

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL

### WHITE PAPER

February 2021

**Emotional Intelligence Society Australia**

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Now more than ever, humans need to harness the skills and benefits of emotional intelligence.

Research informs us that individuals and groups of people who use their emotional intelligence skills are more able to achieve a state of emotional and psychological wellbeing.

Humans across the planet are unfortunately witnessing and experiencing unprecedented levels of anxiety, uncertainty, depression, substance abuse, suicide, and domestic violence. The manner in which we react emotionally to these states and situations is critical to our personal health and well-being. Implementing an array of emotional intelligence skills can lead us to cope and even flourish when we are under emotional pressure. A poor or maladaptive reaction to these emotional scenarios has been reported in the research to be a major cause of mental health issues. Reassuringly, emotional intelligence can be improved through insight, workshops, mentoring, and practice. The enhancement of our individual emotional intelligence can lead to more people thriving in these unprecedented times.

The newly established Emotional Intelligence Society of Australia (EISA) is a non-profit educational organisation that brings together researchers, professionals, and humans from around the globe who are interested in applying the principles of emotional intelligence (EI) in their personal and professional life.

The objectives of the Emotional Intelligence Society of Australia are:

1. to bring together researchers, scholars, professionals and others who are interested in the principles of emotional intelligence and their applications;
2. to encourage and support the advancement of emotional intelligence theory, research and applied best practice; and
3. to disseminate emotional intelligence theory, research and empirical knowledge.

The Emotional Intelligence Society of Australia (EISA) firmly believes that emotional intelligence is an essential skill for all humans.

The purpose of this White Paper is to define and describe emotional intelligence, present some of the research on the benefits of emotional intelligence, and describe the application of emotional intelligence in various professions.

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## DEFINITIONS of EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

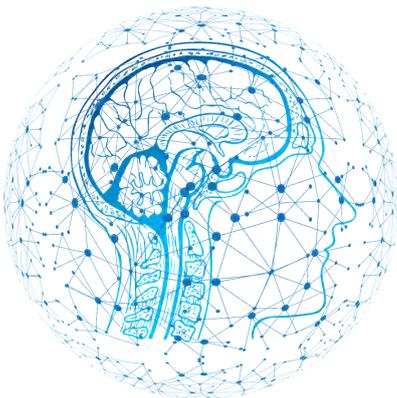
Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10.

...the capacity to carry out abstract thought, as well as the general ability to learn and adapt to the environment...Different types of intelligence are often distinguished according to the kinds of information on which they operate... We conceive of EI, therefore, as operating on emotional information.

Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, 2004, p. 198

Emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual to understand their own emotions, as well as other peoples' emotions, and ultimately to make decisions using this emotional information during everyday life and in the workplace.

Howe, 2009, p.24



"...ultimately, being emotionally and socially intelligent means to effectively manage personal, social and environmental change by realistically and flexibly dealing with the immediate situation, solving problems and making decisions. To do this, we need to manage emotions so that they work for us and not against us and we need to be sufficiently optimistic, positive and self-motivated".

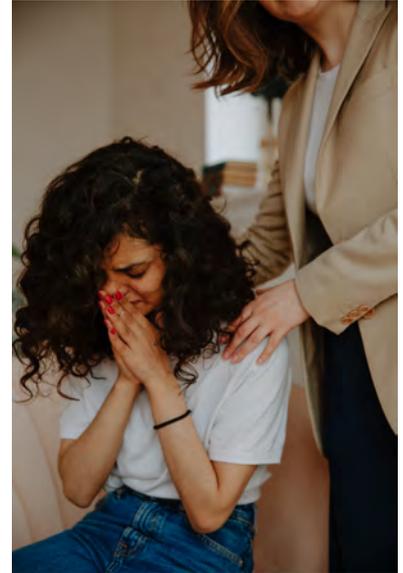
Bar-On, 2006, p. 4

Emotional intelligence is recognised as an integral part of human cognitive capability.[1]

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## IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONS IN OUR EVERY DAY LIVES

Emotions are present in our personal and work lives. Emotions are potent drivers that can positively and negatively influence our decision-making, judgement, learning, problem solving, and our behaviours. [3] Research has established some links between cognitive ability and emotion through working memory and fluid intelligence. Working memory is the temporary storage of information whilst doing higher-order cognitive functions such as reasoning and comprehension. By contrast, fluid intelligence is the intelligence representing abstraction and problem solving free from prior experience and education. Together, working memory and fluid intelligence use emotionally laden information, called 'hot' information, to allow novel problem solving and adaptive changes.[1]



Emotions have been portrayed as waves of energy that flow through our bodies and communicate to us. [4] We constantly experience emotions happiness, shame, curiosity, grief, worry, and uncertainty. Emotions assist us to understand ourselves and others, connect with others and groups, and communicate with others. Emotions assist us to decide whether to run from danger, stand-up and verbally defend ourselves or others, or give someone a hug.



Emotions have three distinct functions: a basic survival function (for individuals), a communication function (between two people), and a social coordination function (with groups or teams).[5] Emotions play a role in the creation and maintenance of groups and workplace teams. Group cohesion can be enhanced by positive emotions such as joy, celebration, and surprise (e.g. supporting a sporting team; experiencing success in the workplace). Negative emotions also bring people closer (e.g. frustration in the workplace can be a catalyst for change; groups who experience grief might prefer to be with those who feel similar emotions).[5]

## **PROFESSIONAL BENEFITS of EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Reassuringly, research has reported that emotional intelligence is malleable and can be improved in adults [6]. Research has shown that EI can be enhanced through participation in EI workshops that focus on specific EI skills.[7] An essential factor in a person's ability to improve their EI is receiving accurate feedback from peers, managers, or mentors.[8] If you take the time to improve your emotional intelligence abilities, then you may start to experience the following benefits.

### **Emotional self-awareness**

Emotional self-awareness is our ability to recognise and understand our own emotions. Emotional self-awareness involves the ability to differentiate between subtleties in these emotions while being aware of their causes and the impact they have on the thoughts and actions of oneself and others.[9]

### **Regulate and manage emotions**

Stress plays a major part in our lives. Our stress response may hinder our ability to think and make decisions. When we are stressed, if we implement emotional intelligence strategies (e.g. using mindfulness to become more aware of our emotional state) we may become more self-aware of our emotional reactions and in turn, we may be able to regulate our emotions and improve resultant behaviours.

### **Improved relationships at home and work**

When we are able to improve our self-awareness and regulate our own emotions, we build the capacity to tune into the emotional state of our families and work colleagues. The ability to accurately read other people's feeling aids positive interactions and fosters growth in relationships.

### **Authentic leadership**

Emotional intelligence is a core component underpinning authentic leadership. Self-awareness within an authentic leadership is "...the degree to which the leader reflects and demonstrates an understanding of how (s)he derives and makes sense of the world and is aware of his or her strengths, limitations, how others see him or her, and how (s)he impacts others. Authentic leaders...presents his/her true self, openly shares information, and expresses his/her true thoughts and feelings, reinforcing a level of openness with others that allow others to be comfortable and forthcoming with their ideas, challenges, and opinions..." [7, p.14].

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## APPLICATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE in VARIOUS WORKPLACES

### Healthcare

Healthcare professionals worldwide are inundated with people seeking psychological and emotional support, and the wait-lists for services increases daily. Healthcare professionals work closely with patients whose emotions are aroused, altered, or diminished. The constant demand for services and the complexity of cases being presented are taking a toll on the well-being of those staff providing psychological support. Emotional intelligence and self-compassion are key components that promote well-being and prevent burnout and compassion fatigue for professionals offering counseling and psychological support services.

Studies involving healthcare professionals show that mature EI competencies are positively correlated with reduced stress,[11] enhanced caring behaviours,[12] increased patient satisfaction,[13] and teamwork skills.[14] Teams with higher EI have been shown to have a positive impact on team cohesion and their ability to deal with conflicts.[15] Leaders of health care organisations should encourage their staff to use their emotional intelligence skills on a daily basis.

### Business and leadership

In the workplace, people interact with other people every day. As a result, employees are saturated in emotions and emotional responses from colleagues. Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between a business' performance and the interpersonal emotional intelligence of its employees.[16] Leaders need to manage the emotions that occur: inter-personally (between themselves and others), intra-personally (their own internal emotional state), and the emotions of each team. Research has shown that when the leaders and their employees are emotionally "in tune" with each other, there is a positive effect on organisational outcomes.

### Emotional intelligence and student success

For students, the development of mature EI skills is integral to becoming work ready and for achieving success in the workplace. A major reason for withdrawing from a course of study is the student's inability to manage the emotions that surround a situation, rather than the situation itself. It has been shown that a student's emotional competence enables them to persist with their studies when under pressure.[17] Tertiary education has the remit to ensure graduates have the skills to succeed in the workplace including; a design mind-set, virtual collaboration skills, cultural awareness, new media literacy, novel and adaptive thinking, and emotional intelligence. [17, 18] Many of these desired attributes assist a graduate to foster their 'employability'.



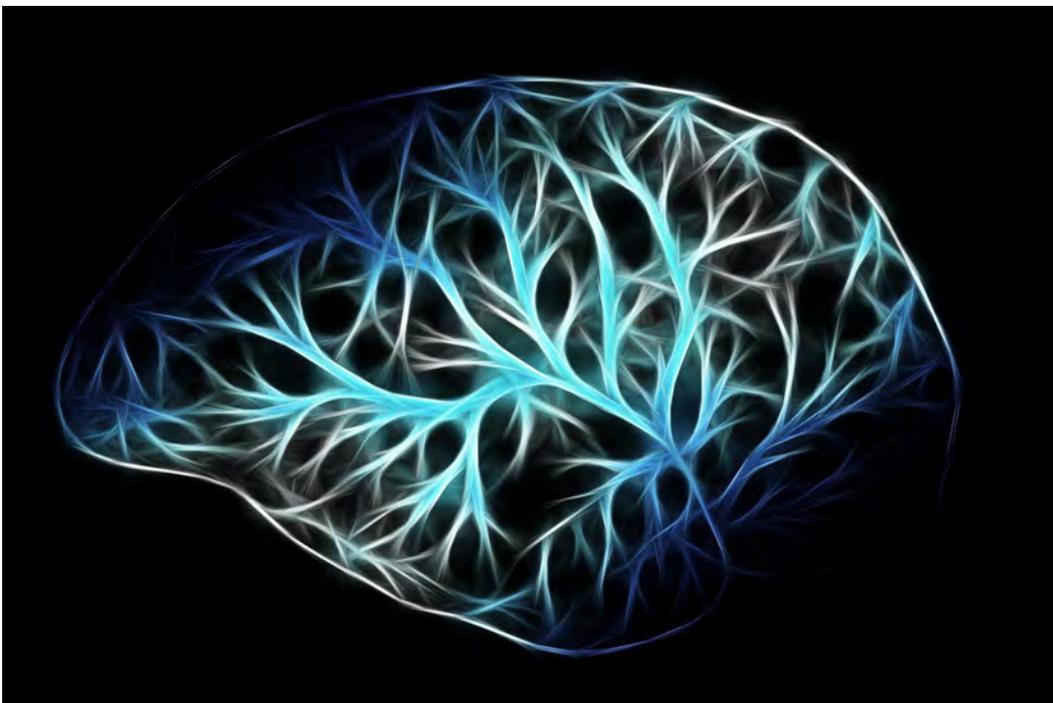
# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SOCIETY of AUSTRALIA

## AIMS and PURPOSE

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