Emotional Intelligence for Nurses

The theory of emotional intelligence provides a framework to think about all of the non-technical skills you need in order to be a good nurse. It’s often described as the potential to feel, use, communicate, recognize, remember, describe, identify, learn from, manage, understand, and explain emotions (http://eqi.org/eidefs.htm).

The idea of emotional intelligence has been around for a while. Recently, the concept has gained popularity as it applies to career success and development. You can even do an internet search for emotional intelligence + nursing and you will find a lot of articles and resources that show the link between nursing practice and emotional intelligence.

Your ability to perform patient care tasks will certainly impact your success in a job. However, how you work with others and how you incorporate self-awareness into your role may play an even larger part than the nursing skills. You not only need to communicate with other members of the health care team, but you also need to connect to your patients, whether you are in a hospital, primary care setting, clinic, or nursing home.

Below are some of the principles of emotional intelligence. (Adapted from www.eiconsortium.org.)

How do these qualities relate to what you want in your career? How have you increased these qualities through clinical or work experiences? How would others rate you on these categories? How do these competencies help you develop your nursing practice? These reflections will help you craft your philosophy of nursing, highlight strengths on your resume, impress the interviewer, and ensure success in your nursing roles.

**SELF - AWARENESS**

1. Emotional awareness: Recognizing one’s emotions and their effects.
   a) Know which emotions you are feeling and why
   b) Realize the links between your feelings and what you think, do, and say
   c) Recognize how you feelings affect your performance
   d) Have a guiding awareness of your values and goals
2. Accurate self-assessment: Knowing one’s strengths and limits.
   a) Aware of your strengths and weaknesses
   b) Reflective, learning from experience
   c) Open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning, and self-development
   d) Able to show a sense of humor and perspective about yourself
   a) Present yourself with self-assurance; have “presence”
   b) Can voice views that are unpopular and go out on a limb for what is right
   c) Are decisive, able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and pressures

**SELF - REGULATION**

   a) Manage your impulsive feelings and distressing emotions well
   b) Stay composed, positive, and unflappable even in trying moments
   c) Think clearly and stay focused under pressure
2. Trustworthiness: Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity.
   a) Act ethically and are above reproach
   b) Build trust through your reliability and authenticity
   c) Admit your own mistakes and confront unethical actions in others
   d) Take tough, principled stands even if you are unpopular
   a) Meet commitments and keep promises
   b) Hold yourself accountable for meeting your objectives
   c) Are organized and careful in your work

4. Adaptability: Flexibility in handling change.
   a) Smoothly handle multiple demands, shifting priorities, and rapid change
   b) Adapt your responses and tactics to fit fluid circumstances
   c) Are flexible in how you see events

5. Innovativeness: Being comfortable with and open to novel ideas and new information.
   a) Seek out fresh ideas from a wide variety of sources
   b) Entertain original solutions to problems
   c) Generate new ideas
   d) Take fresh perspectives and risks in your thinking

SELF - MOTIVATION

1. Achievement drive: Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence.
   a) Are results-oriented, with a high drive to meet your objectives and standards
   b) Set challenging goals and take calculated risks
   c) Pursue information to reduce uncertainty and find ways to do things better
   d) Learn how to improve your performance

2. Commitment: Aligning with the goals of the group or organization.
   a) Readily make personal or group sacrifices to meet a larger organizational goal
   b) Find a sense of purpose in the larger mission
   c) Use the group’s core values in making decisions and clarifying choices
   d) Actively seek out opportunities to fulfill the group’s mission

3. Initiative: Readiness to act on opportunities.
   a) Are ready to seize opportunities
   b) Pursue goals beyond what’s required or expected of you
   c) Cut through red tape and bend the rules when necessary to get the job done
   d) Mobilize others through unusual, enterprising efforts

4. Optimism: Persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks.
   a) Persist in seeking goals despite obstacles and setbacks
   b) Operate from hope of success rather than fear of failure
   c) See setbacks as due to manageable circumstance rather than a personal flaw

SOCIAL AWARENESS

1. Empathy: Sensing others’ feelings and perspective, and taking an active interest in their concerns.
   a) Are attentive to emotional cues and listen well
   b) Show sensitivity and understand others’ perspectives
   c) Help out based on understanding other people’s needs and feelings

2. Service orientation: Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting patients’ needs.
   a) Understand patients’ needs and match them to services or products
   b) Seek ways to increase patients’ satisfaction and loyalty
   c) Gladly offer appropriate assistance
   d) Grasp a patient’s perspective, acting as a trusted advisor

3. Developing others: Sensing what others need in order to develop, and bolster their abilities.
   a) Acknowledge and reward people’s strengths, accomplishments, and development
   b) Offer useful feedback and identify people’s needs for development
   c) Mentor, give timely coaching, and offer assignments that challenge and grow a person’s skills.

4. Leveraging diversity: Cultivating opportunities through diverse people.
   a) Respect and relate well to people from varied backgrounds
   b) Understand diverse worldviews and are sensitive to group differences
   c) See diversity as opportunity, creating an environment where diverse people can thrive
   d) Challenge bias and intolerance

5. Political awareness: Reading a group’s emotional currents and power relationships.
   a) Accurately read key power relationships
   b) Detect crucial social networks
   c) Understand the forces that shape views and actions of clients, patients, or competitors
   d) Accurately read situations and organizational and external realities
1. Influence: Wielding effective tactics for persuasion.
   a) Are skilled at persuasion
   b) Fine-tune presentations to appeal to the listener
   c) Use complex strategies like indirect influence to build consensus and support
   d) Orchestrate dramatic events to effectively make a point
2. Communication: Sending clear and convincing messages.
   a) Are effective in give-and-take, registering emotional cues in attuning your message
   b) Deal with difficult issues straightforwardly
   c) Listen well, seek mutual understanding, and welcome sharing of information fully
   d) Foster open communication and stay receptive to bad news as well as good
3. Leadership: Inspiring and guiding groups and people.
   a) Articulate and arouse enthusiasm for a shared vision and mission
   b) Step forward to lead as needed, regardless of position
   c) Guide the performance of others while holding them accountable
   d) Lead by example
4. Change catalyst: Initiating or managing change.
   a) Recognize the need for change and remove barriers
   b) Challenge the status quo to acknowledge the need for change
   c) Champion the change and enlist others in its pursuit
   d) Model the change expected of others
5. Conflict management: Negotiating and resolving disagreements.
   a) Handle difficult people and tense situations with diplomacy and tact
   b) Spot potential conflict, bring disagreements into the open, and help deescalate
   c) Encourage debate and open discussion
   d) Orchestrate win-win solutions
   a) Cultivate and maintain extensive informal networks
   b) Seek out relationships that are mutually beneficial
   c) Build rapport and keep others in the loop
   d) Make and maintain personal friendships among work associates
7. Collaboration and cooperation: Working with others toward shared goals.
   a) Balance a focus on task with attention to relationships
   b) Collaborate, sharing plans, information, and resources
   c) Promote a friendly, cooperative climate
   d) Spot and nurture opportunities for collaboration
8. Team capabilities: Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals.
   a) Model team qualities like respect, helpfulness, and cooperation
   b) Draw all members into active and enthusiastic participation
   c) Build team identity, esprit de corps, and commitment
   d) Protect the group and its reputation; share credit

SOURCES:
This framework was adapted and the original can be found at: www.eiconsortium.org.