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FEBRUARY 2026

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We are so pleased to serve as your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. The EAP is designed to be your first stop for support, offering prevention and short-term problem-solving services when life gets challenging.

Through the program, you have access to confidential short-term counseling, wellness seminars, legal support, and financial consultation services, all at no cost to you.

Each month, you'll receive a newsletter filled with helpful wellness tips along with updates on upcoming seminars, webinars, and additional resources available to you and your household.



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WELLNESS SEMINAR

Emotional Intelligence in
Action: Reading the Room &
Responding, Not Reacting

02/19/26 | Thursday
2:00 PM CENTRAL TIME

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QUARTERLY WEBINAR

Coaching Instead of Managing:
Turning Employees Into
High-Performers

03/27/26 | Thursday
2:00 PM CENTRAL TIME

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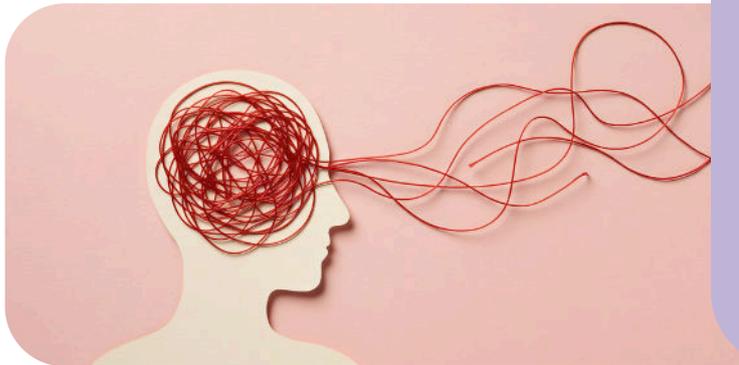
Emotional Intelligence in Action: Reading the Room & Responding, Not Reacting

By: Rosalinda Rodriguez, LPCA

We've all been in conversations where the words are fine, but something still feels "off." Maybe the energy in the room shifts, someone shuts down, or tension suddenly spikes. Emotional intelligence (EI) is the skill that helps us notice those shifts, understand them, and choose responses that keep communication healthy, especially under stress. It's less about being the smartest person in the room and more about being the most attuned.

Research supports that EI isn't just a "soft skill"; it's a performance skill. Reviews of leadership research consistently find that emotional intelligence is a core ingredient of effective leadership and high-performing teams, above and beyond technical expertise (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). Even physiologically, emotions are contagious. Emotions spread through groups, a process known as emotional contagion, shaping cooperation, conflict, and even physiological stress responses (Barsade, 2002).

Importantly, reacting impulsively (e.g., snapping, shutting down, or interrupting) activates the body's fight-or-flight response. Responding instead, with a pause, labeling what's happening, and intentionally choosing a direction, helps keep the thinking brain online.



How to "Read the Room" & Respond Thoughtfully

- Scan for nonverbal signals – Facial expressions, tone, posture, and even silence often reveal emotional states more quickly than words.
- Separate fact from emotion – Ask, "What was said?" versus "How did it make me feel?" That gap is where choice lives.
- Use the three-second pause – It sounds small, but pausing gives the brain enough time to shift from reacting to responding.

When we read the room and respond rather than react, we protect psychological safety. Communication becomes smoother, and conflicts resolve more quickly. Teams that practice EI report higher trust, better decision-making, and fewer emotional "hangovers" after difficult conversations. At home, this looks like fewer arguments; at work, it looks like less reactivity and more collaboration. Reading the room isn't about mind-reading, it's about noticing. Responding isn't about perfection; it's about choosing intention over impulse.



To learn more about this topic, please join our upcoming webinar, [Emotional Intelligence in Action: Reading the Room & Responding, Not Reacting](#) on Thursday February 19th, at 2:00PM CST.

References

Barsade, S. (2002). The Ripple Effect: Emotional Contagion and its Influence on Group Behavior. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47, 644 - 675. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3094912>.
Coronado-Maldonado, I., & Benítez-Márquez, M. (2023). Emotional intelligence, leadership, and work teams: A hybrid literature review. *Heliyon*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20356>.

Emotional Health, Self-Worth & Relationships

By: Rosalinda Rodriguez, LPCA

Most of us know that relationships affect how we feel. But how we feel about ourselves also shapes how we show up with others. Emotional health, self-worth, and relationships form a loop: when it's healthy, we feel more confident, connected, and resilient; when it's not, stress and self-doubt rise. Research supports this. A major 2024 synthesis of over a million people found that higher self-esteem consistently correlates with better mental health and life satisfaction (Zell & Johansson, 2024). Clinical comparisons show the reverse as well: lower self-esteem is linked to higher anxiety, depression, and stress (Meštrović et al., 2025).

How to Strengthen the Loop

- Treat self-worth as a skill, not a verdict. Self-esteem isn't fixed; it is shaped by practice and context. Notice self-talk that sounds like harsh judgment and replace it with evaluation and learning.
- Use "relationship check-ins." Good relationships don't require constant harmony; they require small adjustments.
- Strengthen emotional regulation muscles. Tools include slowing your breathing before responding, pausing during conflict, and labeling emotions.

Relationships play a major role in this loop.

Studies show that self-esteem and social relationships reinforce each other over time (Harris & Orth, 2019; De Moor et al., 2021), and even small acts of support can boost mood and satisfaction on the same day (Berli et al., 2021).

Emotional skills serve as the bridge.

Multiple 2025 studies found that better emotion regulation improves well-being, partly by boosting self-esteem and optimism (Villegas et al., 2025; Sánchez-Sánchez et al., 2025).

In short: better emotional skills → stronger self-worth → healthier relationships and mental health.



Self-worth, emotional health, and relationships form a reinforcing loop. Strengthening even one part of the system can lift the others (Harris & Orth, 2019; De Moor et al., 2021). We don't build self-worth in isolation, nor do we cultivate healthy relationships without tending to our emotional world. The hopeful part is that emotional health isn't just internal, it's relational. And relationships aren't just about others; they're shaped by how we feel about ourselves.

References:

Berli et al., 2021; Cameron & Granger, 2019; De Moor et al., 2021; Erol, 2018; Harris & Orth, 2019; Manish & Vyas, 2025; Meštrović et al., 2025; Sánchez-Sánchez et al., 2025; Schulz et al., 2025; Villegas et al., 2025; Zell & Johansson, 2024.



WHAT CAN MY EAP DO FOR ME?



About Our Logo

For decades, enslaved African Americans looked to the North Star for hope, inspiration, and freedom. Neely EAP (NEAP) provides the **hope** that your situation will improve, the **inspiration** to move you in the right direction, and the **freedom** to live your best life.

At Neely EAP, we understand the challenge of balancing work and life stresses while staying mentally healthy. That's why we've partnered with your employer to offer you the following services free of charge:

- 24/7 Hotline, Access to Confidential Services
- Free Short-Term Counseling and Couch Time Check-In (preventive annual counseling session)
- Legal and Financial Assistance
- Work-life referrals for adult care, childcare, pet care and more
- Wellness Trainings & Online Employee Training Vault
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

