

Emotional Intelligence,



Life and Sport

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Sport performance has taken a great leap over the last 20 years. Technology has enhanced our level of performance greatly through improved equipment and nutritional products. Back in the 1980's it was good enough to be fitter than your opponent, that would secure the win; it was good enough to have more technical skills, it would ensure the upper hand; even having tactical skills would allow for an advantage. Today however, everybody is as fit, as technically and tactically advanced as their opponent. The playing fields have been leveled once again. What possibly could give us the edge that we are desperately looking for to give us the one up on our opponents?

Imagine you are a builder. You have been given all the material you need to build your house. The question you need to ask yourself is, do I have the skills to build my house? Is this material just going to lie around as bricks, sand, wood and glass, or will I be able to construct something with it? Will my house stand firm or will it crumble at the first signs of distress (rain, wind etc)? Will I feel proud of my house or will I be embarrassed? Will I have a welcoming house or will passers-by avoid it? Will others feel at ease in my house or will they feel uncomfortable? Will I be flexible as a builder and make any necessary changes to my house as time goes by or will I hold on to the first layer of carpet I installed even though it is thread bare and does not serve its purpose? Will I ensure the upkeep and maintenance of my house or will I just let it deteriorate with time?

You are the builder of your life; you have been given material to do the job. This material equates to our intellectual abilities or IQ. Some of us receive an electric saw and some of us receive a hand saw. Some of us get a cement mixer and some of us have to mix by hand. The point is, we all get material. For some it might take a bit longer or we may have to put in more effort but we can all still build our house. For others, the electric saw never gets put to use. The question is not what material we get but what we DO with that material. Do you have the skills to build your house? Do you have emotional intelligence to help create a successful and meaningful life?

We may have been given the state of the art material but never do anything with it, while others may have been given standard issue material and build a solid, attractive, functional and award winning house. How does this happen?

Emotional intelligence or **EQ**, is an array of skills and competencies that we develop through out our lives to help establish and maintain a comfortable and meaningful existence. Without these skills it is very difficult to know what to do with our building material. Without emotional intelligence we will struggle to make informed decisions, we will not know how to plan the stages of the building. We might not have the self-belief and confidence that we can actually build a decent house. We find it difficult to manage good working relationships. When the pressure is on and we have to throw the concrete or when a storm is on the way and our roof tiles are not on yet, we will not know how to deal with the stress and anxiety. Or when something small goes wrong like a broken tile, we fall apart.

If you want to make sure that you build the best possible house, and become the most you can be, you need to make sure that emotional intelligence is in your tool box!! So, what is emotional intelligence and how do we use it in sport?

Emotional intelligence consists of 5 main areas:

- Intrapersonal skills – the conversation we have with ourselves on a daily basis
- Interpersonal skills – our interactions with others
- Stress Management – our resilience
- Adaptability – how flexible we are
- General mood – our happiness and optimism

People who have developed and have good **intrapersonal skills** are in touch with their feelings, feel good about themselves and feel positive about what they are doing. They are able to express their feelings, are independent, strong and confident in conveying their ideas and beliefs. They generally wake up in the morning and can't wait to hang out with themselves on their building site of life.

Emotional self awareness is one of the most important skills we can have; it is the builders' control-station, his office. He knows exactly what is happening at all times. For the swimmer, it is when they stand on the edge of the starting block and know what they are feeling and why. This allows them a sense of control over their emotions. If we are aware of our feelings and where they come from, they won't suddenly rush upon us and make us say and do crazy things like, shout at your coach and quit because you didn't swim a PB



People who have developed and have good **interpersonal skills** are responsible and dependable individuals who have good social skills - they understand, interact and relate well to others. These people are able to establish and maintain mutually satisfying relationships. In terms of the builder, he is the guy that others want to work for because they feel comfortable in his presence. When his geyser bursts the plumber is more than willing to help him out because he has had a positive experience with the builder. In a room of cricketers, this person is the one that others tend to gravitate towards, the one that others are curious about. This is the person that we want to share a room with on tour.

People who have developed and have good **stress management skills** are able to withstand stress without falling apart or losing control. They are generally calm, rarely impulsive and work well under pressure. If the builder has this skill in his tool box, he is able to build his house in the most adverse of conditions. He does not rush the process; he waits for the concrete to harden before building the walls. He does not lose control or over react when he realizes he's built a wall skew and has to break it down and rebuild it. For the rower who has an injury that needs rest, she is able to delay impulses to give up or defer temptations to ignore the pain or better yet, is able to resist training on the injury.

People who have developed and have good **adaptability skills** are generally flexible, realistic and effective in understanding problematic situations and arriving at adequate solutions. They understand that the environment is not predictable and they are able to change and adapt to the ever changing world. Flexibility is the builders' rubber and pencil. The area where he wanted to build his swimming pool is now a heritage sight. He needs to adapt to this information and make another plan for his swimming pool. If he is unable to do this, he will never have the experience of swimming in his own pool because he was unable to alter his plans. For the rugby player who is unable to wear the new bright pink springbok rugby jersey, he will never know the glory of scoring a try for the Boks!

People who have a good **general mood** have the ability to enjoy life, have a positive outlook on life and overall feeling of contentment. They are cheerful, positive, optimistic and hopeful individuals. They experience happiness and value the here-and-now. They feel satisfied with their lives, enjoy the company of others and have a happy disposition. They are

optimistic about their future and look at the brighter side of life. They maintain a positive attitude, even in the face of adversity. This builder wakes up in the morning and loves each day that he has. He takes note of and enjoys his surroundings, his achievements for the day and the moments that filled his day. He looks forward to his future and a house he will be proud of. The tennis player wakes up in the morning and cannot wait to get onto the court because that is where she is happiest. She acknowledges her achievements for the day and goes to bed with a smile on her face. She dreams of winning the French Open one day and wakes up energized and excited about her future. It's time to go back to the questions I asked right at the beginning. You are the builder of your life; you have been given material to do the job. Is this material just going to lie around as bricks, sand, wood and glass, or will you be able to construct something with it? Will your house stand firm or will it crumble at the first signs of distress (rain, wind etc)? Will you feel proud of your house or will you be embarrassed? Will you have a welcoming house or will passers-by avoid it? Will others feel at ease in your house or will they feel uncomfortable? Will you be flexible as a builder and make any necessary changes to your house as time goes by or will you hold on to the first layer of carpet you installed even though it is thread bare and does not serve its purpose? Will you ensure the upkeep and maintenance of your house or will you just let it deteriorate with time?

What does YOUR house look like so far? Maybe you are only at the foundation level, or have built the walls or perhaps you are already doing the interior decorating. Perhaps you are still hoping that just having material is good enough, like just having talent for a certain sport is good enough? You cannot build a house without motivation, planning, self confidence, resilience and help from others. Just like it is difficult to build a house without Emotional Intelligence, so is it difficult to excel at your sport without EQ. You can always start building, it is never too late.

Now that you are familiar with the builders' EQ toolbox, you may have noticed that some people are better builders than others. Some sports people are more successful, confident, happy, healthy, energetic and sought after. It is EQ that allows them to build this fantastic house. You can use EQ in your sport to create the most optimal sportsperson you can be.

Don't be the one sitting on your heap of sand, use an EQ toolbox and build a Manor! 🏡