

CANADIAN HOME CARE ASSOCIATION



Emotional Intelligence Learning Program

MODULE 3: Manage Emotions and Flexibility

MANAGE EMOTIONS

Learning Objectives

Welcome to Module 3 of the Canadian Home Care Association's emotional intelligence learning modules. This module is designed to help health care providers learn about managing emotions. As you complete this module, you will learn about the important competency of flexibility, as well as the behaviour of adapting your communication style.

The goal is to increase your emotional intelligence skills to help patients and caregivers deal with difficult situations and unexpected challenges through their emotional cycles of change.

After completing this module, you should be able to:

- Define flexibility and explain its role in emotional intelligence;
- Discuss the need for flexibility in response to caregivers' experiences through change;
- Identify the benefits of flexibility;
- Describe the three types of flexibility;
- Identify five ways to improve flexibility;
- Describe the practice of adapting; and
- Outline how to adapt your communication style using the DISC model.

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: Manage Emotions

As you learned in the EI Learning Module preview, the third domain of emotional intelligence is concerned with *managing emotions*.

To manage emotions means to regulate them and respond appropriately. When we manage our emotions, we can draw on them to inform our reasoning and behaviour. This helps us to know when to engage or detach from an emotion, when to respond, and when to stop and think. It also helps us to recognize

appropriate or inappropriate emotional expression in ourselves and in others.

Flexibility is the competency that allows us to manage emotions and adapt and adjust to changing situations. With strong flexibility skills, we can recover quicker from setbacks, upsets, and failures; respond to changes; and seek out new experiences at work and at home.

Why is Flexibility Important?

Have you ever heard the story of the Oak and the Willow?

Two trees once stood in the same field: a large oak tree and a flowing willow tree. The willow tree envied the power and strength of the oak tree. But one day a violent storm passed through, with strong winds and rain. After the storm passed, the willow saw that the oak had fallen over. Although the oak tree was mighty and solid, it was also rigid and inflexible. When the winds were too much for it to resist, the oak tree cracked under the pressure. The willow had lost some leaves and branches, but she had weathered the storm because her flexibility allowed her to bend with the wind.

This classic story from Aesop's fables illustrates the value of bending where others might break.

Flexibility—our ability to bend under pressure, then recover—helps us to

- Adapt to our environment;
- Be resilient and deal with challenges; and
- Adjust to changes.

Flexibility and Emotional Intelligence

Once you can *perceive* and *understand emotions*, the next step in developing your emotional intelligence is to control your emotions in a positive way.

The third domain of emotional intelligence involves the ability to manage emotions.

Managing emotions requires flexibility—the ability to regulate our emotions, and respond appropriately to others emotions.

In this module, we will explore the competency of flexibility and how to improve our own flexibility. Then, we will explore how flexibility helps us adapt in a useful and productive way to support caregivers and patients.

Flexibility and Caregivers' Experiences

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.

Knowing how to be flexible and respond appropriately to caregivers' needs is a necessity for all health care providers.

To learn more about how health care providers can respond with flexibility to what caregivers think, feel and do, hover the hotspots on the photos.

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 have to move back before they move forward.

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

To learn more about practicing flexibility to support caregivers' experiences through the change cycle, hover over the hotspots on the exhibit.

FLEXIBILITY

Benefits of Flexibility

Flexibility means being open to change—being able to change the way we think, work and behave when needed.

Flexible people can change their minds when faced with new information or evidence and alter standard procedures when necessary.

This also means that flexible people are usually optimistic because they can focus on solutions rather than problems.

- When we are flexible, we can
- Avoid being overwhelmed by change;
- Increase our ability to manage the unexpected;
- Have more tolerance of those who are different;
- Improve our relationships and social interactions;
- Make better decisions;
- Be open to learning new things;
- Reduce our stress or tension; and
- Increase our resiliency.

High Flexibility vs. Low Flexibility

The home care environment is often unpredictable and continually changing. This makes flexibility a necessary skill when working with caregivers and patients.

Being highly flexible helps you cope with dynamic and changing work environments.

Let's summarize the differences between the benefits of high flexibility and the consequences of low flexibility.

With high flexibility, you can

- Admit your mistakes and move on;
- Stay open to others' ideas;
- Anticipate and manage change;
- Take quick action when necessary; and
- Learn new things and grow.

With low flexibility, you will

- Be unable to admit when you are wrong;
- Think and behave with rigidity;
- Have trouble adapting to change;
- Be slow to act when it matters; and
- Experience limitations in your career path

In general, highly flexible people are open and considerate of everyone's views and opinions and listen to the advice of others. They seek out information to stay informed and personal improvement.

This makes highly flexible people good problem solvers that show a presence of mind when it comes to new challenges both large and small.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 3.1

Check Your Understanding

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

IMPROVING FLEXIBILITY

Three Types of Flexibility

There are three kinds of flexibility: cognitive, emotional and dispositional.

Each type of flexibility can be learned and improved by practicing behaviours associated with each.

Cognitive flexibility is the ability to use different thinking strategies and mental frameworks. It identifies how well you can change your thinking and adopt a new perspective or adjust to a new environment.

Cognitive flexibility allows us to work on Plan A but still keep Plans B, C, and D in mind and then make a change when necessary.

Having high cognitive flexibility means being a quick and creative thinker, with an ability to seek out new approaches.

You can use EI skills to improve your cognitive flexibility by reframing situations and using empathy to

build relationships.

Emotional Flexibility is the ability to change your approach when dealing your own and other's emotions. With emotional flexibility, we can respond to emotions without being overwhelmed and be comfortable with challenging emotional situations such as grieving the loss of a loved one, or dealing with individuals who are resistant to change.

Emotional flexibility also assists us in to crisis situation.

When you are emotionally flexible as a health care providers, you are aware of what the caregiver and patient are feeling respond to it in a helpful and positive manner.

You can use EI skills to increase your emotional flexibility by being mindful and self-aware so you may perceive and identify emotions and then respond accordingly.

Dispositional flexibility is the ability to remain both optimistic and realistic at the same time.

While it is always helpful to approach problems with positive thinking, it is not helpful to ignore the reality of a situation.

With dispositional flexibility, you can recognizing a bad situation but still imagine a positive outcome.

Dispositional flexibility can also help you cope with ambiguity and see change as an opportunity rather than a threat.

You can use EI skills to increase your dispositional flexibility by reframing situations and practicing optimism when considering problems and their potential solutions.

Five Ways to Become More Flexible

In Modules 1 and 2 you learned about self-awareness and empathy and the related behaviours of mindfulness and reframing. These are critical aspects of emotional intelligence that will help you increase your own flexibility. Let's look at five actions that are necessary for flexibility.

Number 1 — Be open-minded

Keeping an open mind means being open to different ideas, orientations and ways of doing things. If your mind is closed, you will react to change in a rigid way.

With an open mind, you will be flexible and open to alternative solutions when your first attempt does not succeed or your suggestion does not go over well.

Number 2 — Be objective

Being objective means not allowing your own personal fears, wishes, preferences, or prejudices to influence your actions or judgement. Objectivity allows us to see the difference between the way things are and the way we fear or hope they might be.

An objective person is capable of evaluating a situation realistically based on evidence. Being objective allows you to see both the problems and opportunities that exist.

Number 3 — Be calm

It is must easier to handle a stressful situation if you stay calm. When you are calm, you have the capacity to handle multiple demands, shifting priorities, and rapid change with flexibility. Flexibility is hard to achieve if you are worked up.

Number 4 — Reframe

Reframing is critical for flexibility. When confronted with change, reframing lets us puts a distressing

situation into an opportunity or challenge to grow. Reframing allows us to be flexible in our response to problems and situations.

Number 5 — Be self-aware

Our own emotions can often get in the way of being open-minded, objective, and calm. When we are self-aware, we can identify the negative emotion such as fear or anger that might make us inflexible in response to change.

Flexible people can usually identify and understand their own fears of losing face, being criticized, losing control, or making a mistake is getting in the way.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 3.2

Check Your Understanding

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

ADAPTING

What is Adapting?

Our communication style influences how others react and response to us. With flexibility, you will be able to adapt your own communication style to meet the needs of different situations and different caregivers and patients.

There are four key areas of your communication that you can adapt: words used, tone of voice, speed of speech and body language.

How can you adapt the words you use?

Health care has many acronyms and “jargon” or specialized terms. Using this type of language may be appropriate when talking to a co-worker.

But, think about how confusing this vocabulary can sound to a new caregiver, who is already overwhelmed.

To avoid confusing or alienating the caregiver, you can adapt your communication style by choosing more common terms and explaining important acronyms and jargon.

How can you adapt your tone of voice?

The tone of your communication is the way it sounds and it can be very meaningful. Do you sound positive, negative, impatient, serious, irritated, encouraging?

Avoid letting your own thoughts and feelings seep into your tone of voice.

Allow the caregiver's situation to set the tone.

Your tone should also match your nonverbal and verbal communication.

How can you adapt the speed of your speech?

Speed or *pace* of speech has an effect on the tone and emotional quality of your message.

A fast pace can make the caregiver feel anxious and rushed, and make you seem inaccessible.

A slow pace can make caregiver feel as though the message is not important.

Adapt to the situation and choose a pace that will help the listener focus on your message.

How can you adapt your body language?

As we learned in Module 2 “Understand Emotions”, body language represents more than half of your communication. Your body language must send the same message of your words, tone, and pace.

You can also adapt your body language to the situation.

Mirroring the caregivers’ body language communication help them feel more comfortable.

Adapting in Response to Others

By being flexible and adapting the way you communicate can better get your messages across and create stronger relationships with the caregiver and patient. We’ve already learned about word choice, tone of voice, pacing, and body language. The next step in adapting your communication is observing the style of others.

The DISC model identifies four types of communication style: dominant, influential, steady, and compliant.

By understanding these different communication styles, you can adapt your own style to become a truly effective communicator.

The four styles of communication are used in different degrees by different personality types.

The figure below shows how the personalities of outgoing, people-oriented, reserved, and task-oriented are connected by the four communication styles.

Adapting to DISC Communication Styles

Although the four communication styles are a simplification of complex human behaviour, most people display one or two of them. To identify the communication style of the caregiver you are interacting with, ask questions, observe and use mindful listening. Then, adapt your style accordingly.

The dominant communication style is direct and decisive. This caregiver is self-confident, results-oriented and likes to take control of situations.

When communicating with a dominant-style communicator:

- State points clearly and briefly;
- Emphasize the facts;
- Avoid chit chat or long stories;
- Be prepared and organized to show your competence; and
- Provide support and maintain, don’t direct or order.

The influential communication style is talkative and outgoing. This caregiver is a people person who is motivated and loves interaction.

They usually want to talk and feel like they have been heard. They respond to friendliness and want to be recognized for their contribution,

When communicating with an influential-style communicator:

- Be friendly and sociable;
- Add some humour, if appropriate;
- Ask for their opinion;
- Let them talk and give them the opportunity to verbalize their thoughts; and
- Ask specific questions if you want specific answers.

The steady communication style is calm, patient, and controlled. This caregiver has a quiet, sincere approach to communication. They are a supportive team player and a good listener who prizes reliability.

When communicating with a steady-style communicator:

- Present information in a non-threatening way;
- Do not be aggressive or pushy;
- Patiently explain, step-by-step, how things will get done;
- Confirm agreement with any plans before moving on;
- Do what you say you will and when you say you will; and
- Give them the time and support needed to adapt to change.

The compliant communication style is conscientious, logical, and cautious. This caregiver is an analytical thinker, who likes to focus on the detail and take their time before responding.

When communicating with a compliant-style communicator:

- Be well-organized, accurate, and patient;
- Keep chit chat to a minimum and focus on the visit;
- Provide facts, figures, and logic;
- Discuss specific expectations and outcomes; and
- Do not force them to make rapid decisions.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING 3.3

Check Your Understanding

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

SUMMARY

Module Summary

This module covered the emotional intelligence domain “manage emotions”, the competency of flexibility and ideas on how adapt communication. The key points to remember are:

When we manage our emotions, we can regulate them and respond appropriately to others' emotions. Becoming more flexible can help us manage emotions.

Flexibility is the ability to adjust to unfamiliar, unpredictable, and dynamic circumstances, and adjust your approach as a situation changes.

Knowing how to be flexible helps you support and empower caregivers through their emotional cycles of change.

Being flexibility allows you to anticipate and manage change, take quick action and better cope with unpredictable situations.

Flexible people are usually optimistic and focus on solutions rather than problems.

There are **3 types of flexibility**:

1. Cognitive flexibility is the ability to use different thinking strategies and mental frameworks.
2. Emotional Flexibility is the ability to change your approach when dealing your own and other's emotions.
3. Dispositional flexibility is the ability to remain both optimistic and realistic at the same time.

There are 5 ways to improve flexibility:

1. Being open-minded - look for and embrace alternative solutions
2. Being objective - see both problems and opportunities
3. Being calm - stay peaceful and unaffected by negative emotions
4. Reframing - look at situations with new eyes and in a more positive light
5. Being self-aware - recognize and understand your thoughts and the impact of your behaviour

Adaptability is the skill to change (or be changed) to fit changed situations and circumstances.

- Practicing the behaviour of adapting allows us to handle many demands and adjust to new situations with fresh ideas or innovative approaches.
- Adapting your communication styles help you relate to all types of people

Remember by managing your emotions, being more flexible and practicing adapting your communication styles you can better support and empower caregivers through their emotional cycles of change.

REFLECTION

Consider what you have learned in this module and respond to the following reflection questions.

- How do you respond to change?
- Do you think you are a flexible person?
- Can you remember a time when you needed to be flexible when supporting a patient and their caregiver?

WHAT'S NEXT?

In the next module, we will learn about the domain of use emotions, the practice of decision-making, and how emotional intelligence helps us in collaborative thinking.

The **Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA)** is a national non-profit association dedicated to strengthening integrated community-based care. Launched in 2021, the CHCA Learning Centre offers a range of flexible and well-designed courses for home and community care providers. Using a blended learning model that leverages technology and instructional design our micro-training courses maximize participant choice and engagement.

Partners in Restorative Care (PiRC) is an innovative capacity-building initiative for health care providers (regulated and non-regulated) to enhance their abilities to recognize, understand and address challenges experienced by caregivers when they are supporting a loved-one who is receiving care in their home.

CHCA Emotional Intelligence Learning Program increases health care providers emotional intelligence skills through a 3 step process: (1) self-directed e-learning modules, (2) facilitated group learning and (3) practical field application through a structured mentoring process.

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