

# Coaching Skills Strengthen Essential Skills

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Have you ever wondered why some highly intelligent people are not particularly successful, whereas others of lesser intelligence are wildly successful? While having a high IQ is a measure of intellectual functioning and can explain how well we accomplish technical tasks, there is [another form of intelligence](#) that affects our ability to appropriately manage our emotions, to work collaboratively with others, and to be strong leaders. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the capacity to understand and regulate emotions and to recognize the emotions of others and act accordingly. We draw on emotional skills to create lasting and meaningful relationships, to form productive teams, and to help us solve problems. We propose that coaching based on EI can effectively build capacity and promote greater productivity.

Today, Individuals begin their educational journey in kindergarten and often continue through postsecondary and graduate training. During those years, curricula primarily focus on developing academic skills pertaining to the humanities and social and physical sciences. We are taught basic disciplinary skills to increase our knowledge and ability to work and think. But what about the importance of soft skills that focus on *how* we do our work?

Emotional skills are positively correlated with success. Stronger leaders demonstrate higher levels of assertiveness and empathy, independence and strong problem-solving skills. Similarly, the best teachers when compared to their mediocre counterparts, demonstrate higher flexibility, stronger empathy and enhanced self-awareness. Those who excel at their professions often demonstrate a [suite of essential emotional skills](#) higher than their less successful colleagues. It is these skills that we do not learn at school but are trained in the workplace.

[Research](#) indicates that recent graduates lack essential skills around critical thinking, communication and collaboration. [Lane and Murray](#) specifically measured this gap showing that 30 percent of college graduates were underprepared. In response to the skills gap, many businesses have hired coaches to work directly with employees. Since 2008, the demand for executive coaching has increased substantially. The American Management Association [surveyed](#) businesses in 2008 to find that 52 percent of respondents use coaches and an additional 37 percent would in the future. <sup>1</sup>

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As the workforce changes, executive coaches have a significant opportunity to use emotional intelligence as a foundation for coaching to help bridge the skills gap. EI has not just gained popularity as a psychological buzzword; rather a growing body of research shows that EI can be assessed, and more importantly, improved. While IQ is relatively stable, [EI can be enhanced through training](#). Furthermore, EI transcends age, gender and nationality thereby making it a useful foundation for all coaching programs.

The link between successful coaching and emotional intelligence is strong. The workplace is shifting from a reliance on IQ as a hiring guide to a heavier emphasis on EI skills. Because individuals with high EI are more effective communicators, they can create inclusive, synergistic environments where employees feel heard and understood, and are motivated to increase output, better meet goals, and contribute in a meaningful way.

Emotional skills can be improved significantly with coach-skills training. By learning coaching skills, we improve the ability to communicate through deep listening and building trust. Critical thinking skills are enhanced by improving the ability to ask questions with intent. Learning to coach others can facilitate creative thinking and collaboration to expedite goal setting and to develop accountability. Organizations that encourage their employees to learn coaching skills can begin to close the essential skills gap within their workplaces and to mentor and prepare individuals for future leadership roles. Finally, as coaches we understand the need to “coach to culture.” Cultural adaptation of coaching and EI is a topic of great interest that has been studied by Multi-Health Systems Inc. (MHS). MHS has demonstrated that the medicine wheel, embedded in Indigenous cultures, is similar to the [theoretical model of emotional intelligence](#).

There is a growing need in the workplace to build capacity based on emotional intelligence. We suggest that coaches bring emotional intelligence into their coaching repertoires. For individuals and teams, using EI as the basis for coaching can identify the set of dynamic skills they have and those they need to work on. These include how individuals perceive and express themselves, how they relate to others, and how they make decisions and manage stress. Pairing EI training with coaching skills enable your clients to put these emotional skills into action. Using EI as a means to coach to culture can be highly productive and can focus efforts to address critical and pervasive problems that transcend gender, age and ethnicity.

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