

WELCOME TO THE



Michigan
Municipal
Executives

2025 Winter Institute



You Have to be the Bigger Person:

Maintaining Emotional Resilience and Seeking
Positive Outcomes During Public and Personal Criticism

Mark Washington, City of Grand Rapids

Griffin Graham, City of Grandville

Holly Young, Inclusion & Experience Wolverine Worldwide



You Have to be the Bigger Person

Perspective of a Manager from a Larger City

City Manager Mark Washington
City of Grand Rapids

COMPLEXITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE



- Value is placed on transparency, accountability, and engagement.
- Some people provide candid considerate feedback, others may offer brutal, demeaning, and harsh critiques, both online and in person.
- Public administrators must value others' rights to speak and express opinions while also preserving their own emotional resilience, professionalism, and effectiveness.
- The basis of criticism might be valid, its delivery can often be hurtful and detract from the core issue.
- How do we navigate this complex landscape, ensure respect for diverse opinions and maintaining a high standard of professional conduct?

**Someone
must be
the bigger
Person!**



COMPETENCIES TO CULTIVATE



Balancing Respect and Professionalism: Learning to value others' opinions while keeping a professional approach, especially when dealing with tough feedback.



Building Emotional Resilience: Developing skills to handle emotional stress and remain composed and professional when responding to criticism.



Effective Communication Techniques: Mastering how to respond to criticism in a way that is thoughtful and maintains professional standards.



Handling Online and Face-to-Face Criticism: Learning to manage feedback in different settings, including social media and in-person conversations.



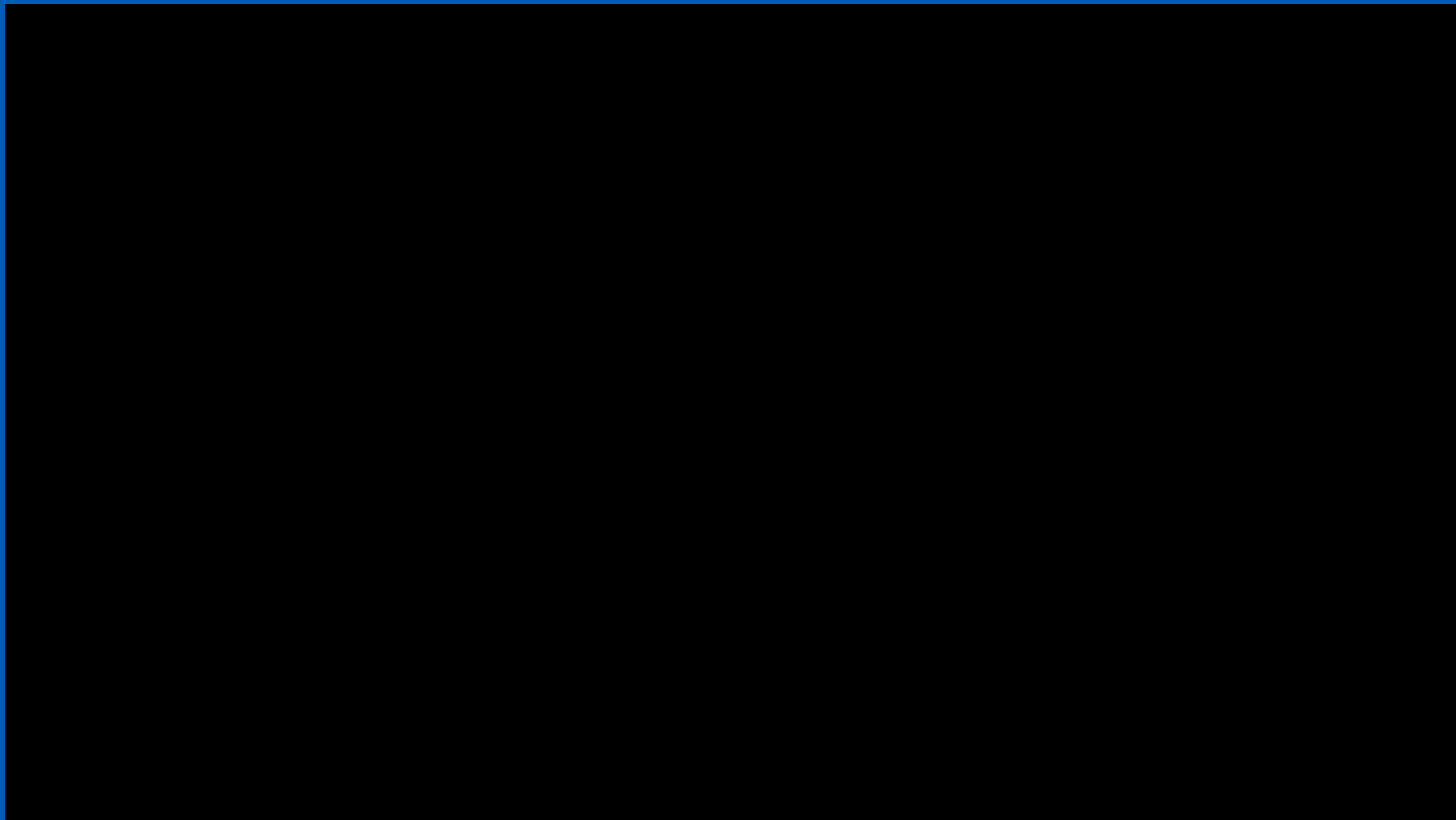
Staying Professional Under Criticism: Keeping a high level of professionalism even when feedback is personal or harsh.



Using Feedback to Improve: Using all types of feedback as a chance to enhance transparency and engagement in public service roles.

VIDEO COMPILATION

From Grand Rapids and Flint, Michigan along
with Antioch, CA



INCIVILITY - HOW RUDENESS STOPS PEOPLE FROM WORKING TOGETHER

SHRM



Incivility can fracture a team, destroying collaboration, splintering members' sense of psychological safety, and hampering team effectiveness. Belittling and demeaning comments, insults, backbiting, and other rude behavior can deflate confidence, sink trust, and erode helpfulness — even for those who aren't the target of these behaviors [(IT CAN SPREAD)]”





LEADERSHIP'S ROLE IN FOSTERING CIVILITY

- Leaders set the civil or uncivil tone.
- Tone impacts individual and team productivity, creativity, and well-being.
- Individuals who feel a strong sense of psychological safety, who perceive their team environment as trusting, respectful, and a secure place for taking risks, tend to thrive.



INCREASED POLITICAL POLARITY SINCE THE PANDEMIC



- Increased emphasis on Public safety, public health, economic recovery, housing stability, climate and social equity
- Negative impact of virtual meetings
- Heightened political debate focusing on divisive and extreme viewpoints
- Polarization has led to wider gaps in opinions on how to move forward in government and society
- Noticeable increase in public participation in local decision-making post-pandemic



THE LOCALIZING OF NATIONAL ISSUES



Local Government is the most accessible government to residents. National and Federal issues are being brought to local bodies to solve or weigh in on:

- Immigration: Drivers License For All
- The War in Gaza – Cease Fire
- Allocation of Federal Tax Dollars
- Macro Environmental Issues
- National Elections
- Supreme Court rulings
- Police Use of Force Incidents that occur in other communities

Setting a clear policy can be helpful





BUILDING BRIDGES-BEING THE BIGGER PERSON

- Honor first amendment rights but also be clear on decorum and expectations in public meetings
- Sometimes a 3 Minute Public Comment Period is not Enough
 - GR reimagined Commission Community Night Outs - Incorporating more opportunities for residents to engage, ask questions
 - Added transparency by increasing access to proceedings (written and video)
- Role Modeling Respectful Discourse
- Create off-dais moments and conversations with colleagues and constituents



KEY FUNCTIONS OF ELECTED OFFICIALS AND STAFF



ELECTED OFFICIALS

CITY STAFF

COMMUNITY BUILDER – BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Focuses on relationships and consensus-building with the community, governing body, appointed officials and other elected officials. The Community Builder fosters relationships and can work through differences.

Focuses on relationships and consensus-building with community members, staff internal to the organization, and other agencies. The Community Builder fosters relationships and can work through differences.

STRATEGIC VISION – BIG PICTURE THINKING

Brings a unique, lived resident perspective that focuses on issues that can have significant impact on the community, both long- and short-term. This role often concentrates on the future and what might make a significant difference, while seeing possible connections and relationships and thinking beyond present data and constraints.

Use subject matter expertise to develop strategies based on priorities and policies of governing body, best practices and profession; focuses on issues that can have significant impact on the community, both long- or short-term. Often concentrates on the future and what might make a significant difference, while seeing possible connections and relationships and thinking beyond present data and constraints.

KEY FUNCTIONS OF ELECTED OFFICIALS AND STAFF (continued)



ELECTED OFFICIALS	CITY STAFF
<p>REPRESENTATIVE CONSTITUENT ADVOCATE</p>	<p>SERVICE DELIVERY / IMPLEMENTER</p>
<p>Serves as a “customer liaison.” In this capacity, the elected official is a conduit between constituents and local government services. Often, residents see the elected official as most responsive to their individual concerns.</p>	<p>Focuses on high-quality customer service delivery in a consistent manner to all. Answers questions and responds to needs as policy and resources allow.</p>
<p>DECISION-MAKER</p>	
<p>Political: much like a judge, wherein information is presented at a public meeting, and the Decision-maker votes it up or down.</p>	<p>Operational: like a manager / supervisor on day-to-day operations (personnel, resources, operations and processes).</p>

KEY FUNCTIONS OF ELECTED OFFICIALS AND STAFF (continued)



ELECTED OFFICIALS

CITY STAFF

TRUSTEE / STEWARD

Involves listening to and respecting constituent views. The Trustee–Steward feels responsible to the community as a whole and to future residents and will make uncomfortable decisions that may run counter to constituent wishes if the decision is in the interest of the greater good.

Involves listening to and respecting constituent views of public and governing body. Involves financial, legal and operational analysis with consideration of developing intended and unintended impacts resulting in policy options with the best staff recommendation.

OVERSIGHT

Focuses on accountability of appointed staff to the elected body and boards with specific responsibilities. Receives and monitors reports on financials, performance, policy and audits.

Ensure accountability of employees; align to Charter, City Strategic Plan and budget; conduct audits, evaluations and investigations; analyze performance and create performance reports; measure and respond to key performance indicators.



You Have to be the Bigger Person

Perspective of a Manager from a Smaller City

City Manager Griffin Graham
City of Grandville



Key Objectives

1. Understand the impact of criticism on you, your leadership, and your organization.
2. Learn strategies to enhance emotional resilience.
3. Learn about resources for ongoing support.



Cost of Emotional Burnout

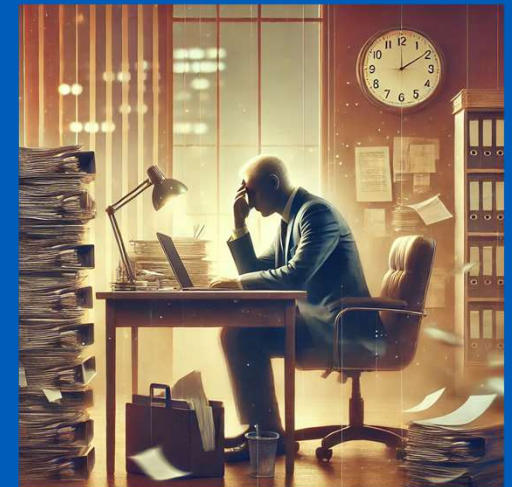
Personal Cost

- Job Satisfaction
- Personal Well-Being
- Work-Life Balance

Professional Cost

- Public Trust & Credibility
- Leadership & Decision-Making
 - “Protection Mode”
 - “Jaded”

Signs of Burnout: Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive





Strategies for Building Emotional Resilience

1. Separate Fact from Emotion
2. Develop a Growth Mindset
3. Maintain Self Awareness
4. Practice Self-Compassion
5. Build a Support Network



Types of Criticism

1. Constructive Feedback
2. Uninformed Criticism
3. Personal Attacks

Strategies for Handling Public Criticism



1. Stay Professional
2. Clarify Misunderstandings
3. Develop a Media Strategy
4. Use Criticism Constructively

Strategies for Handling Personal Criticism (continued)



5. Separate Criticism from Self-Worth
6. Seek Feedback from Trusted Sources
7. Practice Detachment
8. Engage in Self-Care



Take the High Road

- Pause Before Responding
- Engage Constructively
- Lean on Empathy

“Trust is earned in drops, but lost in buckets”
– Kevin Plank



Other Tips from Experience

1. Early Intervention
2. Never “Go Low”
3. Don’t Take the Bait
4. Set the Tone for Civil Discourse
5. Foster Workplace Moral



Tools & Resources

- Employee Assistance Programs
- MME/ICMA Advisors/Peers

“It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it.”

– Lou Holtz



Takeaways

1. Public Role vs. Personal Impact
2. Emotional Resilience is a Skill, not a fixed trait
3. Be Patient & Take Care of Yourself
4. Maintain Professionalism
5. Set the Tone
6. Leverage Your Network



Peer Discussion

- Do you have any experiences to share?
- What strategies have you found effective?
- How do you support your teams through public criticism?



You Have to be the Bigger Person

A Skill Building Perspective

Holly Young

Inclusion & Experience Wolverine Worldwide



FINDING PURPOSE IN THE FRUSTRATION A MEANINGFUL WAY FORWARD

COMPETENCIES TO CULTIVATE



Balancing Respect and Professionalism



Building Emotional Resilience



Effective Communication Techniques



Handling Online and Face-to-Face Criticism

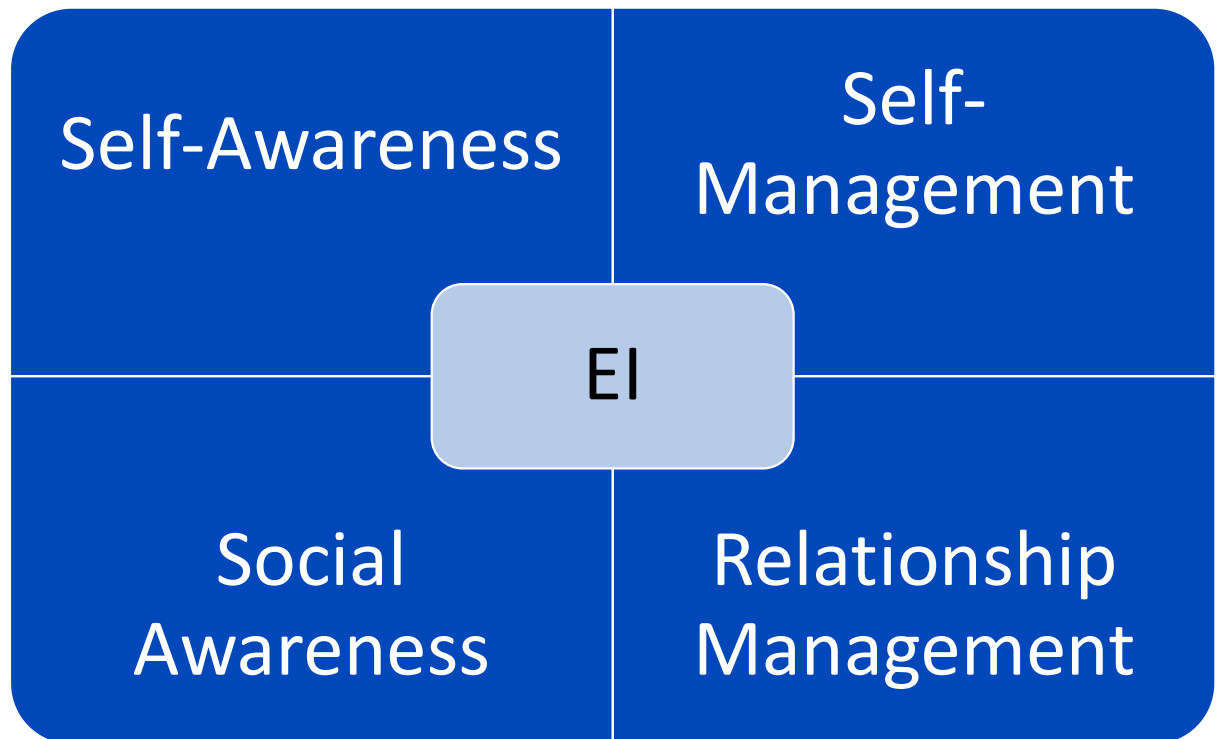
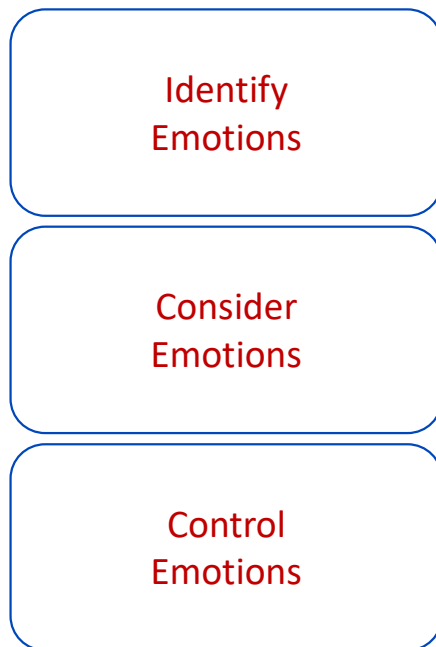


Staying Professional Under Criticism



Using Feedback to Improve

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



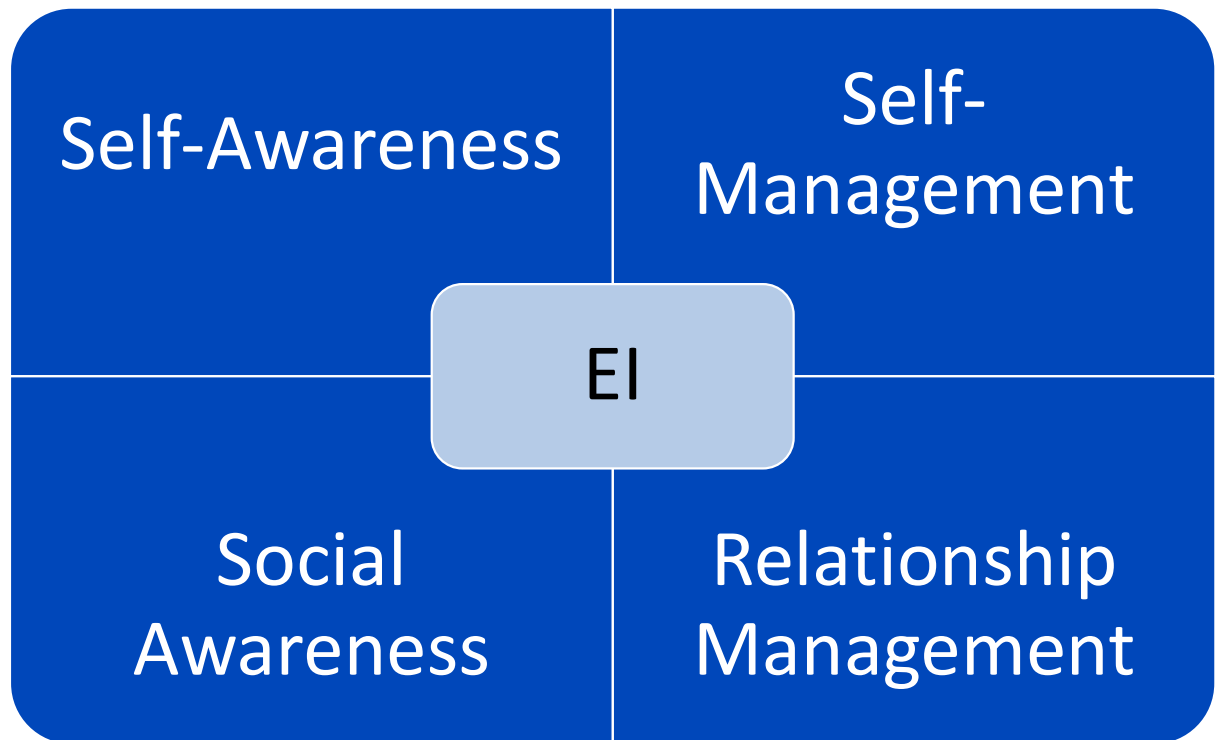
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



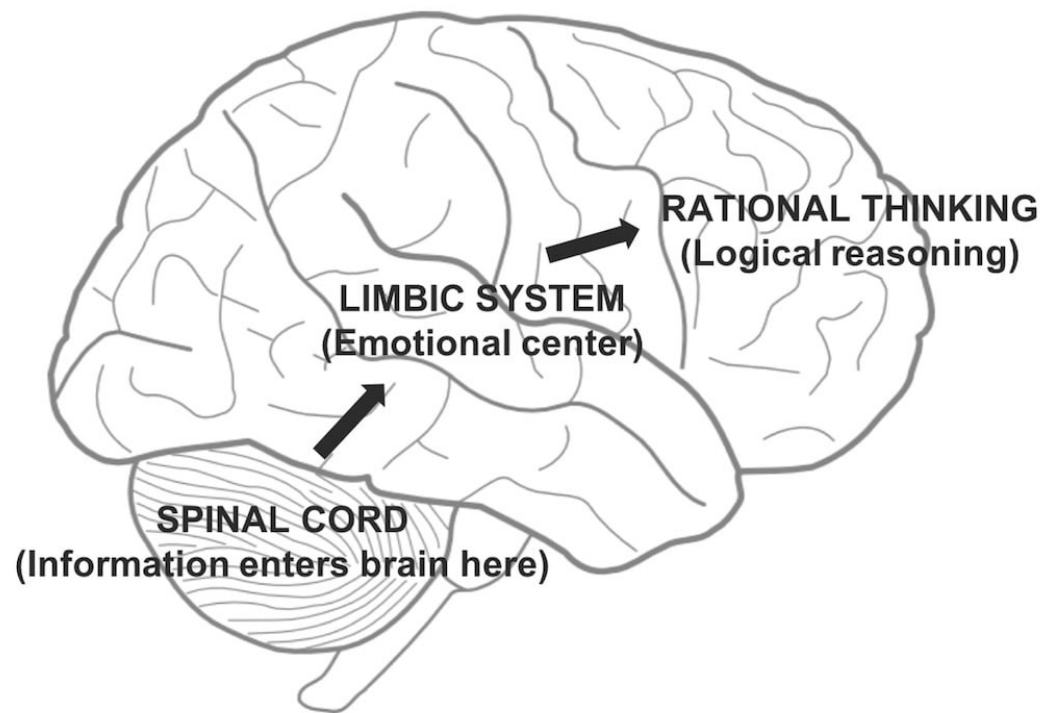
EQ accounts for 58% of performance in all types of jobs

90% of high performers have higher EQ scores

Higher EQ leads to a greater sense of well-being



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



The ability to understand one's emotions as they happen

Self-Awareness

Triggers

Impacts

Personal value

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



Instructions

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

6462 9285



Or use QR code

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



The ability to manage one's emotions as they happen

Self-
Management

Respond
vs
React

Adaptability

Personal
Achievement



Breathe in

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



The ability to remove the focus from you to others

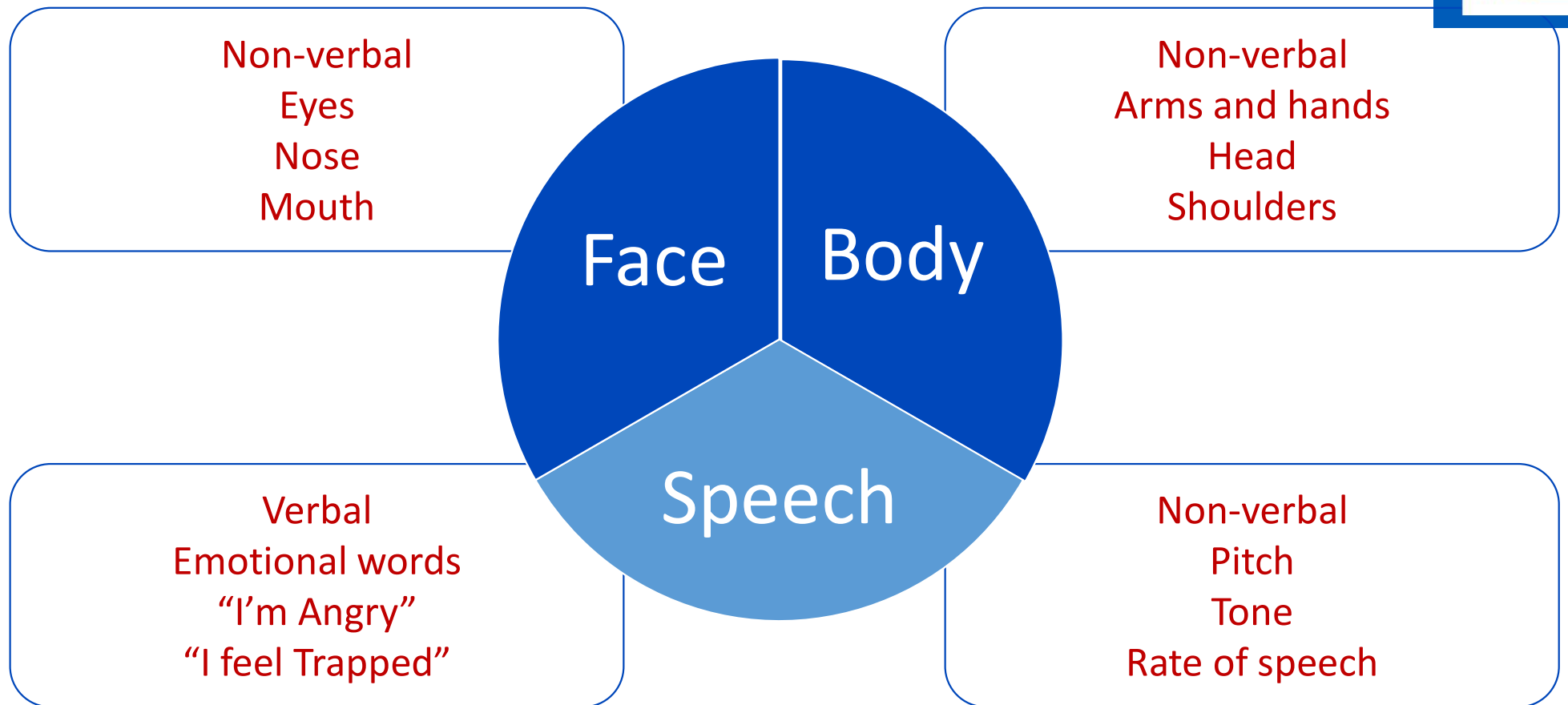
Social Awareness

Verbal

Non-verbal

Application

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



The ability to put it all together to allow for relationship-building

Relationship
Management

Conflict
Resolution

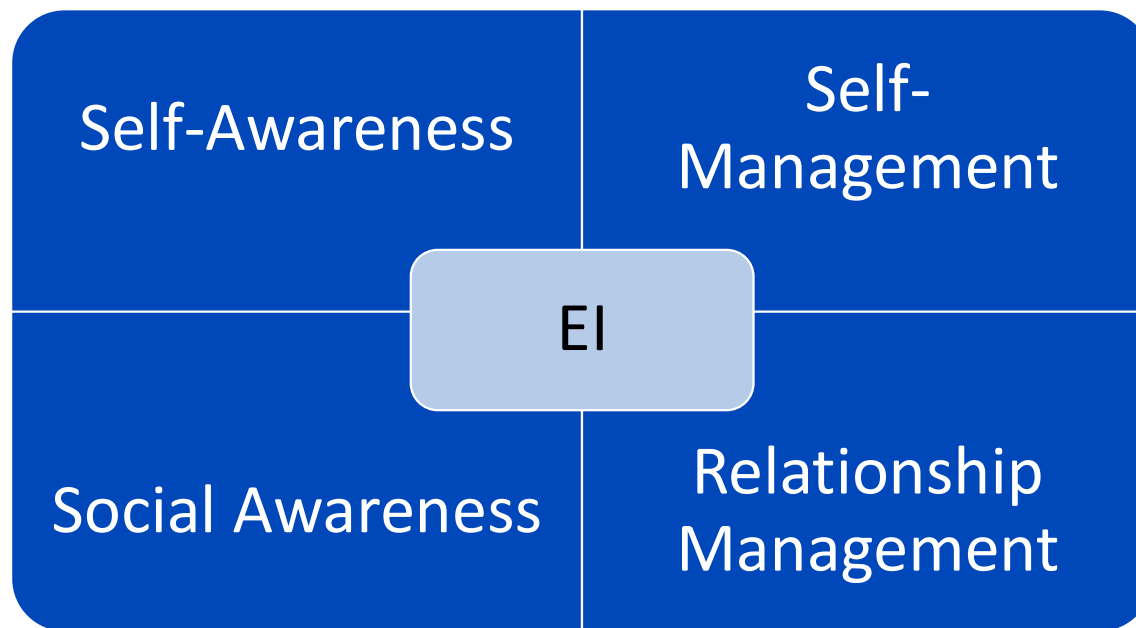
Empathy

Leadership

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



How will you use emotional Intelligence to be the bigger person?



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



Global Leadership
Foundation EI
Assessment



Additional
Resources

Our Community
Listens





DISCUSSION

12 SIMPLE WAYS LEADERS CAN BOOST POSITIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Forbes Magazine



1. **Embrace the Three C's:** Avoid criticism, condemnation, or complaints; instead, give sincere praise and show genuine interest in others.
2. **Genuine Interest:** Exude authentic positivity by actively listening and addressing concerns without overdoing optimism.
3. **Positive Feedback:** Balance constructive comments with recognition of successes to enhance morale and performance.
4. **Knowledge Sharing:** Foster a collaborative atmosphere by listening and sharing expertise, celebrating team achievements.
5. **Lead Positively:** Highlight what's working well rather than focusing on negatives to maintain a positive team dynamic.
6. **Mindful Presence:** Stay grounded in the present to reduce stress and inspire a positive response from the team.
7. **Discourage Negativity:** Redirect focus from drama and gossip to more constructive and positive topics.
8. **Empathetic Leadership:** Utilize empathy to understand and respond to team needs, fostering a supportive environment.
9. **Holistic Positivity:** Cultivate a positive attitude in all life facets to bring genuine inspiration to the workplace.
10. **Appreciation:** Show gratitude for team efforts to build a positive, unified work culture.
11. **Celebrate Wins:** Share personal and professional victories to spread positivity and show team impact.
12. **Positive Influences:** Follow and engage with sources that bring joy and positivity to reinforce a positive outlook.



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