

From Powerless to Powerful – Lessons in Emotional Intelligence

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How do you keep it together so you bring the best of yourself to your career and make money while you're at it? It requires a certain amount of emotional maturity and resilience to not only survive but thrive during difficult times!

How are you feeling about your business? Do you have a vision for yourself and your career along with the desire to continue on? I believe you do - otherwise you wouldn't be reading this! Carl Jung said "Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakens." You need to have a vision of the life you want and a belief that you can make it happen.

The first thing you need to do is to be able to identify the emotions in yourself. As we mature emotionally we start to recognize that it is not what happens to us in life that determines our success, but how we choose to react to it. Using emotions as a source of information and motivation can move you from powerless to powerful if you are willing to "look inside"

Our thoughts affect how we feel and how we feel affects how we act. In the frenetic world of speaking there are times when what matters most, our sense of purpose and our humanity, gets swallowed up in the rush and worry of making a living. But it is the individuals who hold on to their sense of purpose and values who continue to succeed. Never be afraid to take a step back to think about and feel what is important to you.

I talk to meeting planners and event coordinators who continue to be busy regardless of the economic climate. Individuals who seem to find business opportunities that don't exist for others. It would be easy to say that they lead charmed lives and have been blessed with luck that others don't have but I know that isn't true. They have a talent for resourcefulness and flexibility and are able to balance the stressors of life with a sense of hope and optimism. They are able to adapt to new situations and see the opportunity in the adversity.

After studying emotional intelligence for over 12 years I know that those emotional traits can be learned and improved. You can learn things in these times of trouble that you could never learn during a boom economy. Just like steel becomes strong when it is tempered in fire, our resilience is forged through adversity and it will be the individuals who are resilient that thrive through the next few years! When I talk to successful individuals they inevitably speak about past hardships or tragedies that gave them insights that they never would have learned if life hadn't thrown them a curve ball. Although no one wishes for tragedy or troubles, not a soul I talked to regrets what they learned.

Recognize that emotions are a source of information. Fear is a wonderful emotion that lets us know that danger exists and we have to protect ourselves. Learn the lesson and then let go of the fear. When you allow yourself to live in fear, it stifles creativity and creates a potent cocktail of stress hormones that wreak havoc on our bodies and mess with our relationships. Allow yourself to be hopeful and maintain a positive optimistic attitude towards your future, and open up your creative ability. It's not enough that you know what you have to do to be healthy and happy, you have to put aside the time and make it a priority. A healthy body and soul are much more productive. People report that they are more focused and energized after they have been on holidays, so find a way to take mini vacations where you put aside your worries and truly enjoy yourself. You don't need a large bankroll to take a great holiday.

Vacation is a state of mind not a destination. Find something you love to do and let your body and soul rejuvenate. Become a tourist in your own town and experience your area through new eyes and then use that fresh attitude to experience your business through a new lens.

Most highly resilient people seek, accept and leverage the support of other people so surround yourself with positive and hopeful people. Form a mastermind group where you can share ideas and contribute to each others success. Beware and inoculate yourself against those emotional vampires that suck the joy from anyplace they enter. You'll recognize them because you feel tired after spending any time with them.

Balance reality and optimism. If the cost of failure is high, then temper your optimism and look at everything that could possibly go wrong. Once you have made the decision, put aside all of your pessimistic thoughts and believe in your choice. In a study done by Dr. Martin Seligman, optimists enjoyed greater success, longer lives and better marriages. If that isn't enough to convince you to silence your inner Eeyore, then nothing will.

Believe in your abilities, put in the hard work and recognize that your contribution to the world is important. In the wonderful video "Celebrate What's Right with the World" by Dewitt Jones he asks us to not just be the best in the world but be the best for the world.

In my career as a speaker I've had the opportunity to meet some amazing people. I am always pleasantly surprised to find out that the best and the top stars in our profession are often the nicest. Part of their success is due to their ability to make strong connections and their referral rate is high. A meeting planner I spoke to talked of a high profile speaker who was difficult and unreasonable with everyone behind the scenes. Although he got rave reviews from the audience she said that she would

not use him again... that there were other speakers at that calibre that she would rather work with. In a business that is created one relationship at a time, you need to be the person that people want to do business with.

An old fable that I love tells the story of a Native American elder who described his own inner struggles to a friend. He said that Inside of him are two dogs, a grey dog and a white dog. The grey dog is mean and angry and the white dog is good and kind. The grey dog fights the white dog all day. When asked by the friend which dog wins, the elder reflected for a moment and replied “The one I feed the most”.