

Emotional Intelligence & Receiving Feedback

A Critical Reflection on Feedback Given in Public

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INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to identify and understand our own emotions and those of the people around us, and to employ that knowledge in the decisions and actions that we make (Goleman, 1995). The way we respond to being reprimanded heavily influences the extent of the learning that arises from such an experience.

This poster is a reflective look at a situation where the manager of my work criticised me in full view of my colleagues. It explores the underlying emotions of my reaction and considers how the application of emotional intelligence could have improved my reaction in a similar situation in the future.

METHOD

I took Gibbs' (1988) Reflective Cycle approach description, feelings, evaluation, analysis and action plan and considered this incident with the framework of the five Goleman (1995) EI components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. The present findings can also be supported by research about the regulation of emotions (Gross, 1998) and how people react to feedback (Stone & Heen, 2014).

REFERENCES

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THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

During a team update, a boss of mine said I had submitted a draft report that did not include some important figures and some parts of it were unclear, right in front of all of us.

I was not given a chance to speak to my boss in private earlier, when my boss could have brought up this point. My cheeks burned. I felt embarrassed. I was unable to reply so I just nodded and kept quiet. Later, my reaction was to get a bit annoyed. I tried to stay away from my boss and was reluctant to work on enhancing my report due largely to my loss of confidence.

Several days later, my boss came with a one-on-one meeting where he clarified that his intention had been to transparently raise the standards so that everybody would know where the line was, but that he had failed to appreciate how the situation would look to other employees. He apologized and specified point by point the changes he would expect.

01 — ANALYSE EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

How My Emotions Shaped My Actions

My manager mentioned during the team briefing in front of all our colleagues that the draft of my report was deficient of crucial data and some sections seemed confusing. I didn't have any prior indications or a chance to discuss my work face to face.

I felt so embarrassed and my face was burning that I couldn't even think of a proper answer. I was just nodding and staying silent all along. Later on, I thought of the incident as unjust and even avoided my manager. Also, I didn't work on improving the report since I lost faith in myself. One day, after a one-to-one meeting, my manager came up with justifications: he wished they have shared it in front of me first and have a clear vision of the expectations. Besides, he was not thinking of me during the feedback and then he asked for forgiveness and gave examples of the points which required correction.

Building Awareness & Self-Regulation

- ✓ Identify the first reactions of the body, an inflamed face and the shoulders locked up means I am feeling quite defensive.
- ✓ Draw the line between being "criticised in a big group" and "my performance is a failure".
- ✓ Have an immediate response at one's disposal: "Thanks for bringing this up, may we go through it together after this session and make some suggestions?"
- ✓ The most important thing: View feedback as helpful comments to improve your work instead of a judgment on your personality.

02 — EVALUATE EI IN ACADEMIC & PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

Self-Regulation

Handling embarrassment so it does not end participation or strain working relationships.

Empathy

Seeing the situation from my manager's side and judging their intention more fairly.

Motivation

Turning criticism into a reason to improve instead of a reason to disengage.

How EI Supports Difficult Situations

- **Academic:** Tutor comments can sting. EI lets students process the emotion first, then use the comments to strengthen later work (Stone and Heen, 2014).
- **Workplace:** Direct or public comments are common at work. EI helps people stay composed, ask questions and respond constructively rather than retreat.
- **Regulation:** Reappraising a situation early tends to work better than suppressing emotion once it has built up (Gross, 1998).

03 — CRITICAL REFLECTION ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

What Went Well

- Showed that I was able to control my emotions even if I was feeling upset
- Didn't give in to temptations to argue or to justify myself
- After the meeting took my time and had a private conversation to learn from my mistakes
- Was able to meet the deadline for submitting the report after having it revised

What I Would Do Differently

- Just asking a single very relevant question in the meeting
- Not to pull back on or not to push to get revisions done as planned
- Getting a quiet conversation straightaway would be what I request for
- What is the issue (delivery vs. content) and what needs to be worked on are the factors that I will keep separate in the processing.

Action Plan

- When feeling defensive or overwhelmed, first take three deep and slow breaths before saying anything
- Ask a question such as "Which areas should be revised first?"
- Tell the person: "Let's get some privacy and talk this over."

★ KEY LEARNING

EI means to me both understanding my reactions to feedback and managing the feedback itself. It is easy to see a public criticism as a personal attack even if the intention was quite different. Taking some time to ask to clarify and keeping emotions and decisions separate will not only safeguard your self-esteem but

also reinforce work relationships. Instead of remaining silent which is the usual behaviour the next time, I will respond with curiosity, a question like "Thanks, could you point out what I missed ?" can easily change the whole dynamic from an awkward setting to an enlightening dialogue.

