# Managing Self for Leadership

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The first two articles in the series covered the need for leadership capacity building among health professionals and the three domains viz managing self, team and environment.[1,2] At the core of good leadership are the skills for managing self. Managing self is a pre requisite of a good manager and leader. Some of the important skills on managing self include emotional competencies, time management, and communication skills with focus on listening skills are covered in this article. These skills are also essential for managing teams one leads.

## Emotional Competencies

Social and emotional abilities were found to be four times more important than Intelligence Quotient (IQ) in determining professional success and prestige.[3] There is a considerable body of research suggesting that a person's ability to perceive, identify, and manage emotion provides the basis for the kinds of social and emotional competencies that are important for success in almost any job.[4] Emotional Intelligence was first defined by Salovey and Meyers as "a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions."[5] The emotional competencies are linked to and based on emotional intelligence. Certain level of emotional intelligence is necessary to learn the emotional competencies. The evidence indicates that high emotional intelligence does have a relationship to strong job performance — in short, emotionally intelligent people make better

workers.[6] People with highest level of intelligence (IQ), outperform those with average IQ just 20% of the time, whereas people with average IQs but high emotional intelligence outperform those with high IQs 70% of the time.[7] Emotional competencies contribute to not only improving professional performance but also good social and family relations. Unlike intellectual intelligence, an important aspect of emotional competencies is that these can be acquired at any stage in life, provided one is ready to learn. Aristotle highlighted the importance of emotional competencies when he said, "Anyone can become angry — that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way – this is not easy."

## Enhancing Emotional Competencies

### Four components of emotional competencies

| Competencies/ Skills | Self | Others |
|---|---|---|
| Awareness | Knowing one's emotions Perceive one's emotions early identify triggers which generate own emotions | Knowing others' emotions Reading emotions of others around us |
| Managing | Self-management of emotions Not behaving under the influence of emotions i.e. not letting emotions hijack one's behavior | Managing others' emotions Managing emotions of others around us to achieve results |

### Self-Awareness: Knowing one's emotions

Self-awareness is recognizing one's feelings and openly acknowledging them. It is the foundation that makes other skills easier to learn and use. On being emotionally charged, it is important that one realizes it and makes a conscious effort not to lose logical thinking during this state. All the stimuli that create our feelings pass from spinal cord through the limbic system, the emotional center of the brain, before reaching the cerebral cortex, the center of logical thinking. The emotions are thus felt before reason steps in. During intense emotions, such as

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anger, the limbic system becomes hyperactive and clouds out the impulses going to cerebral cortex responsible for rational thinking and one behaves irrationally. The more intense the emotions, more likely are they to hijack one's behavior. Controlling the communication between the 'emotions' center' and 'rational center' of the brain is the essence of emotional intelligence. Only 36% of the 500,000 people tested by Bradberry and Greaves were able to accurately identify their emotions as they happened thereby lacking an important competency that can help them use emotions for self-benefit.[7] This awareness was 83% among top performers. There are five core feelings: Happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and shame and each one of these have 20 levels of intensity.

## Self-management

Building the skills of self-awareness, is using the assessment of one's emotions in directing behavior positively i.e. behaving logically and not letting emotions hijack one's behavior. When one faces paralyzing fear, thinking gets so clouded that one is not able to decide what to do. This is an example of emotional clouding mentioned earlier. Those who are able to understand and manage their emotions take the right course of action.

## Social awareness or reading others' emotions

It is accurately picking up emotions of other people i.e. perceiving how others are thinking and feeling without interference from your feelings and thoughts. Active listening and observing others are critical in developing these skills. It takes practice to get a good sense of how others are thinking and feeling. A socially aware person adjusts to different situations by reading the feelings and emotions of others and uses them while interacting with them.

## Relationship management or managing others' emotions

This skill builds on the foundation skill of social awareness helping in building relationship even with those one is not fond of. The people who are not able to manage their stress transmit their own stress to others around them. A person with emotional competencies identifies such individuals around him and helps them manage their stress and improve relations within the team and improve performance.

## First things first: Managing Time

Time is finite and perhaps the only tangible thing that is equally distributed amongst all of us. No one can stretch time in order to cover every single item on the "to do" lists. Time management is not about "managing" time; but it is about setting priorities and planning and implementing these priorities in the time available. Thus, we cannot manage time, what we manage is what we do

during the time we have. If we choose to set our priorities wisely, we can plan our time to achieve our priority goals and tasks both in our personal and professional life more efficiently.

## Principles related to time management
### *Parkinson's law*

Parkinson referred to how the bureaucracy in British Empire expanded over time while the empire was shrinking. For time management, in simple words, this law states that work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion. By keeping our focus on strategic areas we can achieve the results and manage time.[8]

## Pareto Principle: The 80-20 rule or the law of the few

Vilfredo Pareto, describing the unequal distribution of wealth, observed that twenty percent of the people owned eighty percent of the wealth. The 80/20 rule means that in almost everything a few (20 percent) are vital and many (80 percent) are trivial. Pareto Principle reminds the manager to focus on the 20 percent that matters which produce 80 percent of the results and identify and focus on those things.[9]

## The 'clock' and the 'compass'

This principle highlights paying attention to those activities that move you in the right direction to achieve the desired results. For example, you are going to a destination by car. If you set out in the wrong direction, you will never reach your destination irrespective of how fast you drive. You need to check your 'compass' to set the direction and make sure that the activities you are undertaking will get you the desired result. Without this setting out activities and timeline (the 'clock') and working even 24 × 7 will not get you the desired results.

## The four-quadrant matrix of Stephen Covey

Stephen Covey *et al* illustrates the principle of "put first things first" in the following time management matrix.[10] Dwight Eisenhower said: "The more important an item, the less likely it is urgent, and the more urgent an item, the less likely it is important." The most important is Quadrant II. These activities are more likely to lead to results that contribute to the mission and priority goals but are likely to be delayed, given less attention or even shelved. They require proactive and opportunity minded prevention rather than crisis-oriented. The staff gives these activities a low priority as they are never urgent. The manager should identify these activities, slot time for it and monitor them. Urgent and important activities (Quadrant I) need to be attended to but their dominance leads to stress. "Tyranny of the urgent" and constantly being engaged in "fire-fighting" activities (Quadrant I and III) need to be rationalized. Quadrant IV

activities should be reduced to a bare minimum. These "time-wasters" are: unproductive meetings, telephone calls, unnecessary conversation, junk e-mail, being too detail oriented about insignificant issues, and computer games. Figure below gives some examples of the activities that can be included in the four quadrants. Each one of us needs to fill in this with activities on which one spends time and then decide on eliminating (waste quadrant), minimize (Deception Quadrant) and better planning of the activities, which become crisis if not done on time (Priority Quadrant) so that one can spend more time on activities to add quality to your work (Quality Quadrant).

| Urgency/ Importance | Urgent | Not urgent |
|---|---|---|
| Important | Priority Quadrant Activities that were not planned properly and come up when deadline is close Deadline-driven reports and activities Crisis | Quality Quadrant Planning and timely implementation of planned activities Relationship and network building Strategy development Self-learning Recreation |
| Not Important | Deception Quadrant Interruptions-phone calls, e mails, unplanned visitors Some mails/reports Badly planned meetings | Waste Quadrant Junk mails Unproductive meetings Procrastination Net surfing Tea-time/lunch-time gossip and extended breaks |

The above matrix helps in quality-based time management, making choices based on the importance of tasks in achieving your team goals and personal goals. However, what is important to one person may not be important to somebody else. Culture also plays an important role in one's perception of time, priorities, and deadlines. For example, there is the flexible so-called "Indian" time against for precise "Swiss" time. Family activities or civic responsibilities might take precedence over a pressing deadline of a report or manuscript. Because of such differences, we should be flexible and keep an open mind about work and time practices in different cultures and settings, and be prepared to adapt accordingly. It will help to improve time management by putting one's professional and personal activities on which one spends time in the quadrants and identify areas for improvement.

### To do list a tool for time management

With a to do list that includes prioritization tasks, one can plan one's calendar and prioritize the list according to:

a. Essential tasks giving highest return of investment for the time. If not completed, there will be adverse consequences.
b. Important tasks. However, if not done within a given time frame, will not lead to adverse consequences.

c. Optional tasks. These still need to be done but are not time-sensitive.
d. Time wasting and useless tasks.

Without a system of prioritizing, one may find that s/he has been busy all day, and yet feel that has not accomplished much. "To Do" list can be prepared on the mobile phone, computer or paper. It is good to keep a hard copy on the desk, revisit it during the day and at the end of the day. These organizers can sort the tasks in order of priority and guide through the daily or weekly tasks.

## Time Multipliers

One cannot increase the time at ones disposal to do the task but can increase the number of hands resulting in more work being done. Delegation of responsibilities by identifying the right person in one's team who can be delegated part of the work. While delegating a leader should clearly state, what is to be done and when, set up the standards of performance and provide ongoing support and guidance by continuously monitoring the delegated work till the person who is delegated the work can do the work well. This will free up leader's time to focus on strategic and priority areas, which only s/he can perform.

### Do's and Don'ts for improving time Management

The following approaches can help one better use the time. (i) Use personal Organizers: Get a personal organizer, an electronic organizer on the mobile telephone or computer to keep a readily accessible record of appointments and tasks for efficient time management; (ii) If managing projects, one can use one of the various project management software, such as Microsoft Project or eProject. These help in keeping track of deliverables, deadlines, critical paths and milestones; (iii) Avoiding interruptions at the office. Give yourself (and inform your secretary/assistant if you have one) a dedicated portion of your day where you can close your door (if you have one) or put up a "Do Not Disturb" sign in front of your cubicle; (iv) If you have a receptionist or secretary, s/he can screen your telephone calls. Then you can prioritize the calls you need to return. Better still, switch off your cell phone at those times. (v) Minimize clutter and paper on your desk. Do not use your desk to store work that will not be addressed that day, include it on your "To Do" list for later action. (vi) Handle paper and e-mails only once. Refer, act, file or trash it immediately (vii) Skim documents (especially the many attachments on the e-mail) before deciding whether one need to read the entire document; (viii) Highlight key points on documents read. This facilitates re-reading or sharing with others; (ix) Request removal from e-group lists that are not relevant and (x) Start

reading the e-mail messages from the last one sent, moving down to the older messages. It will be found that some more recent messages are copies of reactions/ actions to an older message. (xi) Zero hour: An hour, preferably in the evening, should be slotted when one keeps no meeting and everyone in the team will be at their desk silently attending to one's own work. This reduces backlog though it is difficult to implement with senior managers generally being the culprits of calling their subordinates.[11]

## Active Listening

Hutchinson emphasizing listening skills on the relevance of history taking, when an expert was called, all that he did was to sit down and elicit a detailed history from the patient and the diagnosis became evident. He just 'listened'.

Listening skills are very important for learning, establishing good communication, maintaining good social and family relation and are vital for good management. Good listening encourages others to speak. Writing and reading are much slower communication elements than speaking and listening. Active listening also helps in negotiations. The listening skills can be measured – Brown-Carlsen listening comprehension test.[12] How well you listen has a major impact on your job effectiveness and your relationship with others, at work, we listen to obtain information, to understand and to learn. Unfortunately, focus on education is on reading and writing skills and almost none on listening skills, hence, most of us do not develop listening skills. Active listening can be improved by making the person realize its importance, facilitating the hearing and listening processes. The actions of speaking and listening use more senses than writing and reading. With advances in globalization, we are connected to many more people through mobile phone and internet, but relatively few who listen.

Listening and hearing, are often used interchangeably but have different meaning. Hearing is the physiological process in which sound waves strike the eardrum and cause vibrations that are transmitted to the brain through the malleus, incus and stapes. The brain may or may not pay any heed. Listening goes beyond hearing and occurs when the brain reconstructs these electrochemical impulses into a representation of the sound that gives it meaning. Listening also includes observing body language and other non-verbal clues to understand efficiently what the other person is conveying. Active listening is when one makes an effort to listen and use the information gained by organizing and storing it in the brain. In the Chinese whisper game, we get a vivid description of how a message is distorted

when circulated orally through a few people. In any organization, messages sent orally can be distorted and a manager has to reduce the distortion and asking the messenger to repeat the message before he is sent to convey the message.

Listening has four components:
- Attending: Paying attention to a certain stimulus
- Understanding: When we make sense of the message we heard
- Responding: When we give feedback to the person who sent the message
- Remembering: What we actually remember of the message that we heard

Listening is affected by impaired hearing, when one is speaking to others and distractions in the surroundings. You are not listening if you are mentally elsewhere, side tracked, hijacked by thoughts, formulating a response; prejudiced — what do I get out of this and tired, unduly long session, physically unwell or emotionally charged. The practices that help one to enhance listening: Face the speaker, maintain eye contact, minimize external distractions, respond appropriately, focus solely on what the speaker is saying, and minimize internal distractions. keep an open mind, avoid telling the speaker how one handled similar situation, even if the person talking is complaining, one should wait until he finishes and actively engage oneself in the conversation with the person(s), one is talking to. Listening does not come naturally; one has to make an effort, as it is hard to stay focused. One may have message overload — too much for one to grasp. The mind may take one away from what one is listening to as thinking is much faster than hearing — one may think around 600 words per minute where as one hears only about 140 words per minute. One's mental state may distract oneself from listening and so can physical factors such as tiredness.

Skills for managing self are very important to become a successful leader. The skills of emotional management, time management and listening skills are very important for managers and leaders in health. Emotional competencies have been to be more important for success in professional life than intellectual intelligence. Good news about emotional competencies is that, unlike intellectual intelligence, these can be learned through practice at any stage in life. Time management is a misnomer as no one can manage time but can plan what one can do in the time available. Time management is about setting priorities and doing what is important — first things first. An important element in any human interaction is listening skills. Without good listening skill, one cannot become a good manager or a leader.

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