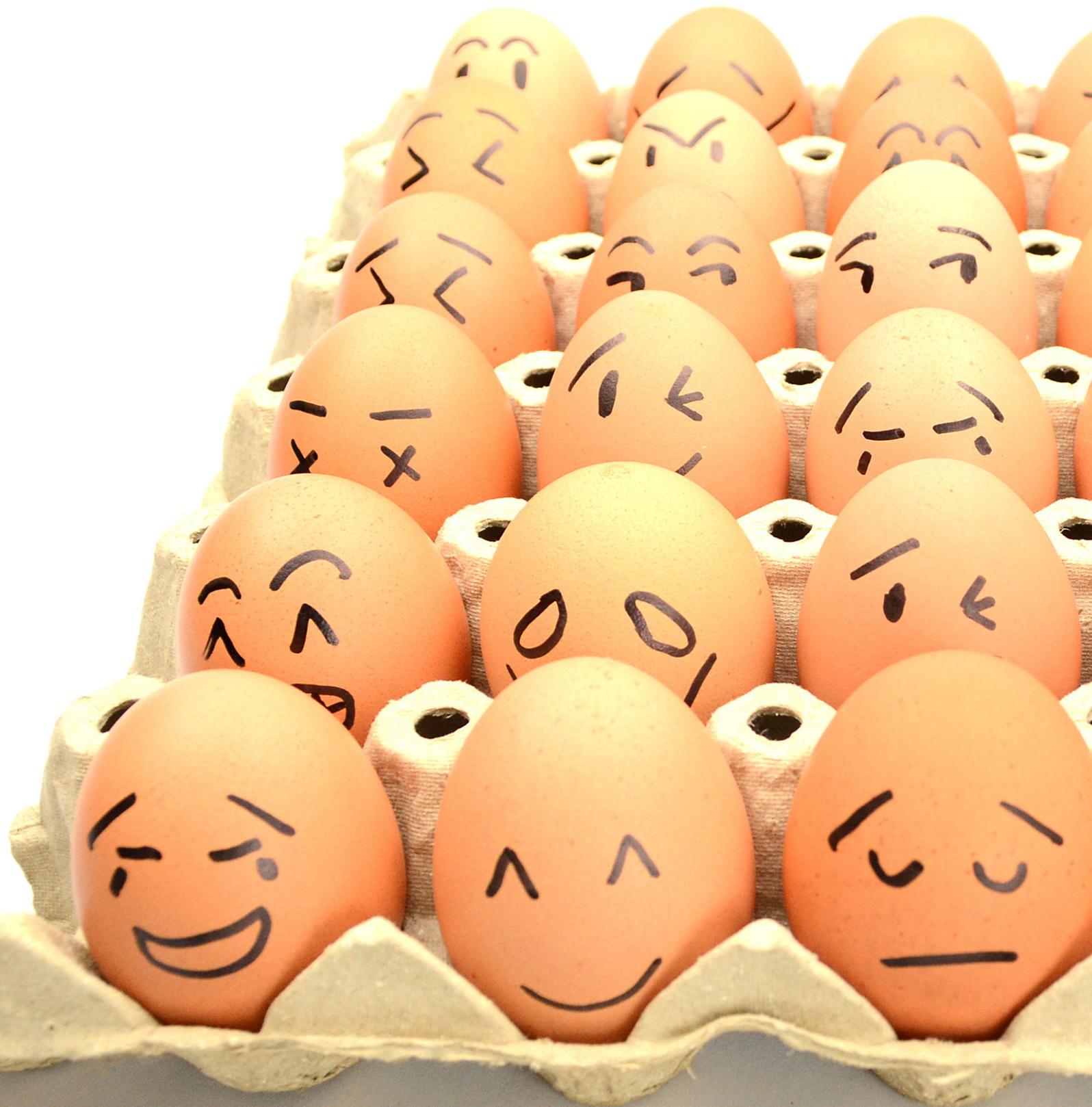


# THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL LITERACY



The building blocks of Emotional Intelligence that will allow you to create clarity and avoid confusion for yourself and those around you

The term Emotional literacy was coined in 1979 by Claude Steiner , he wrote " To be emotionally literate is to be able to handle emotions in a way that improves your personal power and the quality of your life and - equally important, the quality of life of the people around you. Emotional literacy helps your emotions work for you instead of against you."

In essence emotional literacy is the ability to put feelings into words so that those feelings can be understood.

To accurately communicate our feelings we must be able to precisely identify them. This is instrumental in establishing our unmet needs and communicating them effectively to those who can help us.

Once you develop emotional literacy you will be able to notice and name the emotions you are feeling and those you see in others. You will be able to connect the cause and effect that those emotions are communicating. With that knowledge you will be able to select the emotion you are experiencing and choose what to communicate.

Accepting your emotions as a natural part of life will enable you to talk about them and work with them with people you trust.

In 2003 Steiner identified the skills needed to develop emotional literacy:

1. Knowing your feelings
2. Having a heartfelt sense of empathy
3. Learning to manage emotions
4. Repairing emotional damage
5. Emotional interactivity - the ability to put it all together.



To start, just notice how you feel as things happen. Say the name of the feeling to yourself. For example, you might say, "I feel proud" when a presentation goes well, "I feel disappointed" when a promotion you were hoping for does not go your way , or, "I feel sociable" when sitting with a group of colleagues in work or friends.

Practice by tracking one emotion for example joy. Track it all day. Notice how often you feel it. Every time, make a mental note to yourself or write it down. Create a scoring system and try to notice if the feeling is mild, medium, or strong. The more you notice the more accurately you will be able to talk about it.



Learn new words for your feelings by asking yourself how many different feelings can you name. The following step is to start expanding your vocabulary by thinking of even more. For example how many words do you know for "angry"? You might be annoyed, mad, irate, fuming, livid, exasperated, seething.

Take a few minutes each day to write about how you feel and why. Ask yourself what is triggering that feeling. Pay attention to what happened in your life over the last week or month. Give some attention to those things that you cannot control, including dreams or events. Although you cannot change them, they might still impact how you feel.

Writing down your feelings is a way to express them. The habit of keeping a journal will help to express your feelings. Alternatively you can also create art, write poetry, or use any other channels that helps you capture an emotion you feel.



There are also Apps that help tracking your emotions and expand your emotional vocabulary

In addition you could try and observe what feelings art, songs, and movies bring to the surface for you. Pay attention to what the artist did to show those feelings and how did you respond.



Whatever you feel remember don't start judging your feelings. As life happens we feel. It is our job to just allow feelings to exist. The best strategy is to name the feeling , acknowledge it ( give it just some room to breathe) and then let it go. Doing this allows to make room for other events/ realities/ pleasures without looming "things" getting in the way of life.

Finally speak about how you feel with those you trust, the more you do the more they will change. They will often lose their charge and hold over you. I remember dreading having to tell my parents I was getting divorced, yet once I spoke out loud about my fear of having failed as a saviour of my spouse i felt relieved and the anxiety I had been experiencing all but vanished.



# Emotional Literacy Check

Score yourself 1 point for each question that you can honestly answer YES to:

1. I find easily the words to communicate how I feel.
2. I track my emotions as I can recognise how they manifest in my body.
3. I can identify and name 5 variations of the emotion commonly labeled as "energetic".
4. I have more than 5 words to describe types of anger.
5. I feel comfortable speaking about my emotions with people I trust.
6. I can identify and talk about what triggers a specific emotion for me.
7. I am able to acknowledge my emotions and let them go.
8. I can easily spot what feelings a song, a movie or a piece of art is evoking for me.
9. I regularly journal or record my emotions through an app





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