

Becoming a Better You is now available: [HERE](#)

Visit my new facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/TrueNorthPartnering>

Emotional Intelligence vs. Emotional Maturity

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a popular topic - in and outside the business arena. The EI approach to experiencing life supports folks to get in touch with their emotions in real time and manage their emotions when interacting with others.

Old habits die hard

Often, when individuals have done "emotional work" they experience a type of disconnect, i.e., they've learned the concepts and can intellectualize about them but, in real-life situations at work, at home, at play and in relationship find it difficult to effectively manage their emotions, or emotional reactivity, and quickly revert to old, self-destructive emotional habits, patterns and programming. Why?

First, many folks who work with emotions consciously or unconsciously fail to deal with the root cause of their emotional reactivity. They fail to explore, or be curious about, the deeper nature of their emotional history. This "history" of their emotional evolution is a prerequisite to understanding how they "futurize their past" - interpreting the present based on their history, experience and memory.

Absent this understanding, many folks cannot separate their present from their past - "that was then; this is now" - and so this lack of understanding inhibits them from seeing the present - people, places, events, circumstance and objects - as "fresh," unencumbered by their past emotional history. They're unable to experience the present in a positive, neutral way and so experience many of life's events and circumstances in a negative, judgmental, fear-based manner.

Too, few folks actually "process" their emotions. Few allow their emotions to just be - watching, witnessing and observing them and asking them "What are you teaching me, about me?"

Finally, many choose to "bury" their emotions. And we know that when we bury our emotions, we bury them alive - they will return to rear their ugly heads, sooner or later.

Emotional maturity

Instead of focusing on emotional "intelligence," we are better served by focusing on emotional "maturity."

Emotional maturity is not "intellectual," but refers to a higher state of self-awareness, beyond "intelligence" where one is guided by one's senses, intuition and heart.

Emotional maturity is characterized by five principles:

- Every negative emotion we experience is a childhood emotion overlaid on a current person, circumstance, place, event or object.
- Emotionally, many adults are 3-4-5-year-olds in adult bodies wearing adult clothes.
- No one can make you feel a way you don't want to feel.
- An adult can be emotionally mature and child-like or immature and child-ish.
- Mindfulness, focus and presence are the keys to emotional maturity

Emotional maturity focuses on our emotional history - beginning with our interactions with primary caregivers, extended family, teachers, friends, clergy, etc. We learn that around seven our psychological and emotional "programming" is set. Our emotional reactivity (e.g., anger, sadness, fear, shame, hurt, guilt and loneliness, etc.) that was triggered early on in life has become stored in our cells, and arises when "related" triggers appear later in life.

"This/you/he/she/it, etc. (consciously or unconsciously) reminds me of..."

Emotionally intelligent, but emotionally immature

Being emotionally mature means we seldom act out on, or suppress our emotions.

Emotionally intelligent, but "immature" adults," often are unable to identify or manage their emotions. They usually avoid their emotions by intellectualizing, explaining, analyzing, disagreeing, attacking, flattering, joking, apologizing, evading, going silent, becoming aloof or suspicious, rejecting, criticizing, judging, etc. Emotionally intelligent, but *immature*, these folks appear: superior, arrogant, stubborn, defiant, hostile, people-pleasing, wishy-washy, phony, resentful, intolerant, self-pitying or victimized, etc.

Not having explored their emotional development, many aren't aware that they superimpose their childhood emotions on to their "adult" life. Their past leaks out in the present.

The emotionally mature adult understands "my emotions are not me, but mine I'm in control, not my emotions." Here, we are more objective, non-judgmental. We are more able to be detached from triggers that would normally evoke reactivity. We experience states of equanimity, serenity and inner peace. Blaming is no longer a strategy we use to make ourself feel safe.

What it means to be child-like

The emotionally mature individual is child-like: lively, excited, juicy, adventurous, joyful, happy, open etc. The emotionally mature adult is: nurturing, supportive, firm, fair, helpful, respectful, self-responsible, non-judgmental, heart-felt, honest, sincere, allowing, accepting, focused on well-being; s/he serves, coaches or mentors.

What it means to be child-ish

The emotionally immature adult is often child-ish: reactive, acting out, throwing tantrums,

fearful, scared, needy, angry, resentful, pushy, bullying, jealous, envious, shut down, quiet, withdrawn, defensive, argumentative and grandiose, etc. Their qualities can include being: non-loving, overbearing, micromanaging, controlling, disrespectful, fearful, angry, negative, judgmental, critical, abusive (mentally, emotionally, psychologically, physically), dishonest, insincere, narcissistic and focused on the self and the ego.

The most visible quality of emotional maturity is the capacity to be in the moment, to be present and non-reactive or non-judgmental.

Being present supports our true and authentic self to guide us. We intuit "right knowing," "right understanding" and "right action." We have our emotions without "becoming" our emotions. We grasp that the "trigger" for our reactivity may be "outside me," but the "cause" of my emotions is within me.

We watch, witness and observe as we're triggered while allowing our true and authentic self to support our inner journey, explore, and be curious - not reactive. We accept our experience as it is. Practicing mindfulness, presence, focus, trust and surrender, we allow our heart and soul to bring what is needed, knowing our heart and soul never call for negativity or reactivity, but a considered, emotionally mature response.

Some questions for self-reflection:

- Do you ever feel you need to change the way you respond emotionally to others?
- How do you feel when others challenge or disagree with you, or give you feedback?
- Do you ever find yourself feeling fearful, angry or anxious? Do you know why?
- Are you ever surprised by the way you react to others?
- Do you ever feel afraid about exploring your emotions? Why?
- Do you consider yourself to be emotionally mature? What would others say?
- How did you learn about emotions when you were growing up?

(c) 2013, Peter Vajda, Ph.D. and True North Partnering. All rights in all media reserved.

Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is the founder of True North Partnering an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit, Peter's approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker and published author. For more information, www.truenorthpartnering.com, or [pvajda\(at\)truenorthpartnering.com](mailto:pvajda@truenorthpartnering.com), or phone 770.804.9125. You can also follow Peter on Twitter: @petergvajda