



Umbrella Summary

Emotional Intelligence Training

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

What is emotional intelligence training?

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to abilities or tendencies related to recognizing, understanding, and managing emotions. Because of its connections to important work outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, and turnover intentions (e.g., Joseph, Jin, Newman, & O'Boyle, 2015; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2016), there has been great interest in developing EI via coaching and training, even though it has not traditionally been regarded as something that is amenable to change through training.

EI is conceptualized, and measured, in three different ways (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). When it was first conceived, EI was considered to be a set of abilities or competencies, to be assessed through actual behavior (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Lopes, 2003). For example, the most prominent test of this nature, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), asks respondents to choose how they would maintain or change their feelings in various hypothetical scenarios and indicate how to manage others' feelings to achieve certain results (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004; Salovey et al., 2003). In this type of test, answers are considered more or less correct, and the response options are multiple choice or rating scales (e.g., how effective, how useful). As EI gained popularity and new measures were developed, the focus shifted to self-report methods. In one category of tests, respondents provide self-appraisals of their emotion-related skills, using agreement scales (e.g., Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, & Golden, 1998). Example items include, "I am aware of my emotions as I experience them" (Schutte et al., 1998) and "I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me" (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004). Though the measurement method is very different than that used for ability tests, these assessments have nonetheless maintained alignment with the original conceptualization of EI as an ability. In the third category of tests, self-report methods are also used, but the factors measured go beyond those originally defined as EI and often overlap with other well-established personality factors (Joseph et al., 2015; van der Linden, Pekaar, & Bakker, Schermer, Vernon, Dunkel, & Petrides, 2017). There are many scholarly and commercial personality-based EI tests available, though many argue that despite their labels, they are not actually measuring EI. Thus, EI trainings vary, in part, based on how EI is conceptualized, and their success is often measured in accordance with that conceptualization.

In spite of or because of the strong popularity and widespread availability of EI training across industries and settings, there is no standard curriculum content or training method. Examples of content include knowledge or skills around self-awareness, regulating emotions, expression

of emotions, emotional balance, focus, empathy, adaptability, and relationship management. Examples of training methods include lecture, modeling, diaries, self-directed learning, reflection, case studies, practice, homework, feedback, and coaching (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019).

Is EI training valuable?

Overall, EI training has a moderately positive effect on EI, such that people who receive training have higher EI scores after training compared to control groups (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019). These effects hold true regardless of participant gender and type of EI measure (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019). Unfortunately, due to insufficient reporting of training details, the ability to examine the effect of training method is limited. Exploratory analyses indicate that EI training is more effective when it does not involve lecture and when practice and feedback are included, but more research is needed to corroborate these preliminary findings (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019). There is much yet to learn about what type of training (e.g., content, methods, length) is most effective, for whom it is most effective, and the extent to which it affects different EI dimensions, actual behavior, and subsequent job performance (vs. just overall EI assessment scores). Future studies need to be more thorough in reporting what they have done and in examining additional types of training outcomes.

QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ There is no standard EI curriculum content. Examples of content include knowledge or skills around self-awareness, regulating emotions, expression of emotions, emotional balance, focus, empathy, adaptability, and relationship management.
- ▶ There is no standard EI training method. Examples of training methods include lecture, modeling, diaries, self-directed learning, reflection, case studies, practice, homework, feedback, and coaching.
- ▶ Overall, EI training has a moderately positive effect on EI, such that people who receive training have higher EI scores after training compared to control groups.
- ▶ There is much to learn about other factors that may influence the effectiveness of EI training. Future studies need to be more thorough in reporting what they have done and in examining additional types of training outcomes.
- ▶ For information on the use of EI in employee selection, see the QIC-WD umbrella summary on [emotional intelligence tests](#).

References

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