

So I totally lost my EI....in the coffee shop drive through.

How to Improve your Emotional Intelligence (EI).

My friend and colleague, Ann (who allowed me share this story) began a meeting with me recently that went like this...

“I was running late this morning. Kids slept in, we were rushing. I had to get them to school on time (or at least not too late). I had to get myself to work on-time. I had a lot on my mind. Just the usual work stuff, deadlines, quotas, projects and of course limited bandwidth to get everything done on time. I dropped the kids off at school and then I entered the Tim Horton drive through. Yes, there is always time to grab a coffee. As I waited in line and fret about my day, fret about my kid’s day and am already dreading my night time commitments I wonder why the line is not moving. I look out my window to see an elderly woman taking her time at the pay window. I think to myself, wow, must be nice to have this time on your hands when you are retired. I guess you have nowhere to be, your time must be more important than mine and so on and so on....finally she pays and starts to drive. Then she stops and backs up.”

“That’s when I totally lost my EI. I thought to myself, the nerve! I can’t believe that she is actually going to slow my day even more. Doesn’t she know I am a busy person? That I am under pressure? I am not proud of this but I was waving my hands in the air, wishing her to get out of the drive through so I could just get my coffee and get on with my day. Finally she advances and leaves the drive through. I finally get to advance to the pay window and that’s when I discover why it took so long. Not only was this elderly woman paying for my order, she was also paying for the policeman’s order behind me. That is why she backed up to the window. I can’t believe I lost my EI.”

As I sat back and took in Ann’s story, I can’t help but remember how many times I have done this very thing or saw someone else reacting in this manner. How do we not allow an incident of frustration to negatively impact the remainder of our day? It’s okay to feel frustrated when things are not going our way but it’s our reaction to the frustration that can make the difference.

Here are three pressure reducers taken from the [Performing Under Pressure](#) book that help me reframe my mind:

- 1) Breathe naturally- Inhale, exhale.
- 2) Downsize the importance- yes, Ann was going to be late but losing it in the drive through was not going to change that.
- 3) Anticipate- even before Ann entered the drive-through, she could have anticipated that it may not be as fast as she would like it to be. Thus, taking the pressure off.

Luckily for Ann, she caught up with the woman at the next set of lights and thanked her for her coffee. So next time, when I am running late or the pressure of my day to day obligations has me fretting, I will remember Ann’s story and remind myself that a stranger thought enough to buy another stranger a coffee (even though her arms were waving frantically in the air) and I will remember my EI.

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