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Empowering Occupational Health Nurse Leaders:

Embracing Emotional Intelligence in Diverse Settings

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Disclosures:

Accreditation statement: The American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Inc. (AAOHN) is accredited as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

Contact hours: 1.0


Successful completion: Complete the evaluation form for this session.

Disclosures: None of the planners or presenters for this activity have a relevant financial relationship to disclose with ineligible companies.

Objectives

By the end of this session, learners will be able to:

1. Analyze personal emotional triggers and apply self-regulation strategies to promote resilient leadership in occupational health nursing (Cognitive: Analyze/Apply; Affective: Responding/Organization).
 - Observable evidence: complete a validated EI self-assessment with a reflective action plan and demonstrate at least two self-regulation techniques during a simulated leadership scenario.
2. Demonstrate empathetic communication techniques in leadership interactions to foster inclusive work environments (Cognitive: Apply; Affective: Valuing).
 - Observable evidence: role-play leader–staff conversations using active listening, reflective statements, and inclusive language; receive peer/faculty checklist score \geq predetermined competency threshold.
3. Apply conflict-resolution and change-management frameworks to resolve team issues and evaluate outcomes (Cognitive: Apply/Evaluate; Affective: Responding).
 - Observable evidence: develop and implement a brief conflict-resolution plan for a case study and submit a post-intervention evaluation describing outcomes and lessons learned.
4. Create and justify a workplace plan that promotes psychological safety and staff well-being, aligning strategies with measurable indicators (Cognitive: Create; Affective: Characterization by Value).
 - Observable evidence: produce a unit-level action plan (policy/brief) with at least three interventions, implementation steps, and two measurable outcome indicators (e.g., staff-reported safety climate score, absenteeism), and present rationale.



The World Needs Stronger Emotional Intelligence:

Because of increased Emotional Intelligence demands in today's complex environments, we are seeing:

- High emotional burnout & stress
- Increased conflict & communication issues
- Reduced resilience
- Difficulty managing stressful environments
- Poor interpersonal relationships
- Weak emotional regulation
- High stress and anxiety
- Lack of self-awareness/accountability

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What is Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Overview

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Emotional Intelligence (EQ or EI)

Emotional Intelligence (EI) or Emotional Quotient (EQ):

- Recognize, understand, manage, and utilize your own emotions, as well as perceive and influence the emotions of others.
- It involves self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills to navigate interactions effectively, reduce stress, and improve decision-making



Key Components of Emotional Intelligence:



Self-awareness



Self-regulation



Motivation

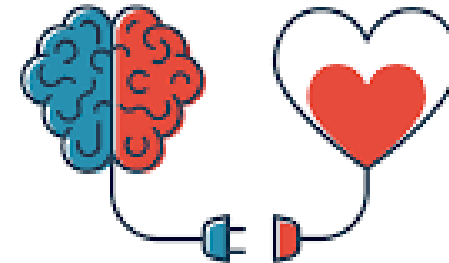


Empathy



Social skills

Emotional Intelligence



Conceptualization and Application of Emotional Intelligence (EI)

| Feature | 1983 (Gardner) | 2026 (Modern View) |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Perspective | Theoretical (Multiple Intelligences) | Practical, Measurable (EQ) |
| Scope | Conceptualized as Intrapersonal/Interpersonal | A 5-part model (Self-awareness, regulation, etc.) |
| Workplace | Rarely mentioned in business | Regarded as a "Career Superpower" |
| Trend | Emerging concept | Declining in populations, yet essential for AI era |
| Key Driver | Academic curiosity | Performance/Leadership necessity |

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Empowering Occupational Health Nurse Leaders:

**Key Practical Applications of Emotional
Intelligence (EI) for OHNs:**

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Emotional Intelligence (EI) in Occupational Health Supports:

- Health and safety in diverse work environments
- More effective case management and employee crises
- Interpreting nonverbal cues to identify burnout
- Better conflict resolution, focusing on mutual respect
- Holistic Primary Care
- Improvements in health surveillance and screening
- More effective workplace hazard assessment
- More effective compliance and policy development
- More effective wellness and education

Emotional Intelligence (EI) in Occupational Health

- Fostering administration, stakeholder, and employee awareness of the growing need for Occupational Health and compliance
- Balance KPIs and the Human Equations
- Deal with Complexity
 - Generations
 - Diversity
- And the list goes on

By embracing Emotional Intelligence, you can move beyond simply managing tasks to truly inspiring and motivating your teams and clients.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) Enables Us To:

Improve Relationships

Enhance Communication

Better Mental Health for Self and Others

Enhance Performance

Build Trust with Employees and Family

Leading to Improved Workplace Health Outcomes

Develop and Strengthen Resilience

Reduced Burnout

Generational, Diversity, and Complexity

Emotional Intelligence



Generational Differences in Emotional Intelligence & Work Styles:

- **Baby Boomers (1946–1964):**
 - Prioritize loyalty and logic
 - Direct communication
 - May view emotions as unprofessional
 - Can struggle with empathy and adaptability
- **Generation X (1965–1976):**
 - Independent, pragmatic, and adaptable
 - Value self-reliance and directness
 - Can struggle with balancing work-life issues with a results-oriented focus



Baby Boomers 1946–1964

Generation X 1965–1976

Millennials 1977–1995

Generation Z 1996–2010

Generational Differences in Emotional Intelligence & Work Styles:

- **Millennials (1977–1995):**
 - Highly collaborative and empathetic
 - Valuing purpose, feedback, and inclusivity
 - They are comfortable expressing emotions and seeking workplace flexibility
- **Generation Z (1996–2010):**
 - High in self-awareness and social awareness
 - Prioritizes mental health, authenticity, and rapid, open communication

Emotional Intelligence Evolves Across Generations

Baby Boomers

Strong emotional regulation, resilience, self-awareness, and restrained emotional expression

Generation X

Self-contained emotional management developed through autonomy, adaptability, and high-stress roles



Emotional Intelligence Evolves Across Generations

Millennials

Empathy-driven EI with emphasis on psychological safety, feedback, and relationship awareness

Generation Z

High emotional awareness and expressiveness; authenticity and inclusion with developing regulation skills



Leveraging Emotional Intelligence for Multi-Generational Success: Styles:

Bridging Communication Gaps:

- Leaders with high EI can translate across generations, helping a Gen Z employee understand a Boomer's preference for structure and a Boomer understand a Gen Z employee's need for autonomy.

Improved Collaboration & Engagement:

- When team members are sensitive to the emotional needs and motivations of other generations, collaboration increases. For example, recognizing that Gen Z wants "purpose" while Gen X wants "flexibility" improves engagement.

Leveraging Emotional Intelligence for Multi-Generational Success: Styles:

Conflict Resolution:

- High EI allows leaders to manage conflicts constructively, focusing on the underlying needs rather than the generational stereotypes.

Creating Psychological Safety:

- Leaders can use empathy and active listening to create an environment where all generations feel respected, valued, and safe, reducing turnover.

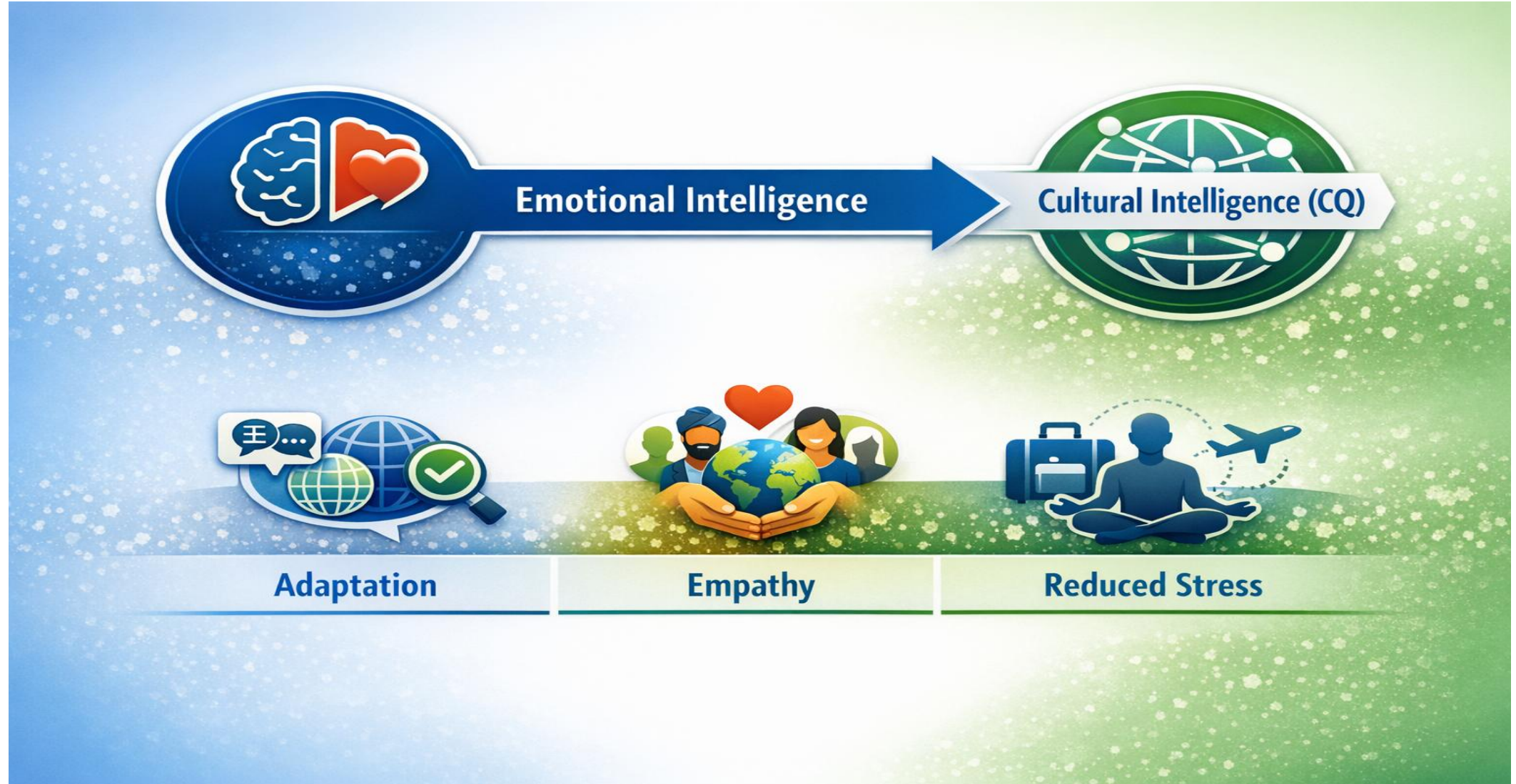
Key Takeaway: While Multi-Generational Styles Differ with EI

The fundamental need for empathy, respect, and clear, authentic communication is universal.

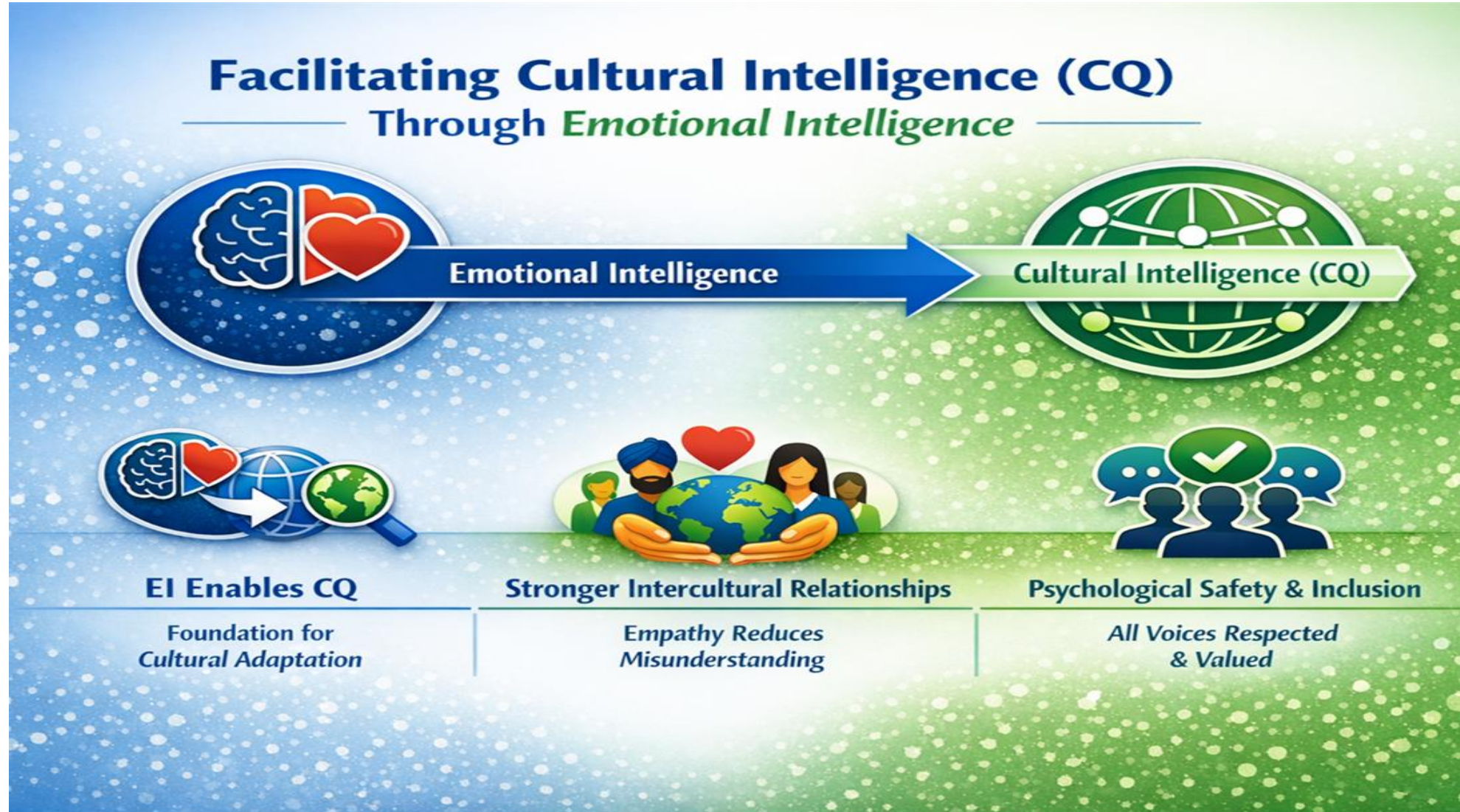
Effective leadership involves the use of Emotional Intelligence skills and a flexible management style to meet these varied generational needs.

Consider a Mentorship Program: Pair younger employees (technological skills) with older ones (strategic experience) to foster mutual respect.

Embracing Diversity & Complexity Through Emotional Intelligence



Embracing Diversity & Complexity Through Emotional Intelligence



Diversity and Inclusion in Occupational Health

Safety and Health Equity: A diverse workforce brings varied perspectives that enhance or increase risk identification.

Psychological Safety: A truly inclusive culture fosters a psychologically safe environment where employees feel valued, trusted, and able to report hazards without fear of retribution.

Inclusive Work Design: Effective OH programs adapt to the specific needs of diverse groups, including considerations for different physical abilities, languages, and cultural backgrounds.

Complexity in Occupational Health

Intersectionality: The social position of any worker is a complex mix of identities: race, gender, class, and nativity, that, when combined, create unique risks.

Structural Invisibility: Traditional OSH models often fail to capture the full experience of marginalized groups, rendering their specific health risks invisible.

Work as a Social Determinant: The scope of occupational health is expanding beyond the workplace to understand how employment impacts broader health equity, including wages, job stability, and work-life balance.

Key Takeaway: diversity, complexity, and EI:

The Role of Empathy:

- Empathetic individuals understand diverse perspectives and use that understanding to improve interactions and create an inclusive culture.

Cultural Intelligence Integration:

- Emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence (CI) are positively correlated. Together, they allow people to adapt to, and thrive in, diverse environments.

Internal Work (Self-Awareness):

- A key component is "affirmative introspection," which means examining one's own biases, triggers, and worldviews to handle differences in a non-judgmental way.

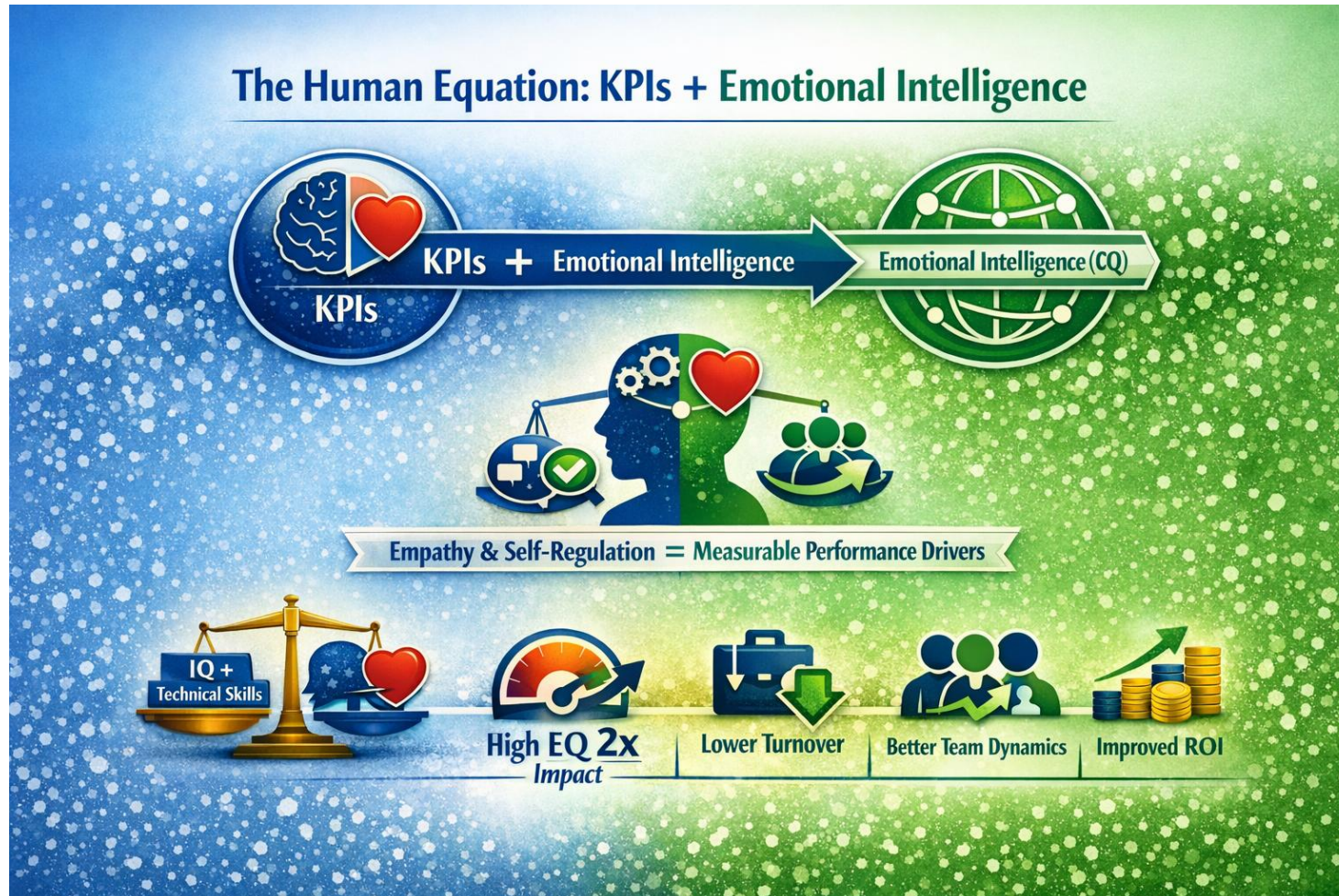
Addressing Inequity:

- EQ helps leaders recognize and address microaggressions and biases that can, if not managed, create a hostile or exclusive environment.

The Human Equation: KPIs + Emotional Intelligence

From “Soft Skill” to Measurable Performance Drivers

The Human Equation: KPIs + Emotional Intelligence



| | Before | Bridge | After |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| Feature | Key Risk Indicator (KRI) | Key Emotional Indicator (KEI) | Key Performance Indicator (KPI) |
| Primary Focus | Risk & Threats (What could go wrong?) | Mental Well-being (How do they feel?) | Performance & Results (What happened?) |
| Time Orientation | Leading (Future-oriented) | Real-time / Leading | Lagging (Past/Present) |
| Purpose in OHS | Early warning signals of hazards | Identifies burnout, stress, anxiety | Evaluates effectiveness of safety measures |
| Data Nature | Quantitative (Thresholds, Trends) | Qualitative & Quantitative | Quantitative (Rates, Counts) |
| OHS Example | Rising number of near misses | Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) | Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR) |
| When to Action | Before an incident occurs | Before burnout or mental fatigue | After incident or review cycle |

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in Occupational Health

Injury and Illness Rates

Absenteeism Rate

Preventive Measure Participation

Employee Retention & Turnover

Workplace Wellbeing Index

The Human Equation: Turning EI into KPIs

Key Emotional Indicators

(KEIs): Leading organizations are beginning to track metrics such as team sentiment, collaboration frequency, and stress levels alongside traditional KPIs like sales and efficiency.

Empathy-Driven Metrics: Customer Effort Score (CES) and employee engagement scores are replacing rigid, high-pressure KPIs in client-facing roles, recognizing that empathetic interactions reduce repeat, frustrated contacts.

Key Emotional Indicators (KEIs) to Track

Instead of just tracking output, organizations are beginning to track "Key Emotional Indicators" (KEIs) to serve as leading indicators for performance:

- **Pulse Surveys/Sentiment Analysis:** Measuring real-time employee or customer sentiment.
- **Employee Turnover Rate:** A direct result of leadership EI.
- **Collaboration Rates:** Measuring cross-departmental engagement.
- **Leadership 360-Degree Feedback:** Assessing self-awareness and relationship management.

The Human Equation in Occupational Nursing



Preventive Care & Education: Nurses use a human factors approach, educating workers on managing fatigue, mental health, and personal lifestyle factors (sleep, nutrition).



Tailored Interventions: The human equation involves listening, being present, and acknowledging that discussing mental health issues can feel risky for employees, necessitating a supportive environment.



Supporting Personal Well-being: Recognizing that personal stressors affect safety, nursing care focuses on individualized support rather than one-size-fits-all policies

When Emotional Intelligence Improves, Performance Follows

Employee Retention: Leaders with high EI retain up to **70% of employees long-term**

Productivity & Performance: **90% of top performers** demonstrate high emotional intelligence

Customer Satisfaction: Strong emotional connection increases customer value by **52%**

Team Collaboration: Higher EI enables better communication, faster conflict resolution, and stronger performance

Reduced Burnout: Empathic leadership improves engagement by **40%+**

Why It Works

EI Drives KPIs: Higher emotional intelligence is linked to greater engagement, reduced absenteeism, and lower injury rates

The Human Equation: Focusing on employee well-being increases satisfaction and trust (measured through surveys and NPS)

Balanced Work Environments: Supportive, low-stress cultures foster retention, resilience, and sustained performance

Engaging Teams Through KPIs



Key Takeaways for Work and Home

- **Keep People Informed**
 - (Transparency & Trust)
- **Keep People Involved**
 - (Ownership & Participation)
- **Keep People Interested**
 - (Curiosity & Innovation)
- **Keep People Inspired**
 - (Purpose & Meaning)

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Practical Applications

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) as an Occupational Tool



Reducing Burnout & Stress: High EI is a strong predictor of reduced burnout and lower turnover intention, acting as a protective factor against empathy fatigue in high-stress jobs.



Conflict Resolution & Collaboration: EI skills allow nurses to handle workplace disputes, improve team cohesion, and manage interpersonal relations between workers and management.



Enhancing Communication: Emotionally intelligent nurses can better pick up on nonverbal cues, enabling earlier identification of mental health or safety issues.



Buffer against Empathy Fatigue: Nurses with higher EI can manage the emotional demands of their job (emotional labor) while maintaining high-quality, empathetic care.

Practical Applications of EI for Occupational Health Clients: Direct Support for Client



Building Therapeutic Rapport: Use empathy and active listening to understand client concerns, building trust that improves compliance and outcomes.



Active Communication & Feedback: Adapt communication styles to match the client's emotional state, ensuring clarity and demonstrating respect, especially during difficult conversations or conflict.



Stress Management & Well-being: Introduce techniques like mindfulness, meditation, and structured breaks to help clients manage workplace stress and prevent burnout.



Emotional Regulation: Help clients identify, process, and regulate their own emotions (Emotional Repair) to handle high-stress situations (e.g., in rehabilitation or returning to work).

Practical Applications of EI for Occupational Health Clients: Direct Support for Client

Self-Reflection and Awareness:

- Keep a journal to record daily emotional responses, triggers, and behaviors.
- Identify your own strengths and weaknesses to understand personal motivations.

Empathy and Perspective-Taking:

- Actively listen to coworkers and patients without judgment.
- Try to see situations from their perspective to better understand their needs and feelings.

Communication Skills:

- Practice clear, assertive communication.
- Pay attention to nonverbal cues like body language and tone of voice.

Practical Applications of EI for Occupational Health Clients: Direct Support for Client

Feedback and Coaching:

- Seek constructive feedback from trusted peers, managers, or coaches regarding your interactions and emotional responses to stress.

Self-Regulation:

- Practice staying calm during high-tension situations and learn to pause before reacting, which helps manage emotions in the moment.

Active Engagement:

- Use simulation or role-playing exercises to practice navigating challenging interpersonal scenarios.

Practical Applications of EI for Occupational Health Clients: Infusing Cognitive Flexibility

- **Problem-Solving & Adaptability:** Utilize [cognitive flexibility](#) to help clients navigate workplace challenges and adapt to new roles or environments.
 - **Cognitive flexibility** is the mental ability to switch between thinking about multiple concepts, adapt behaviors to new, unexpected situations, and shift attention. As a core executive function, it enables problem-solving, creativity, and resilience by allowing individuals to update strategies and overcome rigid thinking.

Core Cognitive Flexibility Skills We Can Teach and Use:



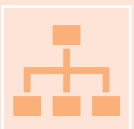
Task Switching (Shifting): Teaching clients to move smoothly between different activities or mental tasks without getting stuck.



Perspective-Taking: Training individuals to understand alternative viewpoints or approaches to a situation.



Problem-Solving & Adaptability: Developing the ability to identify challenges, generate alternative solutions, and adapt to new information or unexpected changes in routines.



Executive Functioning Skills: Enhancing planning, organization, and emotional regulation to manage daily life tasks.

Core Cognitive Flexibility Skills We Can Teach and Use:



"If-Then" Planning: Teaching cognitive techniques to manage changes in environment or rules (e.g., "If this step fails, then I will try that").



Verbal/Cognitive Fluency: Improving the ability to quickly generate new ideas or switch between concepts (e.g., naming words, brainstorming).



Self-Talk (Metacognition): Training individuals to use internal dialogue to guide their own thinking, behaviors, and emotional responses.



Implement Practical Educational Techniques

Self-Reflection and Journaling: Encourage employees to use journaling for 5 minutes a day to recognize emotions and their impact on behavior.

Role-Playing and Simulation: Use role-playing exercises to enhance interpersonal skills and practice responding, rather than reacting, to challenging situations, such as difficult coworkers or demanding customers.



Implement Practical Educational Techniques

"Sacred Pause"

Coaching: Teach employees to take a "sacred pause" (the moment between a trigger and a response) to manage their emotional energy, especially in high-stress environments.

Storytelling: Use storytelling to improve empathy and communication within teams.



Implementing Occupational Health:

- **Training Programs:**
 - Developing EI skills via training, coaching, and feedback can improve team cohesion, leadership, and emotional regulation.
 - **Cultivating Resilience:**
 - Encouraging proactive stress management and fostering a supportive, psychologically safe culture helps employees navigate high-demand, high-stress environments.
 - **Benefits:**
 - Organizations that invest in EI and resilience experience lower turnover, higher employee engagement, and better mental health outcomes.
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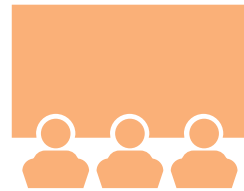
Integrate into Existing Wellness Programs



Workplace Wellness Initiatives:

Incorporate EI and resilience education into routine

- health screenings
- lunch-and-learns
- employee assistance programs (EAPs)



Targeted Training Modules:

Deliver workshops focused on

- stress management
- self-awareness
- empathy, and social skills (key elements of EI).



Utilize Technology:

Promote mindfulness apps (e.g., Headspace, Breathe2Relax)

Thank You

