

Monthly Newsletter

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Do You Possess “Emotional Intelligence?”

Any of us who witnessed the recent World Cup Soccer Championship is well aware of the notorious head-butting incident that resulted in French star Zinedine Zidane being ejected from the championship game with Italy. The French team was reduced to 10 players and Italy prevailed in extra-time.

The trigger for Zidane’s act was supposedly a remark uttered by his Italian victim, Marco Materazzi. When asked after the losing French effort if he regretted his behavior, Zidane stated, “I don’t regret anything that happened. There was a serious provocation and the guilty party is the one who provokes.” Allegedly, the Italian player uttered a derogatory statement that upset Zidane.

Contrast this ugly incident to the continual, overt harassment experienced by the late Jackie Robinson after he became the first African American ballplayer to crack into the major leagues in 1947 when he was called up by the Brooklyn Dodgers. Unlike Zinedine Zinane, Jackie Robinson was able to ignore loud and frequent taunts as well as death threats with grace and dignity. He went on to become the National League’s most valuable player and set fielding and batting records.

Some would say that unlike Zinane (whose lifetime record indicates 14 additional ejections), Jackie Robinson possessed a high degree of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is marked by five competencies or skills, according to psychologist Daniel Goleman:

1. The ability to identify and name one’s emotional states and to understand the link between current emotions and future consequences.
2. The capacity to manage one’s emotional states and to shift undesirable emotional states to more appropriate ones.
3. The ability to enter into emotional states at will that are associated with success and achievement.
4. The capacity to read and understand other people’s emotions.
5. The ability to enter and sustain satisfactory relationships even with those who initially appear antagonistic.

Jackie Robinson’s emotional intelligence propelled him to triumph over adversity and scorn and become the first African American inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Zidane’s lack of emotional intelligence propelled him to an early retirement and notoriety.

Certainly, many of us can reflect on a personal incident or outburst in our life which resulted in a negative consequence such as marital discord, loss of a friendship or perhaps a job action. The good news, according to Dr. Goleman, is that emotional intelligence can be cultivated and developed to a high level. To do so, one must honestly review and assess one’s behavioral reactions to negative “provocations” (to use Zidane’s term) and learn to intelligently respond rather than instinctively react.

If you are experiencing unresolved anger that you just can’t seem to control, we invite you to contact your Employee Assistance Program. You too can attain the insights and emotional intelligence that will propel you to a successful personal and professional life! Please feel free to call and discuss your situation in complete confidence today.