

Personal Resilience and Emotional Intelligence – is there a link?

In business and personal development different topics, themes and theories come in and out of fashion. Many people keep looking for the latest theory hoping it will provide some magical solution. Possibly it might, there again it might not. Sometimes the established ones can give the support and answers if understood and applied properly. I want to explore whether there is any connection between Personal Resilience and Emotional Intelligence (considering at an established concept) and if there are benefits in developing one or the other – or both. Why does it matter? The current economic state around much of the world is challenging, both for organisations and individuals. Organisations need capable and strong leaders at all levels. People need to be able to handle the pressures of these difficult times and maintain their ability to deliver at work and live a balanced and productive life. I will show you an overview of Emotional Intelligence and the part it plays in shaping quality leadership and good interpersonal skills. I will look at the 6 Components of Personal Resilience which help individuals handle difficult times. From there I will explore how developing one can support and help the other. What happens if people start to enhance one of these? They will discover that it can help in many different areas for the organisation and the individuals improving performance and morale.

Emotional Intelligence (Ei) became a popular subject to explore in the 1990's after the publication of Daniel Goleman's work. Suddenly many leading organisations wanted to incorporate this as part of their leadership development programmes and assessment centres. Actually, emotional intelligence has been explored, debated and developed in a number of ways since the 1920's and the term became more common in the 1950's. Before then it was a mix with "social intelligence." The earliest work, by Robert Thorndike, defined this as *"the abilities to understand others and to act or behave wisely in relation to others."* Goleman defined Ei as *"the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships."* He moved it on to spread the core of the concept to awareness of self and awareness of others. His research, and measuring Emotional Quotient or EQ, showed that many successful leaders were differentiated by their Ei rather than by their technical expertise or academic qualifications.

Many of those who have worked in the area of Ei have produced broadly similar conclusions. Taking Goleman's competences and capacities he stated that we can break it down into the following areas:

Personal competence: *(how we manage ourselves)*

Self-awareness – knowing yourself and your own resources, instincts and actions

Self-regulation – managing your own state, impulses and reactions

Motivation – emotions and drivers that help towards achieving goals

Social competence: *(how we handle relationships and interactions with others)*

Empathy – awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns

Social skills – ability to interact with others and get the desirable response.

What emerged was that it was possible to break these down still further and assess them. Even better, people could improve their capabilities in these. Although some aspects are more attitudinal and some more skills based, the right training and development could enhance these. Suddenly, current and aspiring leaders could do more than just learn some leadership models, they could develop some core skills which were going to be beneficial in many areas of their lives.

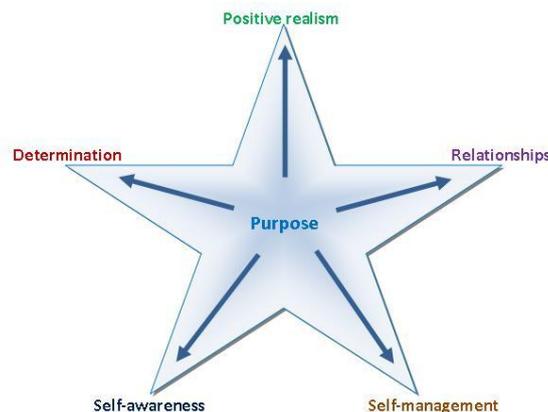
Where does personal resilience fit with this? In many respects it is a totally separate area. There is a growing recognition that in these pressurised or stressful times having a good or high level of personal resilience is one of the most effective ways of dealing with potential stress. Whilst this has always been the case, more recently work has been done to identify and break down what is involved in personal resilience.

What is resilience? *“Resilience can be thought of as our ability to bounce back, or even grow, in the face of pressures and threats.”*

“The ability to withstand adverse events and stressful situations without falling apart, by actively and positively coping with stress” (Stein and Book)

Is it purely a function of one’s personality or character or are there skills and competencies within it? Arguments can be made for each side. The literature and research around resilience shows many common themes about what qualities or characteristics resilient people possess. Where there is a difference of opinion is whether resilience can be learned or is innate. D.L. Couto writing in the Harvard Business Review said, *“We’ll never fully understand it, but we can learn it – and we must.”* At Managing Pressure we believe that there are skills you can develop, while personality will also play a part.

We believe that our personal resilience comprises 6 Components. These are:



Although there are elements of individual personality within each of the components, the strength of each can be measured (using The Personal Resilience Index™). Similarly to EQ, this assessment provides a basis from which development can happen. When we know more about ourselves in each of these Components we can identify specific actions and ideas to enhance them. This is good for the individual as they will become more stress resistant. It is also good for organisation, because the more resilient the individuals within it the better they will handle pressure situations and performance is maintained.

The 6 Components have an overlap with the main competencies and capacities within Goleman’s Ei model. The “personal competency” he identifies includes five of these components as they are fundamentally about knowing and managing ourselves. The relationships Component fits nicely within the “social competency” of Ei.

To develop an individual’s capability in either Ei or personal resilience will pay dividends. The required investment in each helping staff to improve their resilience will also contribute to them increasing their Ei, benefiting them and the organisation. There is a link. Many of the steps you can take to raise the strength within the 6 Components of Personal Resilience do not have to cost much. Using coaching, support groups, encouraging networking, training

workshops are just some of the options. Increasing these will provide a long-term and sustainable improvement and return.

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances.” (Viktor Frankl)