

“Intolerance of Intolerance” Diversity Corner



Beyond This Place... There Be Dragons!

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WHY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, TOLERANCE and DIVERSITY?

The most common question I get when I present a session on Emotional Intelligence and Tolerance is:

What does EI (or “Emotional Intelligence”) have to do with Tolerance and Diversity?

To that question, I will ask...

“Well, is it good to have diversity in an organization?”

I will then hear a resounding **“YES”** from the audience.

I will then ask the audience, **“Really? Is it really?”** The audience will then think about it for a minute.

I will then ask them, **“Is it good to have older people and younger people working together?”**

Again, I will always hear a resounding, **“YES!”**

I will then ask, **“Well, what do older people bring to the table?”**

The audience will then say things like, **“Experience!” “Been there ... Done that!” “Wisdom!”**

I will then ask, **“And what do younger people have to contribute?”**

The audience will then respond by saying things like, “Energy!” “Technology!” “New ideas!”

I will then ask the audience, “And so it is good to put these people together?”

They will then inevitably respond by shouting, “Yes! That would really help an organization out!”

I will then lean into the audience and ask, “Really? Do you *really* think it is a good idea to put these people together who view the world in such *VERY* different ways?”

The audience then thinks about it for a second, then I ask, “And what is going to happen when that young ‘know-it-all’ whipper-snapper tells that older more experienced person that he is *wrong*?”

The audience thinks about that for a second as most of the people begin to smile, thinking of the inevitable clash of egos that is going to occur. I then ask the audience, “And what is going to happen the first time that older person tells that young MIT graduate that he is *wrong*?”

The audience usually snickers at that point since they can then see the destructive nature of intolerance and immaturity starting to rear its ugly head.

THE BOTTOM LINE?

Is diversity good? Yes ... *IF* you are smart enough to use it, which means controlling your **EGO and EMOTIONS** enough to listen to someone else’s idea ... *especially* someone who *disagrees* with you. *THAT* is Diversity.

- **DIVERSITY** is important to have in any organization so we can gather new and different ideas. Diversity is much more than a race or religion issue. It is anything that makes us different, such as older people and younger people, management and labor, and so on. If we do not have ideas that differ, then we have a groupthink mentality, which ultimately ends in disaster. (i.e., Bay of Pigs, Hitler invading the Soviet Union, Enron, etc.) In other words, we do not want a bunch of bootlickers.

However ... having a diverse environment wherein people have differing ideas will end in disaster if we do not also have a culture of tolerance, which means having emotionally intelligent people.

- **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE** refers to our ability to control our **EGOS** and **EMOTIONS** so we can actually let these new ideas we receive from the people around us to take root and grow. If an organization is filled with emotionally immature people, then **INTOLERANCE** will dominate the culture. Emotionally immature people have very fragile egos and are therefore unable to control their emotions. As a result, they cannot stand for anyone to tell them they are wrong or that there might be a better way of doing something. In the end, their goal is to be “right” and to boost their own egos ... not to do what is best for the team. The success of the organization becomes secondary. **TOLERANCE** is impossible to achieve without **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ... and INTOLERANCE KILLS DIVERSITY ... PERIOD.**

IT ALL BEGINS WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In short, if you do not have emotionally intelligent people working with you, none of your programs that require a sharing of ideas will work. Safety Programs fail because people will not communicate with each other, Employee Relations Programs will fail because managers and employees will alienate one another in order to gain a position of power over the other, your Teambuilding Programs will fail because speaking up to correct a problem could make someone look bad and “Social Leaders,” or perhaps the organization itself, will punish anyone who might embarrass them,. Likewise, Change Management Programs fail because those people who have staked out their own little “Kingdoms of Nod” and want to continue to rule “their” areas, so their goal is not to support the organization but to maintain their own power base. Leadership Programs will also fail because far too many emotional children assume positions of power in order to take their own personal ego trip, so they will “kill the messenger” whenever anyone disagrees with their “brilliance,” and so on, and so on, and so on.

Everything we do builds on Emotional Intelligence. As you can see in the following diagram, the basis for *all of these programs* lies with Emotional Intelligence. If we cannot act like adults ... **NOTHING GOOD HAPPENS.**

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:

I know what I am good at and what I am not good at, so I can admit my shortcomings. As a result, I am in control of my **EGO and EMOTIONS**, so I can control my impulses to act and remain focused on my true **GOAL**, I can communicate like an **HONEST RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATOR**, I am able to build real **TRUST** with those people around me and I able to engage in **EMPATHIC LISTENING**. In the end, I am in control of my **EGO and EMOTIONS** instead of them controlling me.



TOLERANCE:

Since I am an Emotionally Intelligent person, I am in control of my **EGO and EMOTIONS**, I can allow others to have their opinions without me feeling threatened. In short, I am more tolerant of others and their opinions because I am comfortable with myself. So, a culture of Tolerance for others' ideas becomes the norm.



DIVERSITY:

Others can now bring their different opinions and viewpoints to the table. Since my organization has a cultural basis of Emotional Intelligence, we are more Tolerant of others when they voice a contrary idea.

We consider and value the perspectives of other people, rather than “kill the messenger.” In this type of environment, Diversity works because “trust” is established. People know it is “safe” to speak up and voice a contrary opinion in an Honest Respectful manner, which allows all of the organization's other programs to flourish. In the end, the organization enjoys a free flow of ideas and communication.

In the end, when we can control our egos and emotions other can have opinions too and we are not offended by someone simply disagreeing with us. So, other programs can now flourish.



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