

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

### IT'S VITAL ROLE IN ENHANCING THE LEARNING POTENTIAL OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

USHA RAMAKRISHNAN

When a child has a disability, much of his potential may be used up merely handling stress. There could be internal stress, of not understanding his feelings towards his disability, of wanting to present a more positive image of himself to his parents and siblings, on the one hand, and, external stress of peer pressure, on the other.

The combination of a disability and its accompanying stress can wreck havoc on the child's performance, a discerning and emotionally intelligent professional would be very aware of this, and take cognizance of it during management

Findings from brain studies done on people show that under stress the emotional part of the brain, functions in ways that undermines the working of the brain's executive centre, the pre frontal lobes.

This pre frontal area is the site of working memory, the ability to pay attention and keep in mind relevant information. This working memory is vital for comprehension, planning, decision making, reasoning and learning- the very areas we are concerned with in learning disabilities

“When the mind is calm the working memory functions at its best, but when there is an emergency, the brain shifts to a self protective mode”

It steals resources from the working memory and shunts them off to other parts of the brain to keep the senses hyperalert –this is a mental stand that has been tailored for survival –which in turn affects working memory

We must address ourselves to these factors as they impede children's learning In them we must include their inability to understand their emotions, and manage them effectively and thereby get stressed, and be

unaware of it. There is a need to first look at children holistically, at their strengths, their disabilities, and into the accompanying stresses that prevent them from performing at their best

Enable them fill in their inner reserves with new self awareness, abilities to withstand stress, even while working with them to better their performance ,Only then will we be truly enhancing their potential to learn...

The most powerful inputs are those that speak to both the heart and head.....

This nature of intervention is vital and is eminently possible with an emotionally intelligent professional

### Enter Emotional Intelligence

In 1983, Howard Gardner postulated “The Theory of Multiple Intelligences “which redefined intelligence, telling people “it's not how smart you are –It's how You are smart” and postulated eight different intelligences of which 2 were the personal intelligences –the inter personal intelligence and the intra personal intelligence. Further to this in the 1990’s came Daniel Goleman’s intensive work in the area of the personal intelligence which he named the emotional intelligences -elaborating in his books why it can matter more than IQ

There are five main elements to emotional intelligence- self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation, as personal competencies, and empathy and social skills as social competencies

Personal Competence – determines how we manage ourselves, and includes

\*Self awareness our own emotional awareness.

accurate self assessment-knowing our strengths and weaknesses,

self confidence which comes from a strong sense of our self worth and capabilities

\*self regulation which includes self control, the ability to keep negative emotions under check, trustworthiness ,conscientiousness, adaptability in handling change, and innovation-being comfortable with new ideas and approaches

\*motivation-including striving to meet a standard of excellence, commitment, initiative and optimism  
continuing to pursue goals despite obstacles and setbacks

### Social Competence

\*empathy, an awareness of others needs ,concerns , sensing others feelings understanding the others  
point of view, taking interest in what concerns them ,sensing others development needs and enabling  
them develop it

social skills including listening and communication skills, ability to resolve conflict, leadership skills -  
inspiring and guiding others ,and team building skills amongst others .

The combination of these competencies makes for a formidable professional

While great emphasis is paid on the knowledge and skills of professionals, it is ultimately her emotional  
intelligence which makes or mars her effectiveness –and thereby a child stands to gain or lose

...

### The role of E.I at Assessments

To assess, we need to be attuned to the child, and look beyond checklists to guide us

. To be attuned we must listen to both parent and child

To listen we must ourselves be in control of our emotions and feelings to truly understand the unspoken  
needs of another

For without understanding needs, how would we guide?

A mind that cannot control and manage its own feelings would be unable to guide another to better  
emotional self-control, which is the forerunner to developing self-esteem. Emotional intelligence enables  
us to listen and attune ourselves to the other non judgmentally, even while managing our own emotions  
effectively.

At programme planning time too emotional intelligence has a vital role to play

It enables the teacher to see that the program that has been developed is in a flow

“Flow blossoms when a person’s skills are fully engaged, and they lose themselves in their work, “so much so that the work itself becomes the motivator And this we know, the best motivator is internal, not external, and when the child’s programme is pitched at her flow level then she would lose track of time and work with concentration and productively,

In order that they develop skills that matter for life-Emotional competence training should find a place in the program and teach children

to identify and label feelings, to express feelings correctly, skills and strategies to handle and manage impulses, set goals for oneself, to understand another's point of view, to become self aware, to read non verbal cues and communicate both verbally and non verbally

Gradually enabling them to find their strengths, their confidence and their place in the sun

A program is effective where parents are involved. However some parents themselves maybe under stress, unable to handle their emotions, or social pressures, an emotionally intelligent professional would enable parents develop their emotional competencies and manage themselves, for she is aware of the repercussions on the child otherwise. Emotionally intelligent parents in turn would make a vital difference to their child’s learning potential

Emotional intelligence is an idea that can make the difference

## References

Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman

Bantam books 1995

Working with emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman

Bantam books 1998

Frames of Mind –The theory of Multiple Intelligences-by Howard Gardner

Fontana press-an imprint of Harper Collins

