

Workplace  
Wisdom  
For  
9 To Thrive

*Proven tactics and hacks  
to get ahead in today's workplace*

*Nina Sunday*

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This book is dedicated to all my friends and fellow authors at  
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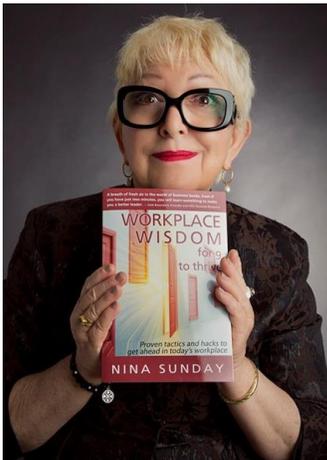
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# INTRODUCTION

Predictions around disruption to the world of work declare there is a new work order. Young people today may have 17 jobs in five different careers. Portfolio careers are on the rise i.e. not one job, one employer, but multiple jobs and employers, perhaps over more than one profession.

In a tech world, it's high social skills that help you stand out and get ahead. The best managers are outstanding communicators who know how to lead a team, collaborate with a diverse range of people and able to influence peers and customers to take action. They know it's not what you say but how you say it that makes the difference. Word choice and how we use language impacts the way we persuade others. In the age of disruption, being adept at human interaction is rewarded with higher wages.

Being average at your job is over. Not being interdisciplinary can harm your career. To thrive in a rapidly changing world, managers and teams need to continuously improve all aspects of their workplace know-how: the art of communication and influence, productivity, sales and service, leading people and creating a conscious and transparent workplace culture.

To future-proof your employability in a VUCA world, (short for volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous), constant reinvention is the key to keeping up, evolving and staying relevant. Your job IS change. It's up to you to stay change agile and continuously grow and reboot your brain. I trust this book will help you achieve the getting of workplace wisdom.

## *How to use this book*

### *For managers*

Each chapter is a stand-alone piece of micro-learning. Copy a chapter to distribute to your team and invite them to read before the next team meeting. You'll find a list of trigger questions in the article *How to Brainstorm* within the *Stay Curious* section, such as:

- What can we **start** doing?

- What can we **stop** doing?
- What can we do **more of**?
- What can we do **less of**?
- What can we **improve**?

And when you've captured in writing a wish-list of next actions, then rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D according to its priority, for example:

- A. low effort, high payoff – do first
- B. low effort, low payoff – do next
- C. high effort, high payoff – just get started with the first action-step
- D. high effort, low payoff – don't bother

### *For individual contributors*

Show this book to your manager and volunteer to copy a chapter to send around, with your manager's blessing, to team members with the invitation to read then participate in an ideas discussion at the next team meeting.

You might like to suggest your manager leads that discussion, or if they decline, offer to do so yourself. At the meeting, use the trigger questions and record each suggestion in writing as they come up. Allocate a specific time. After idea generation, go back to quickly rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D priority.

By you taking the initiative this way, (where there's a positive workplace culture), it will likely identify you as a high-potential team member destined for leadership. (However, if this suggestion is not well-received, ask yourself what can be done to make the culture more conducive to growth and learning; or was it perhaps the manner in which you suggested you take the initiative?)

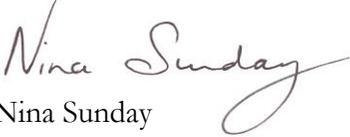
### *Always be reading*

To grow your workplace wisdom read a non-fiction book (digital or print or listen to an audiobook) at least 10 minutes a day. Read at least one book a month, 12 books a year. See the article *Read Your Way to the Top* in the

Gather Wisdom section of this book for reasons to read every day. Leaders are readers. Be a reader.

Feel free to stay in touch by visiting the contact page at [www.brainpowertraining.com.au](http://www.brainpowertraining.com.au) and sharing your thoughts.

The way we did business five years ago can't be the way we do business in the next five. Constant reinvention is the key.

  
Nina Sunday



# Stay curious

Following our curiosity breathes new life into us by taking us down a different path. Like the cat, it's like we have nine adventurous-amazing lives instead of one safe-average one.



# CURIOSITY HAS NINE LIVES

You know what's scary about the saying, 'Curiosity killed the cat'? This proverb paints a negative picture of inquisitiveness; when being curious is the very stuff of innovation and creativity.

## *Curiosity Quotient (CQ)*

Curiosity is different to intelligence. It's possible to have high IQ with a low curiosity quotient (CQ). An intellectually curious person, someone with high CQ, reads widely, not just in their own area of expertise, but from a wide range of subjects. They'll probably also pursue a variety of recreational activities and may master numerous leisure pursuits over the course of their life.

## *Why Be Curious?*

Following our curiosity can lead us to bubble over with new ideas, creativity and innovation. Taking action around new ideas as they come up can add a sense of purpose and meaning to our life, making us more optimistic and confident about the future.

It's self-fulfilling. It's an antidote against feelings of stagnation and hopelessness.

Doing something new can make you happy. Feel stuck in a rut? To shift things, to get unstuck, consider your input. Doing something new inspires us, adds a sense of fun and pleasure and contributes to our overall level of happiness and wellbeing.

Being open to new experiences cultivates psychological flexibility. By becoming a person of many dimensions, life offers better choices. New doors will open.

## *Don't Follow Your Passion, Follow Your Curiosity*

Common advice is to follow your passion. But what if you don't have a passion or you've lost it?

Author Elizabeth Gilbert describes<sup>(1)</sup> a time when, after the success of her book, *Eat, Pray, Love*, she faltered writing the draft of her next book. She

realised she'd lost the spark to write. On the advice of a friend, she took a break from following her 'passion' of writing, backed off for a while, and followed her curiosity instead, 'with its humble, roundabout magic.' Gardening allowed her to think by not thinking. Months later while gardening, an idea of how to fix her book popped into her head. She was then able to restart her second book, *Committed*.

### ***Einstein's Brain***

Albert Einstein is acknowledged as an intellectual giant of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. How was his brain shape different?

After his death at age 76 in 1955, Einstein's brain was preserved and analysed. Weighing about 12% less than the average adult male brain, the cerebral cortex was also thinner. In areas of the cortex specialising in 3D perception and mathematical thought, Einstein's brain was unique. His parietal regions were larger and shaped differently to other human brains. In fact, his parietal regions were so large, each hemisphere was about 15% wider than other brains studied. There's even evidence of his early training in playing the violin.<sup>(2)</sup>

### ***Does Brain Size Matter?***

In Einstein's case the answer is, *not necessarily*. But could these differences in brain shape explain Einstein's insights into space and time?

### ***Neuroplasticity***

One of the great findings of brain research in late 20th century is that brain shape is not fixed, but malleable, like plastic. Brain shape can change, especially when influenced by an enriched environment or when regularly presented with new information and stimuli. Not only does what we think about change the brain, but neural plasticity means that doing something new stimulates your brain to grow new brain cell connections.

An early clue about plasticity was the observation that canary brains grow larger in the singing season.<sup>(3)</sup> A 1998 landmark study about the human brain showed it can develop new brain cells.<sup>(4)</sup>

This kicked off a whole raft of scientific studies connecting learning activity with brain changes. Because London taxi drivers are required to memorise ‘the Knowledge’, (central London’s complex layout of 25,000 streets and thousands of places of interest), a study in 2000 revealed taxi drivers who successfully passed the training, experienced brain changes. Their hippocampus increased in size after the training, and memory improved. Professor Maguire who led the study remarked, ‘The human brain remains plastic even in adult life, allowing it to adapt when we learn new tasks.’<sup>(5)</sup> This finding suggests there’s hope not only for rehabilitation after brain injury but also benefits to the brain from lifelong learning.

German researchers asked subjects over three months to learn to juggle a three-ball cascade, sustaining it for at least one minute.<sup>(6)</sup> After three months, brain scans revealed that in response to daily juggling, certain areas of the brain had grown. Subjects were then instructed to stop juggling and again after three months fresh brain scans determined the increase in grey matter had reduced. This suggests with brain activity, it’s use it or lose it; we should challenge the brain with learning new skills or information.

Similar studies have been done on brains of professional musicians, people who are bilingual, medical students before and after exams and Buddhist monks who meditated.

### ***Build Self-Efficacy***

When you attempt something new, you may be surprised to discover you can actually do it well. This boosts what psychologists call self-efficacy; confidence that if I can do this, it is likely I can do other things well too. It breeds optimism and a feeling of success.

### ***Pick A New Activity and Master It***

Peter Drucker (1909-2005), considered the top management thinker of his time, attempted a new and different hobby every three years. ‘Every three or four years I pick a new subject,’ he wrote. ‘It may be statistics, it may be medieval history, it may be Japanese art, it may be economics. Three years of study are by no means enough to master a subject, but they are enough to understand it. So for more than sixty years, I have kept on studying one subject at a time.’

“This has not only given me a substantial fund of knowledge. It has forced me to be open to new disciplines and new approaches and new methods — for every one of the subjects I have studied, makes different assumptions and employs a different methodology.”<sup>(7)</sup>

Is there a new skill you secretly yearn to master if you only had time or confidence to try?

Remind yourself that attempting something new turns the lights on in your brain, staves off senility and promotes mental flexibility.

### *How To Keep Your Genius Juices Flowing*

Brain function doesn't have to decline with age; learning something new activates the brain, stimulates it, and keeps it young. Doctors encourage people to perform daily mental activity such as crosswords or sudoku as a way to stimulate the brain.

If you feel stuck, revive your spirit of curiosity. If you've lost your passion and energy, become more curious.

### *Don't Just Do What You're Good At*

Challenge yourself by learning a skill you *don't* have a natural talent for. A friend of mine recognised he was poor at dancing. To fix this, he didn't just go along to a few dance classes. He enrolled for a Diploma qualification requiring regular class attendance, study, practice and exams. At his group's graduation performance, while not the absolute best dancer, his technique was equivalent to the majority of his peers. Daily practice transformed his kinetic inability.

### *Curiosity Opens Doors*

Imagine you overhear in a cafe two science students discussing the impact of the LHC on the environment. Your curiosity is awakened to find out, what exactly is the LHC? A web search reveals they're referring to the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland. Suddenly you find yourself reading about atom smashing, proton beams, luminosity, inverse femtobarns and neutrino masses.

Subsequently, when planning a trip to Europe, you find yourself booking a side-trip to Geneva to experience a guided tour of the LHC. This

side-visit has the capacity to become more than a simple half-day leisure activity. Depending on who you meet and your response to the experience, doesn't it have the potential to change the trajectory of your life?

When Steve Jobs delivered the Commencement Address at Stanford University in 2005 he told a story about how, after dropping out of his formal course, he was attracted to study calligraphy. 'Much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on,' Steve explained. 'If I had never dropped out, I would have never dropped in on this calligraphy class, and personal computers might not have the wonderful typography that they do.'<sup>(8)</sup>

Jobs learned a skill before he needed that skill. Sometimes life is understood in reverse. It was years after studying calligraphy that the benefit of that skill manifested in his design approach.

Invest in yourself. You are your own best asset. As you invest in yourself with courses, certifications, skills, the more valuable the asset — you — becomes.

### *You Are a Genius . . . At Something*

A genius is someone who can put two dissimilar ideas together and come up with a fresh idea. 'Some of the most significant ideas come about when someone sees a problem in a new way — often by combining disparate elements that initially seemed unrelated,' writes Dorie Clark.<sup>(9)</sup>

A genius doesn't have to be good at everything; anyone can be a genius at something if they focus, research and invest time to reflect on a question, problem or issue.

Architect and inventor, Buckminster Fuller said, 'The things to do are: the things that need doing, that you see need to be done, and that no one else seems to see need to be done.'<sup>(10)</sup>

The Japanese philosophy of Kaizen suggests the real work we should be doing in the world is continuous improvement; constant reinvention. Look around, focus on a product or an action and ask yourself, 'How else can we do this?'. The next chapter, *Reinvent*, explores the philosophies of Kaizen, Marginal Gains and the 1% Improvement Rule.

### *Multiple Intelligences*

Intelligence is more than being good at English or Maths. There are eight intelligences, and individuals display a different mix of the eight.<sup>(11)</sup>

**1. *Linguistic-Verbal Intelligence***

Like to read and write? Good at languages? That's being word smart.

**2. *Logical-Mathematical Intelligence***

Are you good at maths and solving problems? That's number smart.

**3. *Interpersonal Intelligence***

Enjoy socialising with others? Belong to a club? You are people smart.

**4. *Intrapersonal Intelligence***

Enjoy working on your own? Keep a personal diary? That's being self smart.

**5. *Musical Intelligence***

Can you remember songs? Play a musical instrument? You are music smart.

**6. *Visuo-Spatial Intelligence***

Good at art? Or packing the boot of a car? Able to put things together from a diagram, or read a map? Visual and spatial intelligence makes you picture smart.

**7. *Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence***

Are you good at swimming, athletics, gymnastics or dance? Good with your hands? That's body smart.

**8. *Naturalist Intelligence***

Enjoy being in nature? Can you name plants and animals? That's nature smart.

It's easy to go through life thinking some people are smart, some dumb. But consider instead how people can be intelligent in different ways. What if someone can build a motorcycle from spare parts but doesn't excel at written tests? Feel good about what you're good at and admire others for where their abilities lie.

For a garden to grow you have to water it, and it's the same for your brain. A lazy brain does the same thing day after day; whereas challenging the brain with new and different activities builds new neural pathways. To give your brain a workout, try swapping the hand you usually brush your teeth with or change the route you travel to work.

### *Stand Up. Sit Less. Move More*

Regular exercise increases brain function by stimulating new cells to form in the hippocampus — the part of the brain crucial for memory and learning.<sup>(12)</sup> In my Time Management presentations, when I ask the audience if they take a lunch break away from their desk, I'm disappointed to discover a trend for people to eat lunch at their desk while continuing to work.

In scans of the brain after sitting quietly for 20 minutes contrasted with just after a walk,<sup>(13)</sup> brain activity is greater after physical movement. This leads to better cognition, faster, better decisions, more accurate responses.

Here's the lesson. At work find reasons to frequently take a micro-break to get up from your desk. Here's a list of tactics:

- have lunch away from your desk
- take a fresh air break
- walk over to talk in person instead of sending an email
- drink more water so you refill the glass (or go to the bathroom) more often
- use a bathroom that's further away
- park your car further away
- locate your wastepaper bins further away so you have to rise from your desk
- use stairs instead of the lift
- walk around the block at lunch
- use a stand-up desk

- introduce stand-up meetings
- use a headset and stand during phone calls
- aim to reduce sitting by two hours per day

## *8 Ways to Reboot Your Brain*

It's never too late to defrag our mind, reboot our brain, refresh our creativity and find pleasure in finding things out. Here are 8 ways. But the list is endless.

### *1. Do something new.*

Find a public event you'd never usually go to, and go, for example:

- dog show
- dance championship
- basketball match

**Try a sport.** Pick a fresh one and spend the next three years mastering it.

### *2. Go somewhere new.*

Take a short break to explore a place you've never been. Act as if you have a friend visiting from out of town and take yourself sightseeing in your home city.

### *3. Learn something new (whether or not you are good at it).*

Be inspired by Peter Drucker who studied and mastered a different skill every three years. Be inspired too by this Zimbabwe proverb:

If you can walk, you can dance;  
if you can talk, you can sing.

**Try music.** Did you inherit a musical instrument e.g. violin, clarinet, piano? Do you wish you could play? Don't die with your music still in you. Find a music teacher, perhaps one who specialises in teaching adults to play recognisable tunes by ear for self-entertainment rather than learning to read music and practice for exams. (Adults learning an instrument want a quick win.)

**Singing.** Whether or not you've been told you sing out of tune, find a singing teacher. Did you know that if you can successfully distinguish difference in pitch — whether two notes are the same or different, higher or lower, going up or going down — you can most likely be taught to sing in tune? To test your pitch, search on the web for 'pitch sensitivity test' or 'test your sense of pitch' to locate an online test which tests your pitch perception. If you are successful on the test, then you might feel comfortable to get lessons; then you can join a choir or acapella group or barbershop quartet or simply sing karaoke. (Singing is good for the brain.)

4. *Write down your goals.*

Dream something new. At start of each year, write a list of new year's resolutions. Start a bucket list, pick one item at a time off the list and make a plan to do it. Make a vision board by pasting cut-out images from magazines or printed off the web onto a large piece of coloured cardboard to form a collage representing your goals, dreams and perfect life; (or create a digital vision board). Categories could be Time, Energy, Wisdom, Money, Love, Creativity, Career, Travel, whatever. You choose. Olympic athletes and sporting teams have successfully used visualisation techniques for decades; it works.

5. *Draw something, make something, repair something.*

Buy some art supplies, go to a park and paint what you see. Locate an art class and enrol (whether or not you are good at art). Learn to sew or knit or weave or do woodwork or sculpt, anything. Just get started.

6. *Write something.*

Each one of us has a story. Express your ideas to the world. You have a contribution to make. Start a memoir. Start a blog. Start that book. Write your book one blog article at a time (like this one). Fall in love with poetry and write a poem. Read Japanese haiku then write your own. Research your local area and write a community history. Study the genealogy of your family and write its history going back generations. Join a writer's group to connect with like-minded people, to receive

feedback on your writing and grow as a writer. Groups can provide critique, others are a social opportunity to give one another support, motivation, and ideas.

### 7. *Bed, Bath and Bus.*

Three likely situations where new ideas spring to mind are bed, bath and bus:

- going to sleep or upon awakening
- in the bath or shower
- while travelling — bus, plane, train, car

Capture ideas as they come up either by carrying a paper notebook and pen, or add notes on your digital device, or email a message to yourself, or create a calendar reminder. Bursts of brilliance are fleeting and soon forgotten if not captured.

### 8. *Read more.*

Read something different. Successful people read books and read widely. Be well read.

## **HOW TO BRAINSTORM: ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE SECOND RIGHT ANSWER**

When making decisions or solving a problem, instead of leaping onto the first solution that comes to mind, engage in a structured brainstorm to discover a better solution, and here's how to do it.

Brainstorming method can be used for:

- marketing tactics
- innovation
- new product development
- company strategy and decisions

- anything new and better

TIP: Make this a pen and paper exercise. Many of the best authors write their first draft using pen and paper rather than keyboard. The act of writing with pen in hand on paper activates areas of the brain conducive to creative thinking. Choose a space and time where you won't be interrupted.

## *Method*

### *Step 1. Pose a question*

Select a fresh piece of paper or page of a notebook. Write a question top of the page. My wording usually starts with, 'What are 20 possible . . . ', for example:

- What are 20 possible ways to use technology to create a better experience for our customers?
- What are 20 possible low cost, high value items to add to our customer offering?
- What are 20 possible ways to improve how we onboard new team members?
- What are 20 ways our Product/service is different from the competition?
- What are 20 possible ways to provide after-sales customer service so you stay top of mind?
- What are 20 possible ways to stay in touch with a prospect while making the decision to buy?
- *What are 20 possible questions to brainstorm?* (This one question yields a mother-lode of questions to explore!)

### *Step 2. Write Numbers 1 To 20 Down The Page, Left Hand Side.*

Why 20?

Because the first ten ideas are fast, asking for 20 ideas forces your creative brain to kick in. I've often found my best solution was actually idea 19 or 20.

***Step 3. List plausible options and don't stop until you have 20.***

The first few ideas most likely will arrive easily. But around idea 11 or 12, you may experience a lull in the flow of possible solutions.

That's good! Why?

**Psychologists tell us that creativity is often preceded by a mental blank.** So hang in there. Staying with the problem until another thought comes to you is part of the process. And then comes the second wind. Wave after wave of new possible solutions. You may even find you go beyond 20 ideas to 22 or 23. (And often it's those last ideas which are the most elegant.)

***Step 4. Apply the four principles of brainstorming.*****A) Quantity**

Go for quantity, 20 or more, and don't stop till you get there.

**B) Random Order**

Let ideas come in random order (especially if doing a group brainstorm. Don't stop the flow by saying, 'let's look at one area at a time').

**C) Suspend Judgement**

Don't judge whether an idea is practical, cost-effective, been done before, or any other criteria. At this stage, all ideas are equal. If a thought comes to you, write it down, so your brain can move on to the next random idea.

**D) Springboard**

If there is a temporary lull in the flow, look back at suggestions already recorded in your list and consider how you can change — extend, reduce, magnify, do the opposite — an idea to propel you to a fresh idea.

***Step 5. Select the best solution***

Once 20 ideas have been generated, highlight or circle your three favourite options, re-consider those three, decide on first one to action, then action that.

Use this idea-generation method to define best course of action whenever you have a course of action to choose. Often your second ‘right’ answer is the most elegant.

### *Trigger Questions*

Have on hand a list of trigger questions to refer to, such as:

- What can we **start** doing?
- What can we **stop** doing?
- What can we do **more of**?
- What can we do **less of**?
- What can we **improve**?

### *Group Brainstorming*

Use this idea-generation method with a team for them to co-create a decision, a course of action or continuous improvement.

Instead of pen and paper, use a paper flipchart, poster size paper. Pose a question, write it at the top, pre-draw numbers one to twenty, then add ideas in random order as they are suggested.

### *Set A Time-Limit*

To avoid a time blow-out, do set a time limit. Perhaps start with the whole team, then after a time, say 30 minutes, if 20 ideas have not yet been reached, either reduce group size to the most active participants or adjourn the meeting with an instruction to come back next meeting with fresh suggestions to finish the brainstorm.

### *Where Does The Word Brainstorming Come From?*

Alex Osborn is known as creator of the brainstorming technique. His book, *Applied Imagination* was published in 1953.<sup>(14)</sup> Brainstorming by itself may not be sufficient. To fine-tune your ideas, you can use other complementary idea-generation techniques. Brainstorming is just one method.

## WHERE ARE THE GAPS IN YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE?

A life well-lived is a life full of joy and great relationships, a life of success and abundance, a long life of good health and wellbeing.

Here's a short exercise in self-discovery; four quality questions.

### *Happiness*

Happiness includes love and connection, healthy relationships with family and friends, knowing someone loves you, people like you, making time for your children, keeping friends, making new friends.

#### **Quality Question #1**

What is one thing you are not doing now, that if you did, would make a positive difference to your level of personal happiness?

### *Achievement*

Achievement includes success, wealth, recognition, growth, learning, qualifications, wisdom.

What have you achieved that you feel proud of? Perhaps not all achievement is money-driven?

#### **Quality Question #2**

What is one thing you are not doing now, that if you did, would make a positive difference to your sense of personal achievement?

### *Contribution*

What is your contribution to a better world? Is it:

- making a difference
- donating to your favourite charity, (your money or your time)
- leaving a legacy.

Perhaps it's as simple as growing a garden, planting trees.

**Quality Question #3**

What is one thing you are not doing now, that if you did, would make a positive contribution to a better world?

***Health And Wellbeing***

‘Why me?’ people ask themselves when their doctor tells them bad news. Prevention is better than cure. You are a body, not a ghost-like mind. Your body takes you everywhere. What have you done for it lately that promotes good health and wellbeing?

How do you keep your engine purring? Exercise, playing a sport, dancing, energetic walking?

Are you eating well, staying slim? Getting enough sleep? Regular medical check-ups? Is there a niggling pain you’ve been ignoring? Have you quit smoking yet? Do you drink enough water?

Loma Linda University Researchers found<sup>(15)</sup> higher consumption of water helps lower risk of heart disease by up to 60%.

Do you exercise regularly? Here’s a tip:

- Schedule exercise as if it’s an appointment. Write it in your diary. Instead of performing exercise when you have time — make an appointment, with yourself.

Out of a scale of ten, how you would rate your level of health, energy and vitality?

**Quality Question #4**

What is one thing you are not doing now, that if you did, would make a positive difference to your health and wellbeing?

***Action***

Spot places that need more attention and fill in the gaps.

## HOW TO BOOST YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

High emotional intelligence is responsible for productive harmony at work, successful relationships with loved ones and friends, and an inner sense of calm and emotional balance.

For an organisation to evolve from good to great, it requires the people in the business to work well together. Lack of trust, unresolved conflicts or resentment, or individuals not understanding how their actions impact others can be roadblocks to productivity and delivering great results in the workplace.

Unlike IQ (intelligence quotient), there are not as many measurements of emotional quotient or intelligence (EQ or EI).

Academics Salovey and Mayer first coined the term emotional intelligence in 1990.<sup>(16)</sup> They defined it as ability to:

1. perceive emotions
2. use emotions
3. understand emotions
4. manage emotions.

With publication of Daniel Goleman's bestseller, *Emotional Intelligence*<sup>(17)</sup> in 1995, the term became popularised.

Research shows

- EQ skills separate high-achievers from average performers
- managers high in EQ outperform their targets by 20%
- salespeople selected on EQ outperform others by 40%
- leaders who display constructive behaviours have high EQ and the business grows.

So what attributes indicate high emotional intelligence?

### ***Self-Awareness***

Self-awareness is a quality of EQ; knowing what you are feeling and why you are feeling it.

### ***People Reading***

Ability to read the emotions and non-verbal cues of others is also important.

The *Reading the Mind in the Eyes*<sup>(18)</sup> test assesses how well you can accurately read which emotion an individual is experiencing by what you see in their eyes. The test presents 37 photos of pairs of eyes with a choice of four emotions, e.g. ashamed, nervous, suspicious, indecisive.

Accurately reading emotions of people around you means you are sensitive and responsive to people's feelings. That's EQ.

### ***Stimulus Response***

'Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response.'<sup>(19)</sup>

When a bad experience happens to us, we can either respond with a knee-jerk reaction or pause a moment to stabilise our feelings and consider our best response. An emotionally intelligent person has mastery over their emotions and emotional responses. If you can reflect and consider before reacting, you are demonstrating EQ.

### ***Attitude***

Our emotions influence both what we think about and how we think. If you are in a positive mood you will see things differently than when in a negative mood.

### ***Optimism-Pessimism***

When something bad happens to an optimist, they view it as temporary and a one-off event. But when a negative experience happens to a pessimist, they regard it as permanent and universal. A pessimist might even respond to such an event with, 'That always happens to me!'

### ***Here's An Optimism/Pessimism Indicator Question.***

You gain weight over the holidays and you can't lose it. What is your response, A or B?

- A. Diets don't work.
- B. The diet I tried didn't work.

If you answered B, *'The diet I tried didn't work'*, you've taken an optimistic approach; failure is temporary. If your response is A, *'Diets don't work'*, then that's how a pessimist views events; failure is permanent.

### ***Are Optimists Happier In Life?***

Pessimists may view the world (according to them) 'realistically'. Optimists may be under an illusion, but it can be argued they experience more joy in the moment. Growing evidence links an optimistic thinking style with lower risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and infection.<sup>(20)</sup>

### ***Stress Tolerance***

Ability to tolerate stress and being slow to express frustration indicates high EQ.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. When treated in an unfair manner or not shown due respect or consideration, can I avoid becoming too angry or lashing out?
2. Can I maintain emotional equilibrium and stop myself from getting too down when I experience negative events?
3. Can I prevent myself becoming overly worried about things?
4. When I do get upset, can I calm myself down and bounce back emotionally?

Being resilient means staying emotionally buoyant, bouncing back after an upset and not catastrophising i.e. viewing an inconvenience or disruption as, on the scale of things, worse than it really is.

### ***Resilience***

12-step recovery programs use the Serenity Prayer, 'God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference.'<sup>(21)</sup>

It requires emotional intelligence to achieve this clarity.

### ***The Two Marshmallow Test***

This is the scenario. You are given a marshmallow, but here's the deal. You can choose to eat it now; or if you can wait 15 minutes, and not eat that marshmallow, you'll be given a second one.

### *Impulse Control And Delayed Gratification*

Research at Stanford University showed the ability to wait for a second marshmallow indicates future success in life and career.<sup>(22)</sup> Dunedin University research focused on the relationship between childhood self-control and social measures such as health, wealth and crime.<sup>(23)</sup>

Could you wait for the second marshmallow?

### *Flexibility*

In summary, an emotionally intelligent person is able to adjust their feelings, thoughts and behaviours to changing situations and conditions. They are open to different ideas and ways of doing things. They are able to look at the brighter side of life and maintain a positive attitude even when times are tough. They are good at problem-solving and able to identify problems as well as generate and implement solutions.

### *Where To From Here?*

You can increase your self-awareness by:

- observing your reactions
- naming your emotions; 'What am I feeling right now?'
- after a negative encounter, stop, reflect what you are feeling and why
- listening to your tone of voice when you are happy, stressed, tired, hungry.

And if you have opportunity to complete a psychometric test or personality profile, they help you reflect on your strengths and weaknesses and aid you to understand yourself, understand others.



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