

EQ CONNECTIONS

An Emotional Intelligence Newsletter by E.I. Assessments



“THE MEASURE OF INTELLIGENCE IS THE ABILITY TO CHANGE.”

– Albert Einstein

FLEXIBILITY:

A Need for Change

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We are living in the age of COVID-19 which, as we are learning, will require everyone's ability to be curious, adaptable and creative in order to prevent the spread of this virus. Many people are strong in these emotional intelligence skills and can shift their attitudes, actions and plans as they learn more about prevention. While having high *Flexibility* is required during these times, the skills of *Reality Testing*, *Stress Tolerance* and *Social Responsibility* are also needed.

WHAT IS THE SKILL OF FLEXIBILITY?

I believe *Flexibility* often reflects the level of challenge, variety and creative fulfillment a person is attracted to in a business or work environment.

WHAT DOES FLEXIBILITY LOOK LIKE?

People who score high in *Flexibility* on the EQ-i 2.0:

- Have an ability to quickly adapt and adjust to fast-paced business environments
- Can accept feedback and are open to change if presented with the relevant data or new information
- Modify their thinking and perspective to the shifts and changes in their business or professional environment



HIGH FLEXIBILITY VERSUS HQ



Over the years, I have noticed in the EQ-i data that clients who score high in *Flexibility* tend to work outside of headquarters and often operate on the fringes of an organization. They feel more at liberty to experiment since they know breakthroughs will not be made at HQ.

While most work environments have established and proven business or manufacturing processes, unforeseen and sudden problems will test the

Flexibility of leadership since it will require quickly adapting to change.

I believe the reason there might be lower *Flexibility* scores in management at HQ is due to the higher levels of *Reality Testing* I often find. While it is important to encourage creative thinking throughout an organization, this innovative energy needs to be balanced with objectivity, truth and validity.

This objectivity is reflected in the *Reality Testing* scores of senior leaders. I have found many situations in which an organization honestly and intentionally solicits new ideas from their staff yet they ultimately do not implement them. Too much objectivity and not enough support can kill a good idea.

When I work with entrepreneurs, they will very often score high in *Flexibility* since they have innovative energy which yields creative ideas to be implemented. However, implementation requires the skill of *Reality Testing* to slow down, be objective and ask the right questions before going forward. High levels of *Flexibility* can provide the creative power to build very effective work environments



FLEXIBILITY & REALITY TESTING: PLAYING WITHIN LIMITS

I believe a balance between *Flexibility* and *Reality Testing* is needed for professionals and leaders to be open to new ideas while asking relevant questions to ensure success. If a person scores too high in *Flexibility*, he or she may be viewed as too easily influenced or swayed due to the excitement connected to a new idea. They are drawn to the possibilities of new ideas but may not have all of the cautionary information.

While asking questions is a sign of *Reality Testing*, too much reliance of logic and immediate evidence can hinder experimentation and exploration. The result can be fewer creative solutions. Maintaining a balance between these two skills lets you be open to consider what is possible while asking what is probable.

Do more men or women have this balance of *Flexibility* and *Reality Testing*?

Looking at the data from **1,356** EQ-i reports, it appears **32%** of this group (**248** women and **189** men) have the balance between these skills. That indicates they have an ability to pursue creative and innovative ideas while asking relevant, objective questions.

With respect to *Flexibility*, **32%** of this group of professionals (**204** women and **224** men) have a strong tendency to be attracted to creative ideas or energizing work environments. These

are the professionals who have a real need for change in their work. Without the right amount of change, challenge or intellectual stimulation, they will get bored.

The remaining **36%** of the group of **1,356** (**270** women and **221** men) have higher *Reality Testing* scores than *Flexibility*. This means they may be more inclined to ask many questions and probe deeper into an idea before agreeing to its implementation.

Generally speaking, when building an innovative solution, you need men to create energy and women to make sure it is pointed in the right direction.

**“YOU CAN’T USE UP CREATIVITY.
THE MORE YOU USE, THE MORE YOU HAVE.”**

– Maya Angelou

AN INFLEXIBLE EXECUTIVE

A senior executive client was concerned that his direct reports were not generating creative solutions to recent business issues. His EQ-i report showed that his low *Flexibility* score indicated a strong preference for standard operating procedures and that current market changes were hurting his company.

To generate ideas, he asked me to facilitate a brainstorming session at one of his weekly meetings that focused on specific problems. I knew the group had high *Flexibility* and *Reality Testing* and they quickly got into a "what if" exercise which started to generate some creative solutions.

In a short period, they were considering new ideas and innovative possibilities. There was an energy in the room that was invigorating and creative. As I listed their ideas on a flip chart, I noticed the senior executive was getting increasingly uncomfortable, almost annoyed. (Actually, I knew he was angry since his ears turned red.)

When the meeting was over and the group left with their list of ideas, I stayed back to check in with the client. Yes, he admitted that he was annoyed because from his perspective the group was completely out of control and he thought some of the ideas were ridiculous.

In reviewing the meeting, I reminded him that his objective was to ignite the team’s creativity and generate ideas, which we had accomplished. I suggested that his low *Flexibility* made

change and creative ideas uncomfortable for him which was having a dampening impact on his team's ability to be innovative. Based on some of his other EQ-i scores, I also thought he had a fear of losing control. We had a lot to talk about.

INCREASING YOUR FLEXIBILITY MUSCLE



**THE MIND OF AN
INNOVATOR**
A GUIDE TO SEEING
POSSIBILITIES WHERE
NONE EXISTED
BEFORE

PATRICIA HARMON, PH.D.

If you are interested in learning more about the connections between Emotional Intelligence and creative thinking, then I highly recommend the book *The Mind of an Innovator: A Guide to Seeing Possibilities Where None Existed* by Dr. Pat Harmon. Developing a creative and flexible mindset has many benefits, both personal and professional.

Dr. Harmon will take you through the evolution from logical to lateral thinking by introducing you to many useful creative thinking exercises including the Stepping Stones, the Blurring the Boundaries and Attribute Listings. Her approach will help you to develop the mindset of an innovator at a time when ingenuity and resourcefulness are needed.

**“THE MOST TALENTED, THOUGH-PROVOKING,
GAME-CHANGING PEOPLE ARE NEVER NORMAL.”**

– Richard Branson

NEXT ISSUE:

Issue # 15 Stress Tolerance: *Tools & Techniques*