

The Emotional Value of Healthcare

Hiring, Training, and Coaching Emotional Intelligence & Social Skills

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Feeling the Connection

Judy, 75-years-old, has recently moved into your assisted living facility. She was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer two months ago. Judy has chosen a board-certified oncologist and is very pleased with his knowledge about her medical history and available treatment options. Judy mentions that while her oncologist is always professional, she doesn't feel a personal connection with him and he "NEVER" smiles.

Judy notices that some of the residents in her senior living community have been slow to connect with her and one mentioned that making friends and then having someone pass away is really hard on everyone. Judy also feels that some of the staff are friendly but emotionally distant from her. Judy tells you that she wants to live every day that she has left to the fullest and she wants both good quality care as well as a caring environment and caring professionals. She considers the "rationale" value of healthcare (trained staff, working equipment, value for her money) as equally important as the emotional value (personal connection).



Judy is looking for an emotional fit – an emotional connection with her living community and healthcare providers. For Judy, not having this connection is stressful, uncomfortable, and has impacted her emotional wellness. This impact on her emotional wellness is impacting her physical health. A strong patient/resident-care provider connection engages the resident and family and develops "relationships that are enduring, promote healing and encourage an optimal patient experience."¹ A healthcare team that is not professionally and emotionally connected and does not have effective teamwork and communication skills will often negatively impact the resident and family experience.

Social Skills, Emotional Intelligence, and Emotional Fitness

Socially skilled staff², emotional intelligence³, and emotional fitness^{4,5} are some of the current terms used to describe the importance of the resident-care provider relationship. "Social skills are the skills we use to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language, and our personal appearance."⁶ **Socially skilled staff are conversationally present, engaged, compassionate, excellent communicators, friendly, and professional. They are able to effectively manage stress and conflict.**

Emotional intelligence as defined by *HelpGuide*:

“Emotional intelligence (otherwise known as emotional quotient or EQ) is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict.”⁶ Emotional intelligence is commonly defined by four attributes - self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship management.⁷



Emotional Fitness is defined by *Emotionally Fit Leadership* as:

“Emotional Fitness is the willingness to take full responsibility for your emotions, and the ability to identify, feel, and express a range of emotions authentically, without judgment or blame of oneself or others. This requires both humility to look inward and courage to feel.”⁸

Studies are showing that healthcare worker and healthcare provider behaviors, including empathy and compassion, are impacting patient/resident outcomes (e.g., adherence to medications and treatments). Research is also showing that emotional intelligence (EQ) impacts resident-centered care, teamwork, communication, job satisfaction, and employee stress adaptation.^{9,10}

Hiring for Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills

While the literature suggests that you can train for better emotional intelligence skills and social skills, hiring an employee with observed emotional intelligence and social skills is a helpful start. Ask questions that will give you an idea regarding how the potential employee recognizes and expresses emotions.

- Question Examples:
 - Tell me about a time that a resident’s son or daughter expressed concern about the care being provided for their loved one, that you did not agree with, and how you responded.
 - Describe a time that you disagreed with your supervisor/manager and how you addressed the situation.
 - Tell me about a time a resident refused medication or treatment and how you responded.
- Look for:
 - Emotional Response
 - Problem Solving Skills
 - Actions and Resolution or Next Steps¹¹

Training Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills

Emotional intelligence is commonly defined by four attributes:

- **Self-management** – The ability to manage emotions and behaviors, be motivated and reliable, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances¹²
- **Self-awareness** – Recognition of how your emotions affect your thoughts and interactions¹²
- **Social awareness** – Includes empathy and compassion, awareness and understanding of the needs, emotions, and concerns of other people¹²
- **Relationship management** – The ability to maintain positive relationships, communicate effectively, work well with team members, and manage conflict¹²

Some ideas that support Emotional Intelligence training include:

- Develop Professional and Customer Service Standards, [Resource](#)
- Provide Training on Making Personal Connections, [Resource](#)
- Develop Training Scenarios Addressing Positive Messaging, [Resource](#)
- Provide Teamwork and Communication Training, [Resource](#)
- Develop Situational Awareness Training, [Resource](#)

Coaching Emotional Intelligence and Social Skills

- Model behaviors reflective of self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship management – Have an Executive Presence¹³
- Continually learn and develop these skills
- Conduct regularly scheduled leadership/management rounds – develop relationships that support the development of emotional intelligence and social skills in others¹⁴
- Provide frequent in-the-moment coaching¹⁴
- Provide structured feedback when in-the-moment coaching has been ineffective¹⁴
- Define expectations as part of job descriptions and provide performance feedback at regularly scheduled intervals



Resources

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