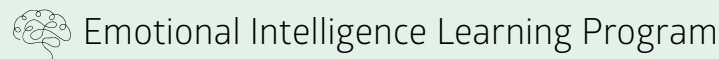


CANADIAN HOME CARE ASSOCIATION



## MODULE 1: Perceive Emotions and Self-Awareness

### PERCEIVE EMOTIONS

#### Learning Objectives

Welcome to Module 1 of the Canadian Home Care Association's emotional intelligence learning modules. This module will examine the perceive emotions domain of emotional intelligence and introduce the important competency of self-awareness, as well as the practice of mindfulness.

Learning how to perceive your emotions and becoming more self-aware will deepen your rewards in both your professional and personal life.

After completing this module, you should be able to:

- Define self-awareness and explain its role in emotional intelligence;
- Discuss the need for self-awareness in response to caregivers' experiences through change;
- Recognize and name different emotions, emotional intensities, and emotional triggers;
- Explain the concept of mindfulness; and
- Describe techniques for practicing mindfulness.

#### Terms and Definitions

These are the terms introduced in this module. You can also download a PDF that includes all the terms used in the EI Learning Modules.

#### EI Domain: Perceive Emotions

As you learned in the introductory module, the first domain of emotional intelligence is concerned with *perceiving emotions*.

This means recognizing our own emotions and the emotions of others. The ability to perceive emotions relies on self-awareness.

This domain of emotional intelligence gives us the ability to answer the questions, "How do I feel?" and "How does the other person feel?" in any given situation.

## What Is Emotional Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the competency required to effectively perceive emotions.

Self-awareness is the ability to be aware of and understand your feelings and behaviours, and the impact they have on others.

Being self-aware means that you know why you are thinking and acting in a certain way.

## Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence

Self-awareness is one of the most important elements of emotional intelligence. You cannot understand, manage, or use emotions if you are not aware of your own emotions.

Being self-aware gives you the ability to perceive your emotions so that you can understand and control them, as well as the thoughts and actions they lead to.

Self-awareness also helps you understand how you are influencing the emotions and actions of others.

## Why Is Self-Awareness Important?

Why is self-awareness important?

Because the ability to perceive emotions and to be self-aware are the foundation on which all emotional intelligence skills are built.

Having strong emotional intelligence means you recognize the ways your emotions and behaviours affect your actions and others.

When you have a strong sense of self-awareness, you recognize when you feel out of sorts, anxious, sad or frustrated, and you understand how your feelings affect your behaviour and have an impact on others.

And if you are aware of yourself—both your strengths and your weaknesses—then you can be aware of the impact your thoughts and actions can have.

When you know why you think and act the way you do, you will know how to change, or even whether you should.

Learning how to perceive your emotions and how to be more self-aware will deepen both your professional and your personal rewards.

Developing your self-awareness is an ongoing process. You will need to continually evaluate yourself and make a conscious effort to improve. Your personal thoughts and interpretations will begin to change. This may change how you feel and will increase your emotional intelligence.

## Self-Awareness and Caregivers' Experiences

As we learned in the introductory module, providing care for a loved-one, friend, or family members can be challenging. But each caregiver's experience is unique. These unique experiences are shaped by their head, heart, and hands.

The head represents what caregivers think: their knowledge, familiarity, and understanding.

The heart represents what caregivers feel: their emotions, reactions, and feelings.

The hands represent what caregivers do: their roles, tasks, and responsibilities. To learn more about how caregivers think, feel, and do, hover over the hotspots on the photo.

## Supporting Caregivers through Change

Caregivers go through a series of changes as they adjust to their new role and circumstance. These changes impact every aspect of their life and influence their caregiving experience—what they think, feel and do.

It is important that health care providers recognize and understand the emotional cycle of change that patients and caregivers are experiencing.

When experiencing change—big or small—all patients and their caregivers go through the cycle in different ways. Some people move through the stages quickly, while others may spend time in each stage, or get stuck and move back before they move forward.

Practicing self-awareness to support caregivers through the cycle of change is an important emotional intelligence skill for all health care providers.

To learn more about practicing self-awareness to support caregivers' experiences through the different stages of the change cycle, hover over the hotspots on the exhibit.

## EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS

### Four Basic Emotions

Being able to name or label our emotions is an important first step in dealing with them effectively.

It can be difficult to identify exactly what emotions we are experiencing. We often ignore our emotions or push them away.

But naming and describing your emotions allows you to better understand yourself and your reactions.

When you connect with your emotions, you can work to resolve them, which can lead to a feeling of calm, resilience and personal power.

If you struggle to name and connect with your own emotions, and those of others, misunderstandings, missteps and conflict occur.

Most psychologists agree that there are fewer basic emotions than we might think. The range of emotional expression actually comes from variations of our basic core emotions.

In this program, we use a model with four primary emotional types: happy, sad, angry, and afraid.

We will use this simple model to help you quickly identify and make sense of the emotions you're feeling and that are guiding you.

### What Is Emotional Intensity?

While there are only four root emotions, each emotion can be experienced to different degrees.

Many of us were taught that we should hold back or conceal strong or highly intensive emotions.

But, we also know that when we conceal or ignore emotions, they can grow stronger or more intense. Emotional intensity is the extent to which we experience an emotion. We can be very glad or mildly sad, or a little bit mad.

It may be helpful to think about emotions as having low intensity, medium intensity, or high intensity. We can use different vocabulary to be more specific about our emotional.

Let's look at some examples of emotional intensities:

If you are happy at a high intensity you might feel *excited*. A less intensive feeling might be *grateful*, or even lower, you may just feel *pleased*.

High intensity sadness might make you feel *miserable*. At a medium intensity, you may feel *distressed*. And at the lowest intensity, you may just be *disappointed*.

If you are angry, you could be *furious* at a high intensity, or *outraged* at the medium level, or perhaps just a little *annoyed*.

If the emotion is fear, or being afraid, at the highest intensity, you could be *terrified*. But, you might just be *uneasy*, or perhaps just *concerned*.

## Range of Emotional Intensity

A broad emotional vocabulary that is specific to the intensity of your feelings will help you increase your self-awareness and help you interact more successfully with others.

Review the table for examples of different vocabulary you can use to describe the common emotional intensities we experience.

You can also download a PDF with a more complete list of vocabulary.

## What Is an Emotional Trigger?

Do some topics of conversation or certain situations seem to spark an emotional reaction in you?

We all have emotional triggers.

Emotional triggers are events that tap into our vulnerable spots. When they are poked, negative emotions are released that might include unwanted memories, uncomfortable topics, or someone's unkind words or actions.

Vulnerable spots depend on your experiences and vulnerability at the time.

For example, a small off-hand remark may seem horrible, depending on your mind set at the time or the circumstances surrounding the situation. The same event can trigger an emotional response in one person but not in another.

Self-awareness includes identifying your own emotional triggers, and understanding them so that you can control your response.

To recognize your triggers, you must pay attention when you experience a strong emotional response. What emotion is going through you in that moment—mad, sad, afraid? Are you experiencing physical symptoms—pounding heart, upset stomach, shakiness?

Some common situations that trigger intense emotions include:

- Rejection;
- Unjust treatment;
- Beliefs being challenged;
- Helplessness or loss of control;
- Disapproval or criticism;
- Insecurity;
- Being excluded or ignored; and
- Rude comments.

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 1.1

### Check Your Understanding

To check your understanding so far, take a moment to answer these questions about perceiving emotions and self-awareness. If you don't get the correct answers, you can go back and review the content again before going to the next section.

## MINDFULNESS

### Developing Self-Awareness Through Mindfulness

As we've discussed, developing your self-awareness is an on-going process.

Now that you've learned more about naming your emotions and their intensity, and how triggers work, you can begin to develop your emotional self-awareness.

We can increase our self-awareness through reflection. This means taking time to think about our emotions—what they are and how and why they make us feel the way we do.

As a home care provider, you learn from your experiences in the following ways.

- By taking the time to reflect, you can appreciate the positives and accepting the negatives as opportunities to learn and grow.
- By reflecting on your words, actions and attitudes after the fact, you can identify better ways to approach and react to different situations.
- And by being ready and receptive to changing your behaviour, you can develop your self-awareness.

Now, we're going to learn about mindfulness meditation, which is a specific strategy for developing emotional self-awareness.

### What Is Mindfulness?

If you *mind* full? Or are you *mindful*?

People often confuse the concept of *mindfulness* with the idea that you should “stop and smell the roses.”

This isn't accurate. If you have your nose buried in flowers while hiking in the woods, you might miss the bear wandering across the path!

This is the opposite of being mindful.

Mindfulness is a state of mind in which you are fully conscious in the present moment and engaged with the demands of the present moment.

In this sense, mindfulness is about avoiding distractions.

Practising mindfulness helps to stop the distractions in your head by focusing your mind on being present in the moment and being aware of your inner thoughts, feelings, and surroundings.

Mindfulness means paying attention to your thoughts without attaching yourself to them.

Practising mindfulness can help focus your awareness on what you're feeling and experiencing in the present moment, helping you achieve an inner calm.

## What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness?

Mindfulness can help you understand, accept, and deal with your emotions in healthy ways.

This helps you change your usual response to a situation by first pausing and then choosing how to act.

Research studies also show us that mindfulness benefits how and what you think, feel, and do.

Some of the benefits of mindfulness include:

- Decreased negative affect (for example, depression or anxiety);
- Less emotional reactivity;
- More effective emotion regulation;
- Increased focus;
- More cognitive flexibility; and
- Improved working memory.

Review the table to see how these benefits related to what you think, feel, and do.

## How To Practice Mindfulness

Being mindful means experiencing the world directly through your five senses. Tasting the food you're eating. Feeling the sunshine on your skin. Hearing the birds singing.

This increased sense of awareness helps you to label the thoughts and feelings you're having, instead of allowing them to overpower you and dictate your behaviour.

There are many ways to practice mindfulness. The most common is meditation, but you can also use some type of focused activity.

No matter how you practice mindfulness, the key is to pay attention with all of your senses and stay in the present moment.

For example, when you are walking, you can feel your feet as you take each step and pay attention to the sights, smells, and sounds you encounter.

When you are taking a shower, you can smell the soap or feel the lather, temperature, and water; you can also hear the water.

When you eat, focus on the smell, colour, texture, and taste while taking one bite at a time.

If you like listening to music, try to choose one instrument and focus on that one instrument throughout the entire song.

Breathing mindfully means focus on your breath. Are you breathing in deeply or shallowly? Is your breath cold or warm? Is it fast or slow? Are you breathing through your mouth or nose? Are you feeling any aches or pains?

Next we'll try a mindfulness breathing exercise.

## Mindfulness Breathing Exercise

If you are able, follow along with the narration for this exercise by clicking on the play button below. Let's take a few minutes to try a mindful breathing exercise.

Sit with your back relatively straight but not stiff. Allow your posture to follow the curve of your spine at your lower back.

Focus on your breathing—the in and out.

Don't try to change it by breathing more deeply or shallowly or inhaling through your nose or mouth. Just note how your breath comes in and out. [Pause]

Now, count to 4 with each inhale, expanding your belly outward. Hold your breath for 2 counts. Then count to 6 as you exhale one full breath, contracting the belly.

Breathe in [pause 4 count]

Hold [pause 2 count]

Exhale [pause 6 count]

Continue.

Focus on your breathing.

Is your breathing deep or shallow?

Cold or warm?

What do you feel with each breath?

If at any time you become distracted from your breath, return to counting on each inhale and exhale. [pause]

When you are ready, go to the next section.

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 1.2

### Check Your Understanding

To check your understanding so far, take a moment to answer these questions about mindfulness. If you don't get the correct answers, you can review the content again.

# SUMMARY

## Module Summary

In Module 1, we learned about perceiving emotions, how to become more self-aware, and how to practice mindfulness.

Self-awareness is the competency required to effectively perceive emotions - to be aware of and understand your emotions and how they influence your actions and those of others.

Developing your self-awareness is an on-going process.

Being self-aware helps health care providers better understand and respond to caregivers' changing emotions and what they think, feel and do.

The four basic emotions are happy, sad, angry, afraid and are experienced at different levels of intensity (high, medium, and low)—for example, if you are angry, you could be furious, mad, or just disappointed.

Many things can trigger our emotions. Triggers are different for everyone. Self-awareness helps you know your emotional triggers, so you can understand them and control your responses.

Mindfulness is a state of mind where you are fully conscious and present in the moment.

Practicing mindfulness every day helps you manage distractions and be aware of your inner thoughts, feelings, and surroundings.

Mindfulness helps improve what you think, feel and do. Practice mindfulness every day to become more self-aware and better understand and use your emotions.

## Reflection

Consider what you have learned in this module and reflect on the following questions.

Think about a recent time when you experienced strong emotions. [pause]

Were you happy, sad, angry, or afraid? [pause]

How intense was your emotion? [pause]

What was the trigger?

## What's Next?

In the next module, we will learn about the domain of understanding emotions, the importance of empathy in emotional intelligence, how to develop empathy through reading body language and listening mindfully, and finally, and how we can use reframing to practice empathy.