

As Ombuds for Bentley University, I appreciate the vital role emotional intelligence can play in our ability to constructively manage and resolve conflict.

Emotional Intelligence or EI, is the ability to understand and manage emotions, ours as well as the emotions of people with whom we are interacting. The key elements to EI are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Self-awareness is being aware of one's own feelings.

Self-regulation is the ability to control impulses and focus on the desired outcome.

Motivation is the reason we behave in a certain way.

Empathy is the ability to place oneself in another person's shoes and feel their emotions.

Social skills are our ability to communicate effectively, express ourselves clearly and be patient and good listeners.

If we lack certain social skills, we can learn them if we are motivated to improve our emotional intelligence. We can practice being better listeners and better communicators. We can avoid interrupting others when they speak and summarizing back to them what they shared with us. This social skill assures them that we are listening, and we empathize with what they say, even if we do not always agree. Being heard and acknowledged is a key step in addressing a conflict.

I have witnessed conflict resolution by the mere fact that individuals were reassured to be at least heard and their views understood.

We can be open minded and welcome different opinions. We can thank them for sharing their views, and if appropriate, let them know that we learned a new perspective.

We can be more empathetic by allowing others to speak and express their concerns and by responding in a reassuring and respectful way.

We can be more humble and share with others our mistakes and how we have used them as teaching moments. We can place our egos aside and ask others to help when we need help.

We can forgive when someone apologizes, and we can apologize when we act unfairly or offend others even if done unintentionally.

I hope this article can help us better understand emotional intelligence and how we can improve our own.

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