

# consumerdirections

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BY COMPLAINANTS

THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF  
**EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE**

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



**Michelle Bihary** has worked in the field of mental health for over 30 years and has a particular expertise in Emotional Intelligence, helping people manage themselves and their clients. SOCAP caught up with Michelle to discuss the importance of Emotional Intelligence in the workplace, specifically in complaints management.

Emotional Intelligence is the psychological capacity for recognising, understanding and managing emotions within ourselves and within others.

According to Michelle, there is an emotional wear and tear in the complaints management sector that has the potential to impact on people's wellbeing, both personally and professionally. Emotional

As Managing Director of The Delta Centre, Michelle inspires professionals to cultivate the best in themselves and those around them through her work in the area of professional resilience, emotional intelligence, leadership training and mentoring.

Intelligence can play a key role in creating a more positive experience for the consumer and a resilience within the complaints management professional, especially when confronted with difficult clients.

"It is how we negotiate within ourselves at those times that really creates sustainability as a career for a complaint handler."

Michelle points to research from the United States as an example of the usefulness of Emotional Intelligence. Researchers compared a group of surgeons who experienced litigation against them with those who did not. Interestingly, the group of surgeons who hadn't been subject to litigation made just as many mistakes, but they were found to display more Emotional Intelligence and were prepared to spend a few extra moments with their clients.

"Sometimes it was a matter of only a few seconds per interaction but they were able to manage the emotional content and interaction with patients better."

So, can Emotional Intelligence be learned? Michelle explains,

"What has been shown through research on emotional intelligence time and time again is that emotional intelligence can be enhanced in anybody."

## Seven Skills of Emotional Intelligence



1. Emotional awareness of self
2. Emotional expression
3. Emotional awareness of others
4. Emotional rationing
5. Emotional self-management
6. Emotional management of others
7. Emotional self-control

One piece of practical advice Michelle offers in developing your Emotional Intelligence is to recognise your own emotional "triggers" when dealing with clients.

"Through managing ourselves when we're triggered, we can vastly improve the quality of relationships. This leads towards a very positive cycle and a very small tip would be to make some notes about why you were triggered in that situation, what button in you is being pushed, and what you understand about that. This will lead to greater self-awareness and also to much greater self-control, which leads to better interpersonal relationships."

Michelle recommends that organisations invest in developing the Emotional Intelligence skills of their workforce, especially in Complaints Management.

"It is very stressful work, it's high risk and we definitely know that there's a very good return on investment when it comes to any of these types of interventions."

"I think that's the thing: It's highly impactful in a long term way if organisations are prepared to support their staff in building their skills to create a more emotionally intelligent workforce. It is incredibly important not only for their bottom line and the wellbeing of staff but also for the best outcome for customers."

*SOCAP's Emotional Intelligence training with Michelle Bihary is available this quarter in Perth, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. For more information go to [socap.org.au](http://socap.org.au)*