falls off a construction site onto the sidewalk where people are walking. The average response would be to jump out of the way at the sound of materials crashing to the concrete. Before one can determine what is happening they already have reacted, then they analyze the perceived danger.

REFLECTION 7.4 How many of you have experienced neural hijacking? Please explain.



REFLECTION 7.5 Why is it important that we are aware of the neural hijacking phenomenon?

POSSIBLE ANSWER: If we are aware that we are experiencing a neural hijacking we can take a step back, collect our thoughts, and think before acting.



Big Picture Philosophy

Dr. Victor Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp during WWII. In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Dr. Frankl explained how some prisoners rose above their stressful suffering to create a positive inner experience and, by doing so, they were able to endure the harshest conditions imaginable.

In one example, Frankl talked about a particularly bleak day. With terrible sores on his feet, he was forced to walk many miles in the bitter cold to a work site, and once there, weakened from starvation, he "forced" his thoughts to another subject. He imagined himself "standing on the platform of a well-lit, warm and pleasant lecture room." Before him sat an audience enthralled to hear him lecture on the psychology of the concentration camp. "By this method," Frankl says, "I rose above the suffering of the moment."

From his experiences and observations, Frankl concluded that everything can be taken from us but one thing, "The last of the human freedoms—the ability to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

If Victor Frankl could overcome the stress of his lengthy and inhuman imprisonment in a concentration camp, surely we can find the strength to overcome the stresses of our current circumstance. We can rise above the existential challenges that we face, no matter how difficult.

REFLECTION 8.1 What is your big picture? What do you envision yourself doing once you get out of prison?

"Where" we are does not define "Who" we are. Each of us is worth more than the worst thing that we have ever done. Let us use emotional intelligence to heal the psychic harm and injuries caused by aggression and violence. Once we begin the healing process we can break the cycle of victimization and victimhood. If we can eradicate the debilitating patterns that landed us in prison, new horizons will inevitably emerge.

Thank you for coming on this journey of personal transformation with us. May you find what you are seeking. Exercise emotional intelligence in all of your affairs and your dreams will become reality.