

Emotional Sustainability Practices

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To develop the truly effective solutions that today's complex world demands, our emotional strength and resourcefulness has to be sustainable! Because right now as we are just about to resolve the current crisis, new problems are germinating, others are sprouting up and some tricky challenge has matured to the point it is just about to tap us on the shoulder and insist, "*What about me??*"

Emotional sustainability is achieved through developing (or redeveloping) both our individual and our social skills. It requires personal practices to hone our own adaptability, centeredness, and growth, and it also requires maintaining physical and social support systems that keep us sensitive to our environment and integrated with our community. Ecologically speaking we know that sustainability describes how biological systems remain diverse and productive over time, that concept also fits well for leaders and teams.

We can understand and develop emotional sustainability to produce powerful demonstrations of leadership and team strength that result in continuous growth and development. Sustainability is similar to resilience, another term used frequently to describe leadership goals. Both indicate the capacity for long lasting endurance and responsive engagement.

With the underpinning of emotional sustainability, leaders and teams experience many benefits including:

- They are more able to benefit from conflict
- Leaders and team members are more likely to stay consistently engaged and positive
- They know how to ride the waves of change
- Leaders and team members have courage to regularly listen internally to themselves and externally to others, reflect on what they hear and be responsive because they value relationships and communications skills
- They demonstrate the benefits of reduced stress because they confront unrealistic expectations and maximize their strengths.

Emotional sustainability is exhibited by leaders and teams when they demonstrate the following practices:

1. Awareness: They are aware of their feelings and actions and attuned to those of others.
2. Responsiveness: Having recognized emotional and other forms of communication, they respond in a timely and sensitive manner.



3. Ability and Willingness to Change Perception: While often holding well developed views, leaders and team members are able to open their minds, listen and fully consider the perceptions of others. This skill includes the ability to change their minds and perceptions when appropriate.
4. Stress Management: Leaders and team members act with emotional sustainability when they adjust their stress dials to the right tempo. They need enough stress to be creatively engaged while not overdoing it to the point they lose physical or emotional stamina.
5. Positive Attitude: They look at events with curiosity and a sense of possibility and begin with the presupposition that positive results will unfold even in challenging situations.

Practices for Building Emotional Sustainability with Individuals and Teams include the following five active forms of engagement.

- Active reflection – Take time regularly to stop and breathe and do what Marcia refers to in [Life's 2% Solution](#), *do the triple T – Think Things Through*. It's taking time to notice what you are doing, why and to change as you believe is best. Reflective self awareness is a powerful strength.
- Give feedback individually and to teams – Leadership assessments reflect a large reluctance to give feedback. This creates loss of power that could result from the creative flow of ideas and has a secondary impact of frequently resulting in a buildup of resentment because people don't respond to the unexpressed thoughts or concerns (big surprise!).
- Yoga or other forms of movement – Keep a physical flow moving in your body whether it is with yoga, walking, running, or qigong.
- Be actively aware of something bigger than yourself – Why do you do what you do? Connecting with something bigger than you and following that path provides meaning and purpose to your life. A life of intentional service in accord with your values provides perspective and zest.
- Intend to live a meaningful life – Self-actualization is one of the key skills measured by the EQi 2.0 and one of the key questions is based on the belief that you intend to live a meaningful life. When leaders and teams incorporate the first four skills we've just discussed with this intention, they have the opportunity to deliberately manage their commitments and activities in order to live purposeful lives that are robust without leading to burnout. That's not an easy achievement; it requires conscious and deliberate living.