

# Getting Past Stressed Out and Overworked Using Emotional Intelligence



A True Story: How Emotional Intelligence Changed the Course of my Career and Life

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A People Path™

This story is simple and straight forward..... Okay, well sort of. If you already read this first part on the website, skip to page 5. If not you'll probably want to just start from the beginning.....

How many of these describe you???

- Are you stressed out at work?
- Find yourself tense? Overwhelmed?
- Do you find yourself working a bunch more hours to “get things done”?
- Do you find yourself doing things yourself because you want things “done right”?
- Do you get overly irritated when you are stuck in traffic?
- Does standing in line cause you to fume and get hostile?
- Do you find yourself snapping at people?
- Do you grit your teeth through out the day?
- Have a hard time sleeping?
- Do you constantly worry about what your employees will screw up next?
- Does your staff come in late or call in sick often?
- Do you wonder what your people are doing when you aren't there?
- Do you expect people to disappoint you?

**If you answered “Yes” to more than a couple of these questions, please take the time to read on.....**

Believe me, EVERYTHING above described me at one point or another in my career.....

Sure I was successful, won lots of awards, had a lot of promotions, blah, blah, blah... But I was working a LOT! I was driven to succeed and I wasn't going to let anything stand in my way. I was going to WILL my way to winning, no matter what! I believed that winning was all that mattered.

When I say “winning” I mean **getting results**.... Crushing numbers.... Budgets for sales, profitability, etc. And also beating others, peers, whoever.

But before I jump into the details, let me say this..... I still believe in **results!** I still believe in being the best! I am still not into the warm and fuzzy fluffy stuff at work, because it doesn't work. You can do all the team building things you want, have every appreciation program, but it doesn't last. Nothing lasts. Unless you change what is going on at the root of the issue.

**What is the “root of the issue”** you ask? It's HOW you manage. You can still have high expectations, you can still get things done!! It's all in HOW you do it!!!

Believe it or not, YOU can work less hours!

YOU can have great employees!

YOU can come back from a vacation and have a staff eager to show off what they did while you were gone!

YOU can be happier and less stressed out!

YOU can make your business more profitable!

YOU can make your business more efficient!

**And this is just the tip of the iceberg....** When you work on HOW you manage and develop new habits, it also improves your personal relationships. This happens naturally really. For some reason it's easier for many people to develop new habits and change behavior patterns from the structure of the work place than just working from a personal perspective.

So how do I know all this? Because, as I said, this all happened to me. I used to spy on my staff when I was off to see what they were doing. I called several times when on vacation (if I even took vacation).

**And then it happened.....**

Halfway through my career, in the late 90's, I was working for a Fortune 50 company and I had a major setback in my career.

I had a 360 review. That's when your peers, subordinates and boss rate you, a couple hundred questions, on every aspect of your management style and personality. I was expecting a terrific review because my departments did well, I was the "go-to" person, I got more done than anyone else (or so I thought), I was ahead of deadlines.

**To my surprise.....**

I found out my peers didn't really care for me too much. They thought I was a "know it all" and didn't really offer them support. Fair, I thought to myself, they are competition really aren't they? Who cares what they think, right? Not so fast.....

Then there were my subordinates..... In a nutshell I found out they were terrified of me. Okay, so terrified is a *little* exaggeration, not much.

I found my boss loved the fact I got things done, I scored high marks in reliability, drive for results, determination and yet I did terrible on the rest.....

**What happened next is the rest of the story.....**

It was a setback that changed my life for the better..... It did take some work though!!

**Next Page it continues.....**

**So.....** What does a driven workaholic do when they find out everyone is scared of them??? I found it amusing at first. I mean really, I wasn't the one with a problem, right? I was a GO-TO person. I got things done.

After all, I had won the coveted *Rookie of the Year* award with a Fortune 500 company, then received an enormous promotion. I had lead a team to break several sales records. I *knew* how to manage.

What else does a person need anyway? I don't care if everyone likes me. Actually, I don't really care if *anyone* likes me other than my boss. I made sure I had great sales figures and all kinds of stuff.

### **The boss.....**

My boss called me in to talk to me about my people skills. I knew he wasn't going to come down on me because I was *on it!!* I got *stuff done!* He said I needed to work on my people skills and not a lot more. In fact, as I've been writing this I can't even remember *who* it is that spoke to me. Back then I figured it wasn't really important.

**A few months** before I got this review, I end up working for this incredibly astute, organized manager, his name was Michael. The amazing thing I found about him was that he asked me questions. He asked all kinds of non-essential questions really. *How was my weekend (or whatever). Did I see so-and-so on TV? Had I heard of this band?*

It was different really, I had never worked for anyone that chit-chatted while we worked. He also didn't *tell* me what to do. He asked for my opinion, he would discuss a problem or opportunity with me. He taught me the *philosophy* of why things were done a certain way, he didn't just say "because it's policy" or whatever.

I know he was really busy, even busier than I was, instead of having 30-40 people under him like I did, he had 150 or more because he was part of the senior staff that ran things. I found myself super motivated working with him because he asked me for ideas. It challenged me to look for good ideas all the time, to either surprise him or know something he didn't know.

**One day.....**

He asked me if I had ever talked to “Sherry”.

“Sherry who?” I asked.

Michael said, “The new gal up front. She has horses too.”

“Really?” I asked, still wondering what this had to do with me. I mean, why would I waste time talking to other employees in other areas when there was so much to do? *Is this a trick question?*

“Yeah, you should really talk to her,” he finished. Then I remember he mentioned some other tidbit about some other employee I didn’t know.

**And then the wheels started to turn.....**

I started wondering how he could have time to know all these things about these employees yet he was WAY busier than me and had MUCH more responsibility. I thought about that for a few days.

In the meantime I was reading every management book I could find to help make myself more promotable, that wasn’t new behavior, it was something I had been doing for years.

Obviously I wasn’t thinking in terms of touchy-feely reading because it didn’t matter, right? I got things done. Besides, others couldn’t do things right anyway, I was always having to fix things. I stayed extra late all the time to get things done, I rarely took a lunch, I don’t think I took breaks either. I had to make sure everyone stayed on task.

**The book that did it.....**

I don’t remember how it happened, the internet wasn’t around back then (gasp! The internet had probably started, it just wasn’t mainstream yet), but somehow I stumbled on a book called *Working with Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman.

Right there in Chapter 1 I knew I found the missing link. In the area called “Some Misconceptions” he says.....

“First, emotional intelligence does not mean merely “being nice”. At strategic moments it may demand not “being nice” but rather, for example, bluntly confronting someone with an uncomfortable but consequential truth they’ve been avoiding.

“Second, emotional intelligence does not mean giving free rein to feeling—“letting it all hang out.” Rather it means managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively, enabling people to work together smoothly toward their common goals.

“Also, women are not “smarter” than men when it comes to emotional intelligence, nor are men superior to women.”

Then on to the next area, “Emotional Intelligence: The Missing Priority” he said.....

“More and more companies are seeing that encouraging emotional intelligence skills is a vital component of any organization’s management philosophy.”

I devoured the rest of the book. I wish I could tell you that I got better and it was a fast and easy process. It was anything but easy.....

I spent quite some time thinking about the book and thinking of the guy I was working for. I thought about his style, what he did for others, how the other employees enjoyed working for him. He was really popular with everyone.

I reread the book. Guess what? I still wasn’t any better. I was still working a ton of hours, I couldn’t trust anyone to get things done without me, I was stressed out and overwhelmed.

### **Months go by.....**

I am just as stressed out and over worked as ever. I had just had someone cut me off on the freeway and nearly hit me, I was 3 minutes late. I stomp in the office and I started spouting off to the other managers about how traffic sucks, I hate stupid drivers, on and on.

Another manager who I'll call Sally, put her hand on her hip and said, "Guess what?! NO ONE CARES! You don't need to go on about any of that stuff because no one wants to hear it!"

My feelings were hurt at first, she was a few tiers above me in seniority so I wasn't really going to say anything back.

*Hm!* I thought to myself, *what's gotten into her?* Another manager piped up who I didn't really like and said, "Jodi, you do go on sometimes about things that other people really don't care about" and with that he walked out.

So I pondered that. *If I waste energy and time on negative things that don't matter why don't I have time to talk about positive things to others?* I spent a few days mulling that over.

Then I remembered the part in the book where Daniel Goleman talks about the "blind spots" on 42 otherwise highly successful executives. Those were: blind ambition, unrealistic goals, relentless striving, drives others, power hungry, insatiable need for recognition, preoccupation with appearance, need to seem perfect. I figured I had 4 of those covered, easy! Obviously there is more to those "blind spots" but I can't put it all in here.

I started wondering, *why do I feel the need to be perfect? Why do I think I can do things better than others? Who's to say my way is always the right way? I was I always driving others? I got frustrated when they stood around and talked, why? They are probably talking about work, why assume they are slacking off? Why was I always striving to be the best? Why did I assume everyone under me should pay attention to me just because I'm the boss?*

The wheels in my mind had really started turning....

## **Hijacking**

The other thing I remembered from the book is that the amygdala controls the emotions in the brain... Actually that's not quite true. The message passes from the spinal cord through the amygdala then on to the frontal lobe. The frontal lobe is usually responsible for putting everything in perspective. The problem is, the amygdala is the fight or flight response center of our brain and if we are already over-whelmed or whatever the frontal lobe's

capacity is diminished..... The full capacity has been limited by the chemical reaction in our bodies from the amygdala. It's like a traffic jam, rather than everything flowing freely between the two areas there's a traffic jam and they can't communicate as well. That's when you are more susceptible to **an amygdala hijack**.

When people fly off the handle? React to something in rage? Become consumed with fear? Doubt? Anguish? Scream in anger? Look to your amygdala, barring all other psychological explanations of course.

How hard is it to retrain your brain? Depends on your situation and persistence.

For me it took a couple years..... Of serious, intense work. I wrote in a journal, reread books, wrote SMART goals. I was able to start making improvements the first year. I started talking to people, asking them how their weekend was, what did they do, etc.

I had some great opportunities that helped my development. I worked a LOT, about 55 hours a week at a minimum, I made time to take notes a couple times a day about how I was doing, nothing dramatic. I was also able to work for Michael for awhile and watch how he interacted with people and handled problems.

When I went home I also spent an hour or so at night writing in my journal about my day and how the day went, measuring my progress against the SMART goals I had written.

### **You have to be authentic....**

One thing you need to know, any changes you make in your management style or behavior *has to be authentic*. Why? People have a sixth sense for phonies and insincerity. You *have* to be authentic.

What that means is you really need to change yourself. You can't go through the motions of changing your behavior and think people won't notice, they will. People value *authenticity*.

Changing your behavior and learning to over ride your amygdala takes practice and you have to be genuine in your effort for mastery.

I did find that I became more interested in others and their ideas. I found myself teaching my staff things rather than telling them what to do. I also found it was fun to engage them in decisions, they really came up with good ideas!!

Another thing happened, rather than running around wondering what they weren't doing I was most often pleasantly surprised to find they went above and beyond to get things done. They would proudly tell me how they came up with the idea to do such-and-such or what problem came up and what they did to solve it.

The wheels in my mind were finally moving in the right direction!

### **So then what?**

By the third year or so after starting this process I received a HUGE promotion. I would run my own building responsible for over \$35 million in sales and have a Senior staff under me of 7 managers, plus their managers, a total staff that, at it's peak, was over 240 employees (it was more but I'm being conservative because I can't remember the exact head count now).

By using the new skills I had worked so hard to develop, I was able to do the following:

- I was less stressed.
- I enjoyed going to work and being with my staff.
- We improved our Employee Satisfaction scores.
- Employee sick calls reduced.
- We reduced turnover and increased interest in the staff for promotions, ensuring the best talent had the desire to move up.
- We reduced any internal theft, damages, etc.
- We developed back up personnel for key positions.
- We developed enough managers to promote to other locations.

- We crushed our sales budgets.
- We came in WAY over our profitability budget.
- Customer satisfaction scores went up.
- I received 2 awards the first year, “Best Expense Leverage to Budget”, “Best Sales to Plan”.

The second year we blew it out of the water even more, winning “Best Comp Sales”. I won the honorary *Manager of the Year* with the Fortune 50 company and a six figure bonus. The best part? We had fun doing it!

I had the greatest set of Senior and Department Managers in the planet. *Then why didn't they win those awards before you got there, you wonder?* Because no one had worked with them and got them all on the same page. They needed what most people need..... To feel included, respected, valued, accountable... *That's* what people want most.

I had the best people imaginable. I have found that most people want to work for someone who believes in them. Someone who genuinely cares about them as a person. When this happens they can really flourish and they typically *exceed all expectations*.

### **Is that all?**

No, that's not all the benefits. My efforts also improved my personal life. Unfortunately I did not improve enough, soon enough, to save my first marriage, that went down the drain before the huge promotion happened. I was a little demanding and I hadn't developed my people skills enough to use them at home. I didn't listen very well, was a perfectionist, selfish, you know the type.

I am now extremely happy and content. I love people. I could not imagine living like I used to, impatient with everyone, hostile, in a hurry, etc. I used to blow things out of proportion, get overly emotional about problems and I didn't really engage others in problem solving because I hadn't developed the rapport with them.

### **Was it easy?**

It's not for everyone. You need to be honest with yourself. There are tools now that didn't exist a decade ago, like online assessments to test your EQ, there are also more books out that are easy to read.

Coaching has been another huge step for self development. It saves all the hours journaling, it's like journaling but WAY faster. Imagine having someone *listen just to you*. ***You are the only focus.***

Years ago there was only therapy, you had someone tell you what was wrong with you. With coaching you have someone in *your corner*. They are not there to judge you. They don't share your information. All they are there for is to help *you* unlock your goals, dreams, whatever and then they help you develop a plan to get there.

Lately I see a lot of advertising for people to "become a coach", "work from home". It's rather worrisome. How do you know you will get somewhere with them? What is their return policy? Do they have a guarantee? Those are all things to consider.

### **More to the story**

Did I over-simplify this story? Yes, I didn't want it to be too boring. I'm going to put more detail in the book I'm writing. Thank goodness I am still friends with some of the people who worked for me way back when so they can help refresh my memory.

Now, the ease your team can improve this assuming there aren't serious dysfunctions in the team. If there are you need to address those problems, especially in you senior management. Some teams are further along than others and you can move more quickly and easily to get everyone on the same page..... And this paragraph leads to another WHOLE long story I will need to write someday.

### **You are in control.**

The core point is YOU can change your LIFE. You can change how you react to situations.

I wish you the best and I hope you achieve your heart's desire!

Email me any questions or comments, I would love to hear from you!

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*“It’s never too late to be what you might have been” – George Eliot*

Jodi Adams, CLTMC, CCMC, Certified Career EQ Strategist, has been in supervisory and/or management positions for **over 20 years**. She has done thousands of interviews and made numerous decisions from hiring, promoting, terminations, setting budgets, controlling expenses, managing change and driving momentum.

Jodi brings a wealth of real world experience **not that many coaches can compare to**. She has won many prestigious awards for sales, expense control, and even **Manger of the Year** from a Fortune 50 company. Many coaches come from the HR field, Jodi has the front line experience that is helpful for many clients.

Her expertise and level headed approach to trouble shooting underperforming assets provide the platform to outperform in her field. Jodi believes personnel are the most important asset a company or individual has. She has had thousands of employees and understands leadership dynamics to help propel teams to achieve higher results.

Jodi’s main **area of specialty** is helping leaders/managers develop and improve their skills to better lead/manage their teams by developing their Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal skills. She is passionate about leadership development, succession planning, goal setting and helping others fulfill their potential. Jodi is certified to administer several assessments and uses them to ensure client growth and understanding.