

Wellbeing and Self-Expression

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Note: This is the second in a series of articles that explores the connections between the EQi 2.0 and wellbeing. Each article focuses on one of the 5 EQi composite areas or the Wellbeing Indicator, which includes the vital skill of happiness.

Self-Expression includes three core skills according to the EQi 2.0: Emotional Expression, Assertiveness and Independence. These three powerful skills are a part of the 16 skills resulting from rigorous research begun in the 1980's by Dr. Reuven Bar-On when he asked the question: "What differentiates people who are successful in responding to environmental demands from those who are not successful?". Emotional Intelligence is a set of emotional and social skills that collectively establish how we respond to the many environmental demands placed on us. "Environmental" is a broad concept drawing on the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual components of our lives.



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The three self-expression skills are foundational for our engagement in the world, they establish the way we speak up, how self-directed we can be and whether we can set appropriate boundaries. Remember the EQi 2.0 module presents the 5 composites and 16 skills in a circle, thus how we talk to others is influenced by all of our EI (emotional intelligence) skills including impulse control and optimism. However, what people notice the most is simply what you say and how you say it, they aren't specifically thinking about your impulse control if you respond shortly because you are out of patience. Rather, your assertiveness is experienced as "My boss doesn't care about me." Or "My team mate thinks it's ok to be rude." How we express ourselves is the "proof is in the pudding" of how we demonstrate the full range of our EI skills, so pay attention! Speak or your voice is lost and your contributions are hidden. Yet speak in a way that is influential and well-received.

Emotional Expression indicates your ability to tell others about your feelings, and even includes your ability / willingness to smile. Smiling is central to your wellbeing! It tells you and others that you are open to positive engagement. One of the best kept secrets of emotional expression is how closely using this skill is related to developing trust with



your staff, peers and others you seek to influence and connect with. Being willing to be appropriately vulnerable by expressing your emotions opens the door for others to connect with you at a more real level. We aren't talking about exposing scary dark secrets. Rather, we're talking about setting context with daily events, such as "I'm worried our team doesn't have the resources to meet this important deadline." or "I'm excited, but also nervous, that we've made it this far in the competition!"

Assertiveness includes the ability to say no when you need to. Far too many of us try our best to be all things to all people and then walk around exhausted. Setting boundaries is core to experiencing wellbeing. Assertiveness also includes the ability to be firm and direct without being offensive. To accomplish this, we need to incorporate skills in empathy and impulse control.

Independence demonstrates that you can make hard decisions on your own. Yet, it needs to be balanced with collaborating with your team mates. Remember, Covey's excellent progression in *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* that as we develop we move from dependence to independence to interdependence.

*Emotional Intelligence skill development is a primary platform
for developing our wellbeing.*

Wellbeing connects with emotional intelligence in indispensable ways. Our wellbeing is impacted daily by our self-expression, by how we talk with others and therefore, the response we elicit.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) studies wellbeing due to its public policy implications. The [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) states:

Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well. Good living conditions (e.g., housing, employment) are fundamental to well-being. Tracking these conditions is important for public policy. However, many indicators that measure living conditions fail to measure what people think and feel about their lives, such as the quality of their relationships, their positive emotions and resilience, the realization of their potential, or their overall satisfaction with life—i.e., their "well-being." Well-being generally includes global judgments of life satisfaction and feelings ranging from depression to joy.



Assertiveness Skill Development

If your assertiveness challenge is speaking up and making more contributions at work and at home, the following steps will help you grow new neuronal pathways that support a habit of using your assertiveness and expand your comfort in participating. If you're a deep introvert, you may always need a bit of internal encouragement to speak up, but you'll have the process in place to tap into.

Improve your ability to speak up assertively by:

1. Commit to speaking up once or twice a day every day for a meaningful time, such as 21 days.* Pace yourself, speak up in safe contexts at first, perhaps a meeting where you usually feel others will get it said and you just don't need to speak up. You'll likely find your voice is valued more than you had expected. Often the talkative folks will be quiet and listen when you speak up because they know you're paying attention and observing well. When it's the weekend, speak up at home or in your community once or twice a day.
2. When you receive positive feedback for speaking up, take a minute to notice the good feeling. This will nourish your commitment to expanding your assertiveness muscles. If you get negative or corrective feedback, listen with interest. Is someone resisting your change just because change is uncomfortable? Or did you speak up with some edginess or abrasiveness, perhaps because you were a bit nervous. If that happens notice and remind yourself to take a breath next time prior to speaking.
3. Write! Take 5 minutes before the end of the day to write a few notes about your experience. This concrete reflective experience and data will prove invaluable as you calibrate your skill and find successful you can be and how much your contributions are valued.

* What is a meaningful time? Some say that it takes 21 days in a row to create a new habit. This can work! However more current research indicates the time to change an old habit and create a new one can take less time or much more and greatly varies depending on the person and the habit. The most important part of starting your new process is to set a time frame that feels reasonable to you and that you will do! If you make it too long at the beginning, you may feel overwhelmed and quickly give up. Perhaps set a 21-day plan and then be willing to extend it if you can see progress yet know you need more intentional practice.

This series of articles connects the 5 composites and the wellbeing indicator of the EQi 2.0 with wellbeing. Your comments are always welcome! Check out our books, [Emotional Intelligence in Action, 2d Ed](#), which provides 4 or more exercises for growing each of the 16 EQi 2.0 skills and [The Emotionally Intelligent Team](#), which covers the 7 EI competencies teams need to be successful and provides