

# EQ CONNECTIONS

An Emotional Intelligence Newsletter by E.I. Assessments



**“GET ANGRY, THEN GET OVER IT”**

– Colin Powell

## IMPULSE CONTROL:

**The Learning Line**

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Does it take a whole lot to get you really angry? Are you the person in the office whom other people seek out in urgent situations since they know that you will remain calm and cope with the problem? Even when dealing with high pressure issues in your work environment, do you have the ability to focus on what is important and learn quickly? Responding Yes to these questions means that you would probably score high on *Impulse Control* on the EQ-i 2.0.

In business environments that bombard you with data, facts and information, *Impulse Control* is an important skill to develop since it will help you to slow down, identify and respond to the highest priorities. In an urgent situation, everything may seem important until someone steps forward and asks the right questions to focus the energy of the group

in the best direction of the problem. People who score very low in *Impulse Control* may have a tendency to overreact often without having all of the necessary information.

## WHAT IS THE SKILL OF IMPULSE CONTROL?

I believe *Impulse Control* reflects your ability to manage two very strong emotions, fear and anger, which can directly impact your ability to actively learn and apply knowledge during difficult moments.

## WHAT DOES IMPULSE CONTROL LOOK LIKE?

People who score high in *Impulse Control* on the EQ-i 2.0:

- Have learned how to stay calm and composed in high pressure situations
- Do not waste their time getting angry or upset but instead focus their energies on the issue to be addressed
- Know how to delay or postpone responding in the moment until they have gathered the necessary information



If you know people who get angry easily, are not effective listeners and have reputations for jumping to conclusions, perhaps they need to develop their *Impulse Control* skill.

## THE LEARNING LINE

The reason I refer to *Impulse Control* on the EQ-I 2.0 as “the learning line” is the connection between this skill and a person’s ability to absorb information.

With very few exceptions, clients who score high in *Impulse Control* will acknowledge they were very good students throughout their academic lives and professional careers. This reflects their ability to focus like a laser on important data and filter away irrelevant information. Since they can manage distractions, people with high *Impulse Control* are often effective students and fast learners.

While I believe Impulse Control is needed for learning, the fact is, I often find that executives and team leaders score low in this skill. When *Impulse Control* is the client's lowest score on the EQ-i report, it indicates to me this person is a "driver." He or she is responsible for driving a team's performance and needs to balance learning with achieving results.



## IMPULSE CONTROL & EMPATHY

When I debrief EQ-I reports, I regularly see a correlation between a client's *Impulse Control* and his or her ability to actively listen, which is reflected in the *Empathy* score.

I like to see a balance between an individual's *Impulse Control* score and his or her level of *Empathy*. The balance tells me if a client can move his or her team forward while still being open to feedback and suggestions from others. People who have this balance between *Impulse Control* and *Empathy* are often very good listeners.

Of the **1,356** professionals who completed an EQ-i, it appears that **30%** of this group (**237** women and **166** men) have this balance between *Impulse Control* and *Empathy*. They have the ability to execute a plan and meet deadlines while also being able to listen to important information of feedback from others.

Looking at the same group of professionals, it seems **36%** of them (**218** women and **272** men) score higher in *Impulse Control* and lower in *Empathy*. Depending on other emotional intelligence skills, a person with high *Impulse Control* may be viewed as indecisive or reacting too slowly to circumstances. When they do react, they may ignore or forget others, due to their lower *Empathy*.



The remaining **34%** of this group of professionals (**267** women and **189** men) scored higher in *Empathy* and lower in *Impulse Control*.

## WALKING A THIN LINE

The president of a non-profit had concerns about the VP of technology, Aaron, whom she believed had a lot of potential. When I asked her to be more specific about her concerns, she was vague but gave me carte blanche regarding next steps. The following day, I called Aaron. We talked about my conversation with the president and set a time to get meet once he completed an EQ-i self-assessment.

After spending time with Aaron, I was curious about his responses. With every question I asked, he would give me a quick-witted, funny response mixed with biting sarcasm. We talked about his job and then reviewed his EQ-i results. His three low scores were *Impulse Control*, *Emotional Self-Awareness* and *Empathy*. These scores indicated to me that he potentially lacked the social radar to know when he was offending people. After our session, we agreed to meet the following week.

The next day, I met again with the president and asked her if there were any HR complaints against Aaron. She was surprised and said, "I can't believe that he told you! Not too serious. What did he say?" I informed her that Aaron didn't tell me anything but that his EQ-i results indicated some areas of potential interpersonal concerns.

I saw Aaron as personable, smart but a little too quick-witted. While his cognitive brain helped him succeed with his business goals, his emotional side was often unaware, almost

insensitive, of other peoples' feelings. The complaints against Aaron were about inconsiderate or insensitive comments he made to co-workers. Since Aaron was not emotionally self-aware, with limited empathy towards the feelings of others, he would impulsively say things that offended people in the office.

When I learned that no senior leader in the organization ever addressed Aaron about his behavior, I suggested that the president and head legal counsel sit down with him and review the complaints. Aaron needed to fully understand the impact of these complaints and their consequences in detail. I could not coach Aaron until the leadership was honest with him. They agreed that no action would be taken but Aaron received a warning instead. The meeting helped him understand the power of his words. I met with Aaron for two more sessions during which we discussed his increased awareness towards the feelings and perspectives of others. Quite honestly, I was not convinced he sincerely wanted to change.

**“BETWEEN STIMULUS AND RESPONSE THERE IS A SPACE.  
IN THAT SPACE IS OUR POWER TO CHOOSE OUR RESPONSE.  
IN OUR RESPONSE LIES OUR GROWTH AND OUR FREEDOM.”**

– Viktor E. Frankl

## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANGER AND PASSION**

It is easy to make assumptions about the connection between low *Impulse Control* scores on an EQ-i report and a person's ability to manage strong emotions. Yes, there is absolutely a percentage of professionals who score very low in *Impulse Control* and *Empathy* and very high in *Assertiveness* which can mean they wrestle with anger issues. However, I have learned over time that *Impulse Control* is often about managing energy which, depending on the situation, can be either a positive or negative force. For me, angry people are often victims who generate negative energy which repels people.

Juanita was a lawyer who worked with a network of inner-city hospitals managing a variety of healthcare and domestic violence issues. As part of an executive development initiative, she was offered an opportunity to take the EQ-i and have a coaching session with me. On



her overall average score, Juanita scored high in all of the Emotional Intelligence skills with her only low score being *Impulse Control*.

As we discussed the results, she impressed me as intelligent; emotionally self-aware and very interested in learning how she could further develop her leadership style.

It was interesting to listen to her voice change from personable to intense when I asked her, "What gets you angry?"

Her two-word answer was "social injustice." Speaking in an even tone, Juanita then went on to passionately describe the many societal reasons for pursuing the lawsuits her non-profit has filed on behalf of those people whom the healthcare system ignored or forgot. Their legal efforts are pointed at influencing and changing public policy. Her passion for helping, her positive energy, has attracted a group of young lawyers whom she mentors.

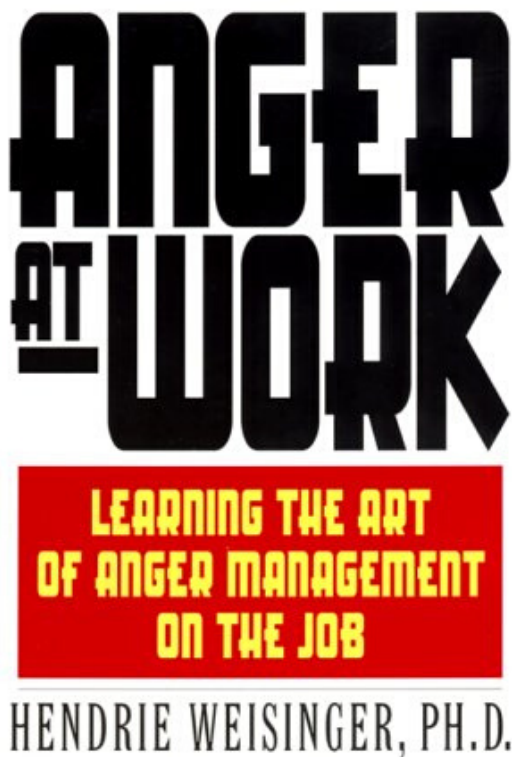
Juanita made it clear that she wants her reputation to be that of a nice, easy-going, sensitive professional that has a passion for the law. However, if she felt that her clients were hurt by the healthcare system and not receiving proper services, then she described herself as getting "intellectually enraged" and would focus all of her energies on finding the fair and legal solution.



## THE ART OF ANGER MANAGEMENT

Anger is a natural emotion which needs to be acknowledged and managed. One of my favorite books on the topic was written by Dr. Hendrie Weisinger, *Anger at Work*, which looks at the effects of anger of cognition, emotions, communication and behavior. He explains how anger is incredibly hard to acknowledge if a person is not attuned to the meaning of physiological changes occurring in his or her body.

When you become conscious that you are experiencing anger at work, Dr. Weisinger recommends these steps:



- Take a deep breath and start to speak more slowly. One objective is to begin to slow your heart rate.
- Go get yourself a drink of water. This allows you to step back, disengage and perhaps cool off any caffeine stimulants, which increase anger arousal.
- Notice your posture. If you are sitting down then make sure you are leaning back. Leaning forward is a fighting posture.
- If you feel the urge to wave your hands or shake your fists, keep them at your sides or in your pockets. All that activity quickly increases circulation. Slow down.
- Keep quiet. Sometimes the best strategy is having the discretion to know when not to express an opinion.

Dr. Weisinger identifies those occurrences in life that generate anger and recommends some interesting strategies for managing your emotions. If you ever have an opportunity to attend one of Hank's conference training sessions, you will not be disappointed.

## **“ANGER AND INTOLERANCE ARE THE ENEMIES OF CORRECT UNDERSTANDING”**

– Mahatma Gandhi

### **A SELF-ASSESSMENT MOMENT**

Just stop and think about it for a few minutes. What gets you angry? I mean what gets you really boiling, pissed off angry? Personally, I have a low level of tolerance for watching people being bullied. Knowing this about myself, I need to own that certain people can trigger my anger and be aware of not overreacting. I believe it is important in business to anticipate those situations which may spark strong emotional reactions in you. *Emotional Self-Awareness* can help you understand these triggers, an skill we discuss in Issue 4 of *EQ Connections*.



### **NEXT ISSUE:**

**Issue # 14 Flexibility: A Need for Change**