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EMOTIONAL INTELLLIGENCE, Vol. 3:
Group EI

This is the last installment on EI, perhaps the broadest of the three since it mainly has to do with EI in groups, going beyond the individual.

Think back again to when you were in the televised group exercise during your leadership program, when it just seemed like the team was really cooking, or, the reverse, when you just couldn't figure out what was wrong but were getting nowhere as a group. The difference can be summarized in the word we used in class, "synergy", and the 12 behavioral tools that have been proven to produce synergy. (See the article "Improving Teamwork – Working Against the Odds" on our website in the Teamwork section.)

Group Emotional Intelligence is another way of looking at synergy and may be productive for strategies to help the group be as "smart" as it can be. Vanessa Urch Druskat and Steven Wolff in their HBR article[1] (also cited in Vol. 2 of this series) offer some "norms around emotions". They start with the fact that the "mood" of the group is crucial to its productivity. To handle the mood of the group, there should be norms that create *awareness of emotion* and also that help *regulate emotions*.

For example, to create *awareness* of emotional content, a group can explicitly acknowledge and discuss the group mood. One team leader instituted the practice of the "wailing wall", a few minutes of whining and moaning about some problem or setback. Once the negative emotions have been released and acknowledged as natural consequences of the setback, the group can then explicitly focus on what it can and can't control in the situation and redirect its energy and humor.

Again, to r*egulate* emotions, another team used the word "cranky" to describe a member who seemed to be in a bad mood on a given day. If a person was acting negatively, he/she was in this way gently reminded that their negativity was impacting the group process. In the interest of the group task, the "cranky" behavior should be curbed. (Urch Druskat and Wolff have a table in their article that provides some guidance for norms in different situations, and you can check out your team's behavior on the basis of these norms, with suggestions for improvement.)

What the authors go on to, and I believe this to be an important extension, are norms for **cross-boundary** teamwork, i.e. teams working with other teams in the same organization, perhaps across boundaries of function or product area. One of the participants in a follow-up program asked me how to handle a situation where one super-effective team was "bullying" other teams in order to get their priorities established ahead of others' – to the detriment of the overall organization that found itself pulled toward these biased objectives. I was a bit stumped till I began to place teamwork into a context of awareness and regulation of emotions <u>across</u> and <u>between</u> teams. Druskat and Wolff suggest, for example, that teams should strive to be aware of concerns and needs of other parts of the organization, not only their own. This requires some deep thinking about competition in the organizational culture, so that

win-win outcomes prevail across teams. Organizations can   also create opportunities for teams to network and interact with other teams and even invite other teams, or their representatives, to be present at their own meetings, where the other teams may have a stake in their outcomes.

An experience I had in this regard was with a top-management team in a U.S. organization in Mexico. The team was concerned with its own performance and how it was perceived by others below them in the local structure. They were also concerned with how they were perceived by HQ. So we used the Campbell-Hallam Team Development Survey (TDS) to sound out these opinions, and sensitize the management team on its impact at different levels in the company. This team went even further: it used the same TDS to check out the perceptions of *customer* organizations that the company serviced. And they found out some things about their team behavior that customers wanted improvements on. Now that's an emotionally intelligent team! Think about it. Pick up the HBR article and apply it to yourself, your team, and the teams around you. You might be surprised how much smarter you can get! (See also on our website the articles on Teamwork and Social Intelligence, especially "So You Want Your Teams to Collaborate" and "Social Intelligence – Restated and Redefined".)

[1] "Building the Emotional Intelligence of Groups", *Harvard Business Review*, March, 2001.