

TRACOM Sneak Peek

Excerpts from



APPLICATIONS GUIDE



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Strategies for Change

Anyone who has ever slipped from a diet or exercise plan, or who makes the same resolution every New Year, knows that lasting change can be difficult. Many people struggle with change because they do not set the stage for success, and this is simpler than you may think. Modern research has helped uncover strategies to help people succeed when trying to change their behavior. As you begin to work on your Behavioral EQ, follow these tactics.

KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

Behavioral EQ focuses on behaviors that are largely caused by emotions. The first step in changing problematic behavior, or increasing productive behavior, is to understand what causes it. You may have already “diagnosed” your emotional triggers during a Behavioral EQ program. If not, this is the first exercise listed in this book, and no matter what you eventually work on, this is a powerful exercise. Having awareness of your triggers helps you to understand your emotions and, therefore, maintain control of your behavior.

LIMIT YOUR FOCUS

One of the primary reasons why people fail at change is because they try to change too much. The Behavioral EQ Model™ contains fifteen skills, and you may believe that you should work on a lot of them. Resist this urge. Research on multitasking shows that instead of doing one thing well, we end up doing multiple things poorly.ⁱ This is even more true for behavioral change. Choose one skill and devote yourself to working on it every day. If you commit to this, you will increase your abilities in that area within a month, and it will stick.

RELY ON THE WEB

The web we are talking about has nothing to do with the internet. Behavioral EQ skills are not completely independent of one another; they are an integrated web. If you touch one strand, a vibration is felt throughout the web. When you focus on one skill, not only will you improve in that area, but also you will notice improvement in other areas, especially those that are physically close on the Behavioral EQ model. For example, working on Self-Control will influence your Stress Management and Self-Confidence, and others will notice this. Becoming good at one skill makes people better at other skills, and it also influences others’ perceptions through a “halo bias,” whereby people perceive that a person who is skilled in one area as being skilled in other areas.ⁱⁱ

REWIRE YOUR BRAIN THROUGH BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Neuroscientific research shows that people’s brains are literally rewired when people engage in consistent behavioral change exercises.ⁱⁱⁱ New neural pathways are formed that alter people’s thinking and behavior. These findings are revolutionary. For decades scientists believed that people were stuck with the brains they were born with. We now know that our minds are much more flexible than previously thought. Changing your behavior means changing your minds, which means changing your thoughts and emotions. For this reason, the exercises are explicitly behavioral, even those devoted to changing aspects of emotional intelligence, which are experienced within the mind.

What Does Behavioral EQ Look Like?

Multiple studies have shown the importance that Behavioral EQ skills have in the workplace. Many of these studies are listed in the Behavioral EQ Concepts Guide or can be found on research repositories on the internet.^{iv} While the importance of these abilities is understood, it is helpful to get an idea of what high Behavioral EQ looks like in the real world. This section describes common behaviors that people with high Behavioral EQ display within each of the four dimensions of the model. Note that people can be more or less skilled in particular areas within each dimension but, for the sake of clarity, we describe individuals who are skilled across all areas. This can help you get a picture of what it looks like to show these abilities, which might help as you begin to develop a plan for increasing your abilities. The next section highlights specific advice and exercises for each area of the model.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE - SELF

Emotional Intelligence - Self is the ability to consciously identify and maintain awareness of one's own emotions and how these influence behavior. This includes insight into strengths and weaknesses, and level of self-confidence.

Although these abilities occur within people's brains, there are certain behaviors that indicate strength in these areas. People who have high awareness of their emotions are able to control their behavior. They stay calm even when feeling upset or frustrated. They understand their emotions and are therefore able to control their subsequent behavior. Instead of immediately acting on the feelings they are experiencing, they slow themselves down and think through their emotions. This allows them to determine the most productive and appropriate actions to take. They are also skilled at expressing their feelings to others. They can name and describe their emotions and beliefs to others in a clear way, which helps others to understand them. Related to their emotional self-awareness, they also have good insight about their behavior and abilities. They recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and are open to feedback from others. In areas where they are strong, they show appropriate confidence in their abilities. They realize that they have abilities and show this through their actions. They are not arrogant, but their confidence comes across in such a way that others have trust in them and their abilities.

BEHAVIORAL INTELLIGENCE - SELF

Behavioral Intelligence - Self is the ability to control impulses and manage self-motivated behavior. This includes coping under stressful conditions, conscientiousness, and optimism.

One of the highlights of people who have good Behavioral Intelligence - Self, is that they stay in control of their behavior. Related to Emotion Awareness described previously, these individuals are adept at assessing situations and understanding how best to respond, based on awareness of themselves and the context. They do not suppress the feelings they are experiencing, but they monitor their behavior for appropriateness to the situation. In a similar vein, perhaps because they are good at monitoring and controlling their behavior, they are also skilled at managing the stress in their lives. They are likely to show resilience to the demands on their time and to remain composed when under pressure. They have developed habits over time that help them manage their time, not to mention their reactions to challenging circumstances. This resiliency is directly related to conscientiousness. People who are conscientious meet their commitments. They are reliable and do what they say they will do, taking accountability for themselves and



What Does Behavioral EQ Look Like?

their work. Because they are consistent and reliable, others trust them. They know that these individuals will do what they say and keep their promises. Conscientiousness is a major contributor to effectiveness and trust from others. Finally, these individuals show a healthy and realistic outlook that is positive and optimistic. They understand that a positive outlook impacts not only themselves but also those they work with. They are not artificially happy; rather, they carry themselves with a positive mindset. Since mood is contagious, their optimism can be infectious for others, leading to a pleasant and productive work environment.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE - OTHERS

Emotional Intelligence - Others is the ability to recognize the emotions expressed by others, empathize and be open with them, and actively listen to them.

People with high Emotional Intelligence - Others are attuned to other people. They pick up on cues to understand what others are experiencing and feeling. For instance, in meetings they can scan the room and determine the mood of the group and of individuals. They do this by recognizing people's body language and facial expressions, in addition to what people are saying. Related to this, when others are talking, they pay careful attention to what is being said. They listen for messages beyond what the person might be obviously communicating, and they account for the person's behavioral style when interpreting messages. For example, they recognize that some people ask questions as a way of trying to influence others, while others are more direct with their opinions. This awareness helps them to listen for the specific messages that people are communicating. By doing this, they show that they understand people's concerns and needs. They reciprocate by being open about their own thoughts and opinions and showing an active interest in others.

BEHAVIORAL INTELLIGENCE - OTHERS

Behavioral Intelligence - Others is the ability to manage behavior when interacting with others. It includes the capacity to direct emotions toward positive behavior and encompasses skill at building good relationships, influencing others, motivating others, flexibility, and innovativeness.

This collection of abilities might be the most noticeable of all the Behavioral EQ skills. The hallmark of these individuals is that they develop and maintain positive and trusting relationships. They do this by being genuine and honest, and this shows others that they are trustworthy. They maintain relationships over long periods of time and reach out to others regularly, not just when they need something. Related to their genuine ability to develop good working relationships, they are also adept at influencing and motivating people. This is not necessarily because they are aggressive; rather, they are influential in large part because they have taken the time to establish strong relationships. Therefore, people have trust in them and are willing to follow their lead and listen to their opinions. When it comes to reacting to circumstances and solving problems, these individuals are adaptable. They are not overwhelmed by change; instead, they find opportunities when circumstances change. Mentally, they are flexible in how they think about things, where others are often more rigid. This extends to their capacity to solve problems creatively. For example, they will examine the status quo and make an effort to discover areas for improvement. In a similar vein, they are good at building off of other ideas, realizing that this is how creative breakthroughs can occur.

Action Plan

Directions

- 1. Review the Behavioral EQ Model and the Action Planner below, as well as the sample Action Planner on the following page.
- 2. Choose up to three skills you wish to develop, but remember that focusing on just one skill at a time will be the most effective approach.
- 3. In the next section of this Guide, identify development activities that will help you improve on each skill.
- 4. Complete the Action Planner below.

SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED	DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES	HOW I WILL ASSESS MY PROGRESS	RE-EVALUATION DATE



Strategies to Enhance Behavioral EQ

Self-Control: Measures the ability to control emotions and impulsive urges. It is an indicator of the ability to stay composed and focused during stressful times, and to control intense emotions such as anger and euphoria.

LOW	HIGH
<p>People with low Self-Control...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are impulsive, particularly during stressful times ■ Act based on how they are feeling in the moment, without thinking through the consequences ■ Do not monitor their behavior for appropriateness to the circumstances 	<p>People with high Self-Control...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Control their impulses and maintain composure, even during especially stressful times ■ Think through the consequences of their actions and manage their behavior ■ Stay aware of the situation and monitor their behavior for appropriateness

Control your behavior by understanding your emotions.

- ▶ If you haven't already done so, review the first exercise under the Self-Awareness section. This will help you to understand your emotional triggers -- the things that result in losing behavioral control. This is invaluable for understanding the situations and emotions that you experience just prior to losing control of your behavior. Understanding emotions is important for learning how to manage your behavior.

Mentally rehearse common situations that set off your emotional triggers.

- ▶ Research shows that when you mentally rehearse scenarios, you are activating the same neural circuitry that is activated when you are actually in the scenario. Instead of responding the way you typically have in the past, imagine yourself acting in a more productive way. Develop a mental "movie" of yourself and clearly imagine yourself behaving in the ways you want. This will help prepare you for when these situations actually occur. You will have a script to follow.

Force your brain into action by solving a problem.

- ▶ Actively distracting yourself is an effective way to maintain self-control. If you are suddenly in a situation where you are feeling anger or frustration, for instance, shift your focus from the other person

▶▶ DID YOU KNOW?

The amygdala, one of the main emotional centers of the brain, acts more quickly than the prefrontal cortex, the logical and slower part of the brain. The amygdala floods the bloodstream with adrenaline, cortisol, and other stress hormones. It acts faster than the cortex but with less accuracy and, because of this, it makes mistakes. When angry or upset, we literally can't see straight; we get a fuzzy picture of reality, and it takes a long time to recover. This is why emotions are felt so strongly and why they last for a long time. We need to cool down before the logical part of the brain can recover and take control.

Goleman, D. (2011). *The brain and emotional intelligence: New insights*. Northampton, MA: More Than Sound.

Strategies to Enhance Behavioral EQ

or situation to a mental problem. Make the problem challenging. For example, work out the solution to 15×18 . This will force your brain to focus on the math problem and away from the stressful situation. The old adage that you should count to ten is not effective. The reason is that it is too easy and, therefore, does not actively engage the brain. Distracting yourself with a difficult problem is an effective strategy for avoiding an emotional reaction. It is not important to solve the problem correctly. The point is to engage the brain region that solves problems, thereby preventing the emotional center of your brain from flooding the bloodstream with adrenalin and other stress hormones that cause strong emotional reactions.

Engage in healthy escapism.

- ▶ If it is too hard to find a mental problem to solve, another form of distraction is to actively let your attention shift to a pleasant memory. You can sing a song in your mind, think of your favorite place or activity, a funny TV show, whatever works best for you. Similar to solving a problem, this will engage your mind and prevent the amygdala from taking control and causing a strong emotional reaction. Think of this as a healthy form of mental escapism.

When it comes to email, the “send” button is not your friend.

- ▶ Ask a friend or trusted colleague to review questionable emails before you send them. Research shows that as many as one-half of all emails are misinterpreted by the recipient. If you think something sounds neutral, it might be interpreted as offensive or rude. Carefully consider your message and the recipients. What type of people are they? What are their behavioral styles? How are they likely to interpret your email? In what ways could your message be misinterpreted? Just as important, if you are feeling angry or frustrated when writing the email, this is a red flag. It is too easy to hit the “send” button, so develop a habit to always wait at least 30 minutes before sending an email when you are feeling emotional.

Walk away from tense situations.

- ▶ If you are in an emotionally heated conversation or situation, say, “I need time to think about this before I respond,” or some other appropriate response that allows you to leave the situation. Not everything has to be dealt with immediately, especially if tempers are high. Separate yourself from the situation. Allow adequate time to pass so you, and the other person, can calm down. When feeling more controlled, you can then respond to the person. Remember that in these situations the amygdala is in control of your mind. It takes time to calm down and for your prefrontal cortex to resume control of your thoughts and actions. Leaving the situation is not escapism; it is a healthy and productive action that will result in a better outcome.

Make a conscious decision to speak clearly and with decorum whenever you are in an emotionally charged situation.

- ▶ This is an effective strategy for avoiding the urge to blow up and lose control. Think of the language you will use; make sure it is respectful and calmly delivered. Like all habits, practice will enhance your effectiveness and it will become more natural over time. If you know that you will be in an emotional discussion, rehearse ahead of time. Determine exactly what you will say and the language you will use.