



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Wanted: Great Leaders With Emotional Intelligence

November/December 2017

Susan Russell, BSN, RN, JD, CPAN, CAPA
ASPAN President 2017-2018

Beginning in July with the National Conference Strategic Work Team (SWT) meeting in Anaheim, my ASPAN travel adventures began to accelerate. Traveling to component meetings to represent ASPAN has a hidden personal reward: the opportunity to read. I usually tuck two books in my carry-on bag, but still cannot resist the lure of the book corner in an airport shop. I am compelled to investigate the selections for new titles or topics. I'll often purchase a book I've had my eye on or one with an intriguing title. They are not always recent releases. I acquired two additional books on emotional intelligence while walking through Austin's airport on my way out of town.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Many of us know the results of our IQ tests from primary or secondary school, but how many of us have been tested for emotional intelligence? According to research, characteristics that define great leaders include more than superior intellect and technical ability. A great leader must also possess a high degree of emotional intelligence. Studies show that emotional intelligence is twice as important to a leader's success as other attributes.^{1,2,3}

The skill sets comprising emotional intelligence include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Emotional intelligence generally increases with age, so it comes as no surprise that Traditionalists and Baby Boomers achieve higher scores than Generations X and Y—for now. Maturity plays a significant role in the development of emotional intelligence, so we can expect scores for Generation X and Generation Y to increase as they gain experience.^{1,2,3}

ASPAN's New Perianesthesia Pacesetter SWT – Leaders of the Future

Less than ten percent of ASPAN members are under the age of forty, but ASPAN's future is ultimately in their hands. This year, the ASPAN Board of Directors chartered a SWT to review efforts to recruit and retain younger members. The work undertaken by ASPAN's Perianesthesia Pacesetters SWT is a critical part of ASPAN's marketing effort and its succession plan. There was an article on this new SWT by its coordinator, Sarah Hessling, BSN, RN, CPAN, in the September/October issue of *Breathline*.

While ASPAN offers many opportunities for emerging leaders, we haven't yet found the key to engaging ASPAN's younger members. ASPAN and its leaders are highly motivated to mentor younger colleagues and provide the training they desire as they work toward their professional goals.

Leadership Training on Emotional Intelligence

Can emotional intelligence be the key? Can it be taught? Emotional intelligence is associated with the brain's limbic system which controls feelings, impulses and drives. According to Daniel Goleman, most leadership training programs focus on the brain's neocortex which governs analytical and technical abilities. The neocortex helps us grasp concepts and logic. Goleman suggests that organizations refocus leadership training and include the limbic system to teach "soft" skills. A successful program might include the use of a personal coach who can assist a leader to identify old habits which impede relationships and interactions. The coach can help the individual form new habits which promote self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness and relationship management.³

How does emotional intelligence play out in the role of an organizational leader? Most of us are familiar with the use of behavioral interviews to determine whether a prospective employee is a good fit for our team. Questions posed to ASPAN candidates for vice president/president-elect are often behaviorally based. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses, owning your failures, and being open to constructive criticism are hallmarks of emotional intelligence. The answers we receive to behavioral questions help us gauge the individual's self-awareness and social awareness.

Emotional Intelligence Enhances Leadership

Great leaders achieve success by capitalizing on their capabilities and accepting challenging assignments. They are willing to take measured risks and they know when to ask for help. Self-awareness includes self-confidence and the ability to read your own emotions or moods. Self-regulation means you recognize how your mood or emotion will affect your team. It means you can manage your own emotions and act with honesty and integrity. It also means you are reliable and adaptable. Social awareness requires empathy and intuition. It requires that the leader be engaged with the team in a caring manner.^{1,2,3}

A great leader needs to appreciate the nuances of organizational politics and be sensitive enough to know when a communication may have a negative impact. Relationship management encompasses the ability to communicate clearly and without ambiguity. Sometimes the message isn't as optimistic as we would like, but the leader's honesty is essential to maintaining the team's trust. Learning to adapt is essential to the resilient leader. Resilient individuals and organizations have yet another characteristic which enables them to overcome hardship. They have a grasp on reality, a set of deeply entrenched values, and the ability to improvise.

ASPAN's potential is unlimited as long as we actively mentor and train new leaders. Let's do more than keep an eye on our Gen X and Gen Y members. Let's encourage them to develop their leadership skills, including their emotional intelligence. They are more than our future. We want and need their commitment and involvement right now.

REFERENCES

1. Bradberry T and Greaves J. *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. San Diego, CA: TalentSmart; 2009.
2. Harvard Business Review. *HBR's 10 Must Reads On Emotional Intelligence*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press; 2015.
3. Goleman D. *The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights*. Northampton, MA: More Than Sound LLC; 2011. 1st Digital Edition