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# IMPROVE YOUR... EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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**FIBA - International Basketball Federation**

5 Route Suisse, PO Box 29  
1295 Mies Switzerland fiba.com  
Tel: +41 22 545 00 00  
Fax: +41 22 545 00 99

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# IMPROVE YOUR...

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Nowadays, in modern basketball officiating, a referee who can identify, use, understand, and manage their own emotions, as well as the emotions of other participants during the game, will have a better ability to demonstrate game control and present quality decisions.

As the well-known author of the book "Emotional Intelligence" and psychologist Daniel Goleman described <sup>(1)(2)</sup>, emotional intelligence is the ability to manage ourselves and our relationships effectively.

In other words, emotional intelligence is the ability to identify how you and people around you feel, understand the causes of these emotions, and include and manage emotions in your decision process to make the optimal choices in life. <sup>(3)</sup>

Here are presented four main components and levels of emotional intelligence:

### ▲ 1) IDENTIFYING AND PERCEIVING EMOTIONS

The first step is to identify emotions accurately. In order to be effective in perceiving emotions in yourself and in other people, first, you should "breathe, observe, and listen". Pay attention to feelings, to moods, and observe and listen by processing the verbal and non-verbal information you perceive (i.e., body language, gestures, facial expressions, words).

When observing and listening, you gather information about someone's emotional state and feelings from many sources: facial expressions, body posture, muscle movements, tone, and sound of voice, words used, and rhythm of speech. Each one of these sources can tell you something about emotions, especially the face and the voice. <sup>(4)(5)</sup>

According to psychologist and Professor Emeritus Paul Ekman <sup>(4)(5)</sup>, emotions are shown primarily in the face, not in the body. The body instead shows how people are coping with emotion. The face is, nevertheless, of more importance than words for transmitting information about emotion.

**EXAMPLE:** you can learn to use certain words and phrases, and even modify and tune your tone of voice by rehearsing it as a part of communication training, but it is very difficult to control your facial micro-expressions and patterns because of many micro muscles and facial movements involved in expression over which we do not have voluntarily control.

#### **EXERCISE:**

When you are in communication with others, try to pay attention to the consistency or inconsistency of words, tone of the voice and facial expressions people use. This can be used when you or others are trying to explain a certain anecdote or emotional situation that happened. Even during the game, when for example, a coach is trying to convince you of something or ask you to explain your decision.

- "Breathe, observe, and listen."
- Pay attention to see if the words used match the body language and facial expressions.
- Be aware of your own emotional reactions and feelings, especially during the game.
- You may notice that sometimes you mimic others' facial expressions, gestures, and emotions. A single deep breathe can help you become aware of the situation's requirements and prepare you for a better response.

## ▲ 2) USING EMOTIONS EFFECTIVELY

The next step involves using emotions to respond with better judgment and higher-quality decisions. It's what is called "reasoning with emotions" or "having common sense". In other words, making decisions based on the situation, perceived emotions (reactions), their intensity, the context in which they appear, and the possible consequence of these reactions. If we identify all the parameters correctly, emotions can help us prioritize what we'll pay attention to and how we'll respond to it more effectively.

**EXAMPLE:** Culture and society, in particular ways, moulds its members to experience and express feelings and emotional reactions in certain ways. There are social conventions and cultural rules around which emotions you can show and use, for instance, "boys should not cry or look afraid", "girls should not be aggressive and express anger", "a grown man should never show sadness when disappointed", or "you should not celebrate victory over opponent".

Emotions can serve various purposes, such as: to protect us, inform us, warn us, or direct and orient us. <sup>(4)(5)</sup>

**EXAMPLE:** If we identify and use the emotion of fear correctly it can protect us and save our lives because we are able to respond to possible threats of harm. Also, reactions of disgust make us cautious about indulging in food or activities that might be poisoned or toxic for us. Joy and happiness on the other hand can direct us and motivate us to do things and make actions we thought we are not able to do it.

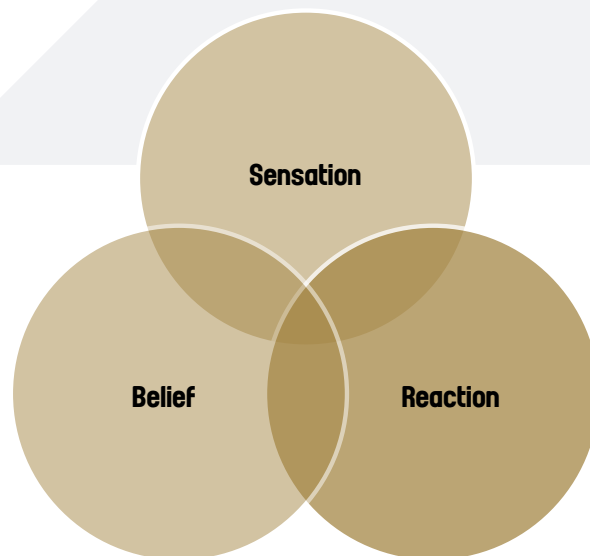
If identified and used correctly, emotions can help us to respond effectively to situational requirements and make better and reasonable decisions.

There is a time and a place to use and express any emotion,  
but with suitable intensity and proper purpose.

## ▲ 3) UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

The third step is how to understand emotions and situations (context) in which they appear. Understanding emotions involves a great deal of knowledge about emotions – Why do they appear? How do we express them? Why do people become emotional?

One of the best definitions of emotions <sup>(6)</sup> describes them as subjective feelings provoked by real or imagined objects or events that have high significance to the individual. They are a set of complex reactions and have three main aspects that we need to take into consideration to understand them better (6):



- Physical (physiological) aspect - affects the physical arousal and sensations in the body (i.e., increased heart rate, blush on the face, headache, nausea, etc.).
- Behavioural (reaction) aspect - it refers to the visible expression of the emotion in a way of a certain behaviour, move, action, reaction (i.e., body language, hand gestures, words said, and the tone of voice, etc.).
- Cognitive (thinking) aspect - concerns how we think about or perceive and interpret a situation that affects our emotions. (i.e., If we perceive a situation as a threat, we will experience fear and anxiety, if we perceive a situation as a challenge, we will probably feel proud and confident).

Our subjective interpretation of objective events can have an influence on how we feel and behave – how we experience them.

You may notice that emotions sometimes can arise quickly and we do not have much control over why we become emotional, but always keep in mind that it is possible to become aware of the triggers that usually activate certain emotions and how we behave after that.

On the other hand, emotions may arise as the result of how we cognitively evaluate situations, activities, others, or ourselves. They inform us of how a situation has been perceived and evaluated. Therefore, they can strongly influence our thinking, cognitive judgments, and decisions. <sup>(7)</sup>

The ability to understand emotions, their intensity, behaviour that follows, and the context in which they appear has a big impact on the referee's decisions and the capacity to demonstrate game control.

To help you understand emotions better, always keep in mind that teams (players and coaches) compete against each other and their goal is to win the game! Competition can awaken many emotions among participants – anger, frustration, joy, excitement, shame, pride, sadness, etc. It can give rise to many kinds of misbehaviour and undesirable reactions from players, coaches, spectators, etc.

To appropriately identify, understand and manage your own emotions and emotions of other participants better, it is crucial to prepare!

#### **EXERCISE:**

After you receive a nomination for a specific game and complete the scouting of the teams, additionally prepare and think about the next:

- In which situations certain coaches or a players have tendencies to react with a protest and/or complaint?
- What are the triggers that provoke intensive emotional reactions and misbehaviour of a certain coach or a player?
- What could be possible consequences of their behaviour and how can they influence the game flow?
- What tools, skills, rules, and solutions do I/we (referee crew) have to resolve these emotional reactions and misbehaviours during the game?
- What do I/we need to do in order to remain calm, responsive, and professionally establish game control?
- What are the triggers that usually activate certain emotions in me?
- Why do I become emotional in certain situations with interaction with certain players, coaches, and colleagues?
  
- How will I prepare to remain professional and present with self-control?

It is important to understand what caused the coaches or players reaction, what message they want to send with their reaction (i.e., protest or complaint) and what consequence these actions could have on the game and its flow.

Also, it is crucial to prepare how will you, as a referee (and referee crew), demonstrate emotional intelligence and professionally respond while maintaining game control.

**"When anger rises, think of the consequences."**

*(Confucius)*

#### ▲ 4) MANAGING EMOTIONS

The highest level of emotional intelligence is the crucial ability to manage emotions effectively. Regulating your own emotions as well as responding appropriately to the emotions of others are very important skills in the officiating world.

Regulating your own emotions is the first step. Internal motivation or willingness to establish self-control of your own emotions and impulses, adjust to changing situations and find solutions to obstacles plays an important role. This ability helps us integrate our emotions, thoughts, and behaviours into quality decisions and better solutions in every aspect of our life.

Finding the balance between "heart & mind" has a great impact on our life, career, and relationships with others.

When we have self-control over our own emotions and reactions, we are on the right track to effectively deal with the emotional reactions of others. This can be significant in many situations during the game, especially in situations of protest or complaint, or in situations with the crew's communication about different decisions on the same play.

**EXAMPLE:** If referees are presenting a sanction (i.e., TF or UF) and show anger and frustration, they may reinforce or trigger an inappropriate emotional reaction from the player'

s/coaches. The player/coach could become even more frustrated, expressing anger and discontent, which may result in even worse consequences. On the other hand, a calm, professional approach helps ensure that sanctions for illegal action are presented appropriately and professionally, demonstrating the referee's self-control.

When speaking about emotional management we should also mention **EMPATHY**. The ability to have empathy and to recognize other people's emotions, perspective, and needs is a very important component of emotional intelligence. It is described as sensing other people's emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking an active interest in their concerns, as well as appreciating the difference in how people feel about things. <sup>(1)</sup>

**To sum up and conclude, emotionally intelligent people have the ability to think before reacting and have better self-awareness and empathy for others.**

Becoming aware, perceiving, and understanding emotions in self and in others is an important part of game control and self-regulation during the game.

It is our responsibility to learn these skills and to become emotionally intelligent – for the sake of the game.

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# STANDARD QUALITY GLOBAL CONNECTION



5, route Suisse - P.O. Box 29  
1295 Mies  
Switzerland  
Tel.: +41 22 545 00 00  
Fax: +41 22 545 00 99