

You Can Learn Emotional Competence

Increasing Emotional Competence Improves Psychological and Physical Well-Being, Social Relationships, and Employability

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Principle

Learning emotional competence makes your life better.

Quote

“Not only can people improve their emotional competencies as adults, but learning to identify, understand, express, manage, and use emotions to one’s advantage can also be beneficial for them.”

So What - Application

If emotional competence can be taught and improves many aspects of your life, how can we go about gaining emotional competence?

We could look for a course, but the message here is that not just any course will do - it needs to be research based.

We could take the skills from this study - being able to understand, identify, express, and regulate our own and others emotions as a starting place.

Essentially this is what we do at Life Changing Principles. We teach simple research-backed emotional competence and coaching skills that can be learned in less than a full-time workweek. As a matter of fact, some of the skills in this study are the exact same skills we teach.

The Research Story

Seven researchers from two universities in Belgium did 2 studies to find out whether emotional competence can be taught.

People can have 3 levels of emotional competence: emotional knowledge, emotional skills they can demonstrate, and using the skills in everyday life.

Study #1 - They randomly assigned 58 college students in Liege, Belgium to a control group or an 18-hour, 6 session class designed to build emotional competence. The competencies were understanding emotions, identifying one’s own and others emotions, regulating one’s own and others emotions, and using positive emotions to foster well-being.

They found that the training group improved in emotional understanding, regulation, and overall emotional competence for 6 months after the class. It also influenced their personality. The more they understood and managed their emotions, the more sociable and emotionally stable they became.

Study #2 - They randomly assigned 92 college students to a control group, the same emotional competence training group, and an improv drama group to see if maybe just the extra social interaction was having an effect.

They found that emotional competence can increase after brief training and that developing emotional competence can lead to a wide variety of positive outcomes including physical health, mental health, happiness, life satisfaction, and social functioning. People even became more employable based on mock interviews.

The idea that personality is pretty stable is generally accepted, but here they found that with the emotional competence training, participants were more extraverted, more agreeable, and less neurotic, 3 personality traits from the Big 5. It’s interesting to think that part of personality is the competence with which you manage your inner life.

Nelis, D., Kotsou, I., Quoidbach, J., Hansenne, M., Weytens, F., Dupuis, P., & Mikolajczak, M. (2011). Increasing emotional competence improves psychological and physical well-being, social relationships, and employability. *Emotion*, 11(2), 354–366. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021554>