

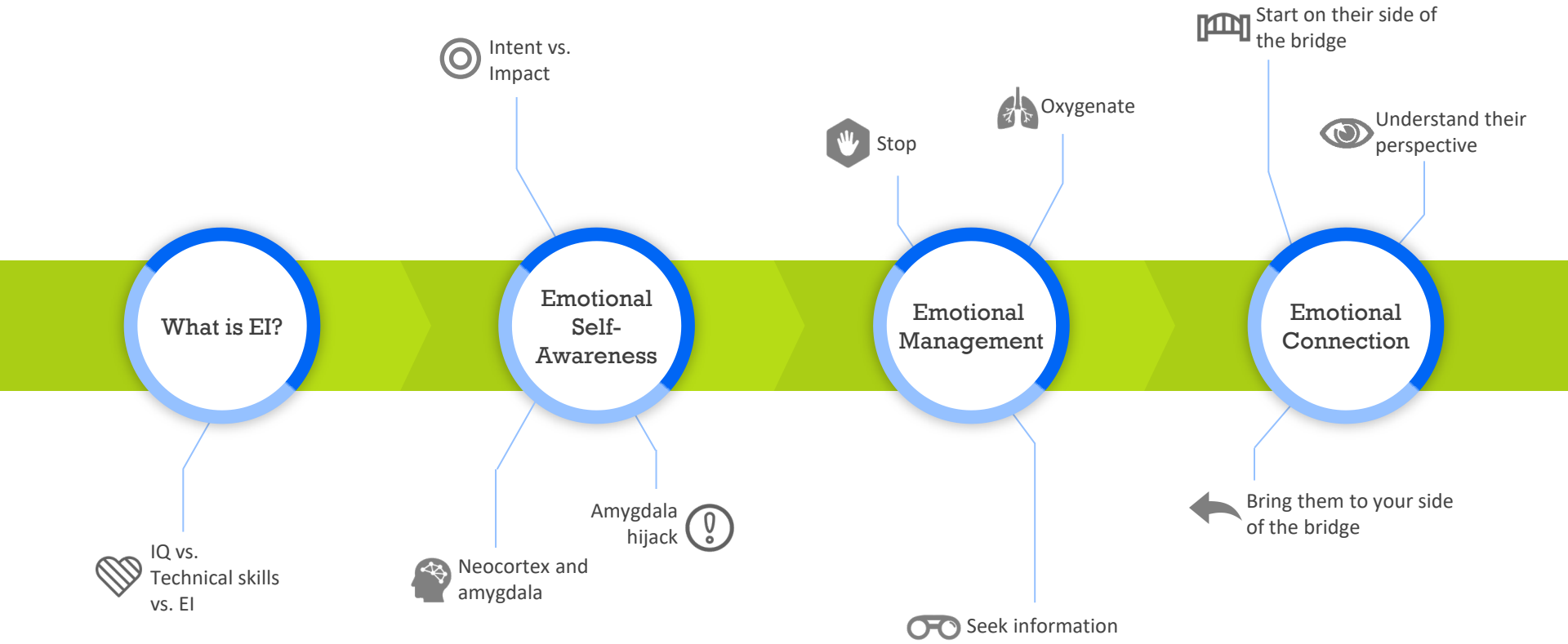


EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The science of leadership **under pressure**

UNITEDHEALTH GROUP

In this guide...



Introduction

Have you ever been in a situation where you were caught off guard and mentally froze? And then, of course, 20 minutes later you start thinking about all of the great comebacks or intelligent things you should have said.

Or what about the conversation that escalates quickly into a heated debate that nobody really wins?

It happens to all of us. But why? We’re smart people, right? Yet in the moments of increased pressure, we struggle.

There’s a science behind this and an approach to understanding it called Emotional Intelligence (EI). The goal of this guide is to introduce you to this approach and help you recognize how you can be at your best, even when under pressure.

The model of emotional intelligence discussed in this eBook was developed by the Institute for Health and Human Potential (IHHP) and is licensed for use at UnitedHealth Group.



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Why Emotional Intelligence?.....	4
EI Self-Assessment	8
Emotional Self-Awareness	9
Emotional Management	13
Emotional Connection	18
Take Action!	21

Why Emotional Intelligence?

The business world is changing at a rapid pace. Skills and abilities once considered cornerstones for a successful career are now not enough. We’re realizing that high IQ and well-developed technical skills no longer provide a distinct advantage in the workplace.

So what determines high performance as a leader?



Think of two individuals in your life who were excellent leaders.
What were the qualities that made them so exceptionally good?

	Name	Qualities
Leader 1		
Leader 2		

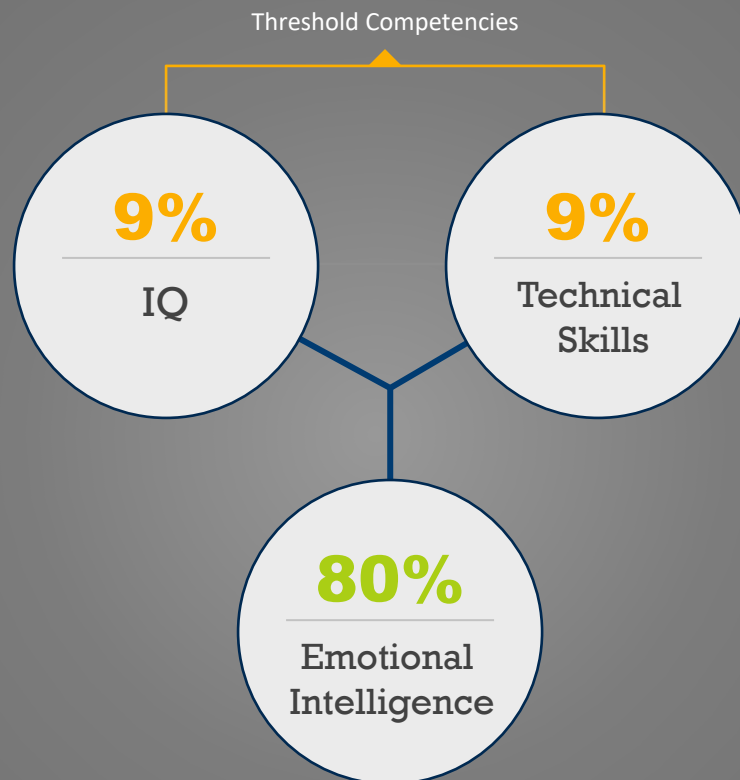
Why Emotional Intelligence?

Researchers at Harvard set out to answer this question about what distinguishes high performers. They took a cross section of graduates from law, medicine, and business. These were Harvard graduates, so you can assume that they had some things going for them. The objective was to look at those who were most successful and determine what about them could have predicted that success. (Success in this case was defined as an overall wellbeing, from career, to relationships, to how they handled stress.)

Here's what they found. IQ was only about a 9% predictor of future success. Technical skills—expertise or competency in doing a job—was also 9%. Emotional Intelligence, however, accounted for about 80% of the predictors of future success.

That isn't to say that IQ and technical skills aren't important—of course they are. But they tend to be *threshold competencies*. You need enough of each to get the job done. But if you took a group of ten people who were all reasonably intelligent and had similar job knowledge and experience, the differentiator of who would make an exceptional leader comes down to Emotional Intelligence skills.

*See *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman, 2006.



Why Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to *recognize*,
understand, and *manage* our own emotions...

AND recognize, understand, and influence the
emotions of others.

And it's something that can be learned.



Levels of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is made up of three levels: Emotional Self-awareness, Emotional Management, and Emotional Connection. These skills and abilities build on each other, allowing you to manage your own emotions and effectively influence others in a high-pressure situation.



Emotional intelligence starts with **self-awareness**. This means recognizing what drives your behavior; being aware of when you're at your best and what throws you off; and being aware of how your behavior and mood affects others.

EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS



Emotional Management is the ability to recognize how emotions are impacting you, and to take appropriate action to self-regulate and stay effectively engaged. It also means recognizing how others' emotions are impacting them.

EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT



Emotional Connection is the ability to connect with another person with the goal of creating a productive relationship for both parties. This means you are able to withhold your opinions, assumptions, and beliefs long enough to effectively hear and understand the perspectives of the other person.

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

EI Self-Assessment



To get the most out of the discussion that follows, take a moment to complete this self-assessment. It allows you to think through where you show up at each level of Emotional Intelligence.

Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 for each scenario at each level of EI.		1	2	3
1 = LOW (I do not do this well)	10 = HIGH (I always do this exceptionally well)	When things are going well and you are working with people you enjoy, how would you rate yourself?	When you are working with challenging people in pressure situations, how do you think others would rate you?	Over the last 6 months, how do you think the people in your personal life would rate you?
Emotional Self-Awareness I am aware of how my emotions impact my responses/behaviors toward others.				
Emotional Management I do not get defensive or personalize difficult feedback.				
Emotional Connection I am able to listen without judgement or jumping to conclusions.				

Emotional Self-Awareness

There is usually a difference in how we view ourselves and how others view us. This is the difference between our intentions and our impact.

Nearly everybody has good intentions when we walk out the door in the morning. We want to get work done, build good relationships, motivate others, be a good friend. We know what we want to accomplish and, as a result, we tend to judge ourselves by our good **intentions**. But others can't read our minds. They can only observe our behavior, our actions. Because of that, others are left to judge us by our **impact**.

We judge ourselves by our intentions...

INTENTIONS



BEHAVIOR



IMPACT



...while others judge us by our impact.

Emotional Self-Awareness

Emotions drive behavior.

EMOTIONS



BEHAVIOR



IMPACT



Since we have good intentions, we tend to assume that our behaviors will reflect our good intent. Sometimes that's the case, but not always. It becomes especially difficult for our behaviors to match our intentions when emotions are involved. When you're in a highly emotional situation, those emotions override your intentions, which affects your behavior, which makes an impact on the other person that doesn't at all match your intentions.

So there's a gap that's created between our intentions and our impact—and that gap points to a missing element of emotional intelligence.

Self-Awareness and Your Brain

There's a science behind why we act or behave the way we do, especially under pressure. The brain is a complex machine, and we're going to simplify it considerably by looking at two parts that impact our behavior: our complex thinking brain, and our emotional feeling brain. These are two systems absolutely necessary for us to function, but only one of these can be in the driver's seat at a time.



NEOCORTEX

The complex thinking brain is the neocortex. This is where IQ and working memory reside. This is where we plan, prioritize, make decisions, and see long-term consequences.



AMYGDALA

The emotional feeling brain has a key piece called the amygdala. Its primary responsibility is to keep us safe. This is what initiates our survival response to fight or flee or freeze when we encounter a threat. It doesn't think, it just responds. In fact, all incoming information streams through the amygdala first so that it can respond to threats before we even have a chance to think them through. And it's not just physical threats we're talking about, but social threats, such as when we're not feeling valued or respected. We each have our own set of social triggers that engages our amygdala.

Self-Awareness and Your Brain



What are some of your amygdala triggers?



In certain situations when the amygdala is triggered, it actually **hijacks** the brain. It floods a chemical called cortisol into the neocortex, which decreases our ability to think clearly and prepares our body to fight or flee. It forces us to focus on short-term self-protective responses.

Everybody reacts differently to this, but you're probably familiar with your own behavior pattern in those situations. Maybe you freeze and can't think of anything to say, your hands get sweaty, and your mouth goes dry. Or you sit back and fold your arms and mentally check out of the situation. Or perhaps you immediately go on the offensive, clenching your fists, trying to get your point across as if nothing else matters.

The effects of an amygdala hijack can last for minutes, which makes all the difference in a high pressure situation.

Emotional Management

So how do we turn that around? When we feel our amygdala getting hijacked, what can we do to stay engaged in the situation in a productive way?

Remember that all of this is a physiological process. Like it or not, there are chemical activities going on inside the body that determine how we feel and what our impulses are. If we're going to manage our emotions and behaviors, first we need to recognize our body's signs and symptoms, these physiological indicators.

There's an emotional management tool you can practice as a self-regulation strategy to help you in these situations. It uses the acronym SOS, which stands for **Stop – Oxygenate – Seek Information**.

When we're hijacked, we lose perspective and tend to get judgmental, which causes us to jump to conclusions. The SOS strategy helps us suspend judgment and gain perspective back so we respond from our neocortex instead of our amygdala.

Stop
Oxygenate
Seek information



Emotional Management

Stop

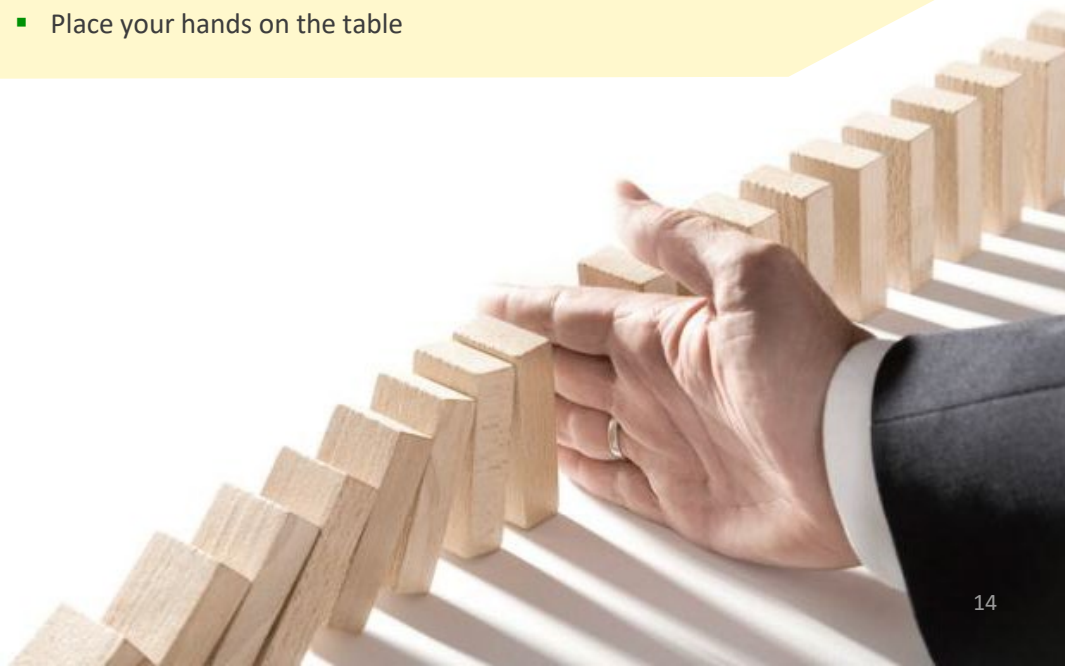
The first step is to Stop. This simply means you disengage from the trigger and stop it from progressing further by re-engaging your neocortex. You can do this by interrupting the physical automatic response you have when your amygdala is triggered.

We just mentioned some of those reactions—you clench your fists, or roll your eyes, or tap your foot. When you interrupt that physical response, it makes you aware of how you're reacting, which gives you a chance to put your neocortex back into control.

When you're triggered, you may, for example, fold your arms and sit back in your chair. Your Stop strategy could be to sit forward and put your hands flat on the table. This is a deliberate motion that is the opposite of your automatic reaction. It seems simple, but it's a very powerful step in regaining control of your ability to think clearly.

Example Stop strategies:

- Take a drink of water
- Relax your shoulders
- Place your feet flat on the ground
- Write something down
- Count backwards
- Place your hands on the table



Emotional Management

Oxygenate

The next step in this strategy usually occurs alongside the first, and that is to Oxygenate. During a hijack, blood is shunted to the main parts of the body in preparation for fight or flight, which means it's pulled away from the brain. And, typically, when the amygdala is triggered, your breathing becomes shallower—you might even hold your breath. Lengthening and deepening your breath helps add oxygen back to the brain.

3-2-4 breathing technique. This helps you get oxygen back to the brain, and the simple act of counting your breathing will further engage the neocortex.

The longer you wait to stop and oxygenate, the more the trigger will progress. Be aware of what it looks like when you're triggered, figure out a stop strategy, and then breathe.

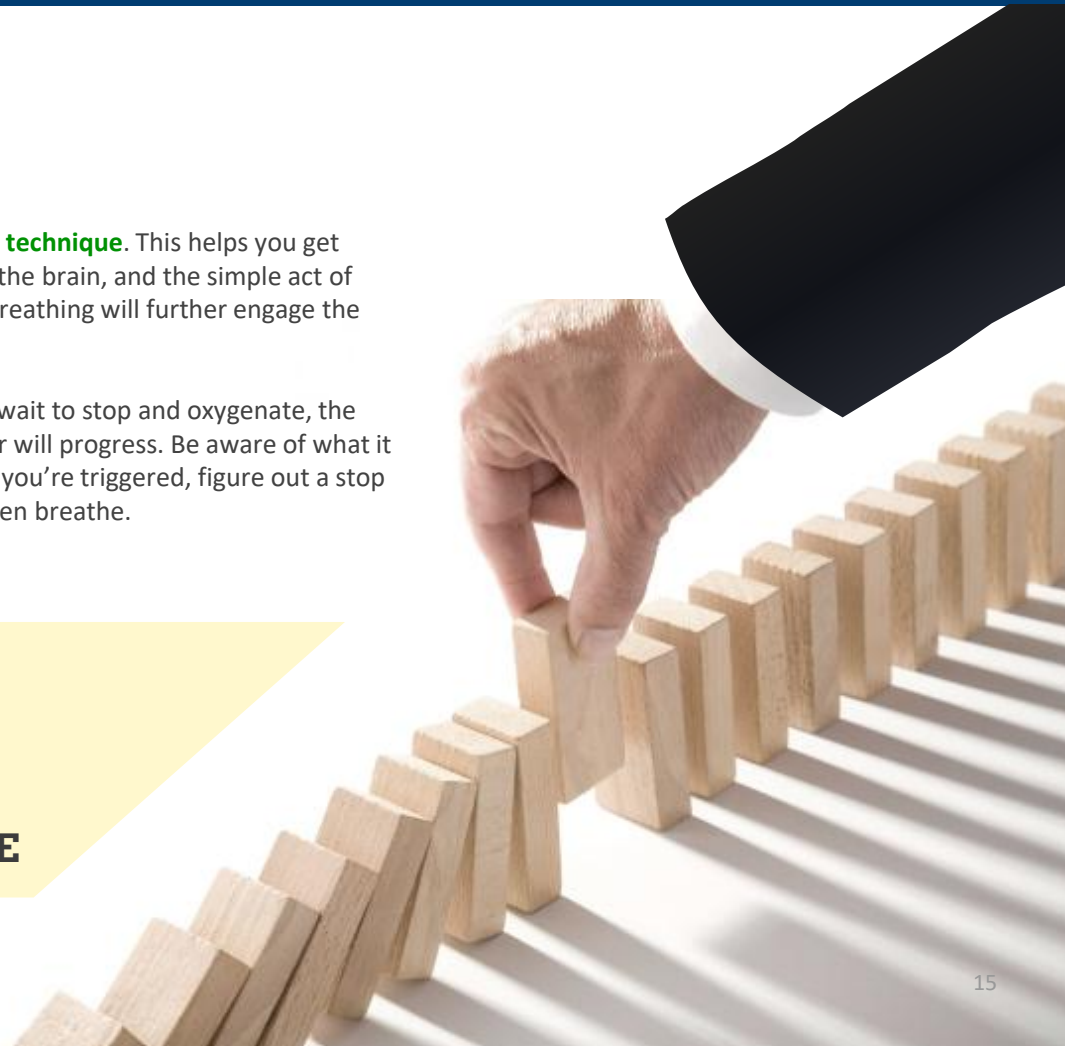
3
seconds
INHALE



2
seconds
HOLD IT



4
seconds
RELEASE



Emotional Management

Seek Information

The final step in the SOS strategy is Seek Information. We are seeking information to reconnect to the other person and to the bigger picture. To keep us from jumping to conclusions so we can effectively listen to others and understand their perspectives.

You seek information by first asking *yourself* questions like the examples you see here. All of this takes place inside your own head as you try to put your neocortex back in the driver seat. Seeking out this information allows you to re-engage in the conversation and establish an emotional connection from a more open and positive place.



Ask yourself:

- Is this a big threat or small? Is it real or perceived?
- What information am I missing?
- Will this matter in six years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, seconds?
- What is my impact right now?
- What assumptions am I making?
- Is my reaction helping me?
- What is my goal here?
- What am I feeling?
- Am I strengthening my relationship with this person?
- What might their good intentions be?
- Do they feel heard?
- What is going on for them?
- What do they need from me?

Emotional Management



Think of a triggering situation that is likely to occur in the near future.
What is that situation? What is your automatic (physical) response to that trigger?



What is a Stop strategy you can use for this situation?



What Seek Information questions would be most useful for re-engaging your neocortex?

Emotional Connection

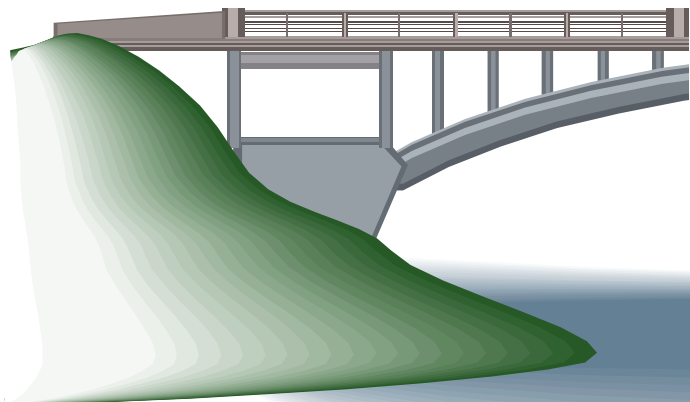
So far we've talked about how our brains get triggered during a high pressure situation, and how you can learn to mitigate that by using an emotional management strategy (SOS). The key to any challenging situation involving another person is the ability to establish an emotional connection so that the other person feels heard, understood, and respected. Establishing that emotional connection is the final piece of emotional intelligence.

You can think of emotional connection like a bridge. In any interaction, there are two sides: your

perspective, and the other person's perspective. Most of the time there is a good, strong bridge that you use to pass information back and forth. But sometimes there's a gap in our bridge, making our conversations and interactions more difficult.

Your Side of the Bridge

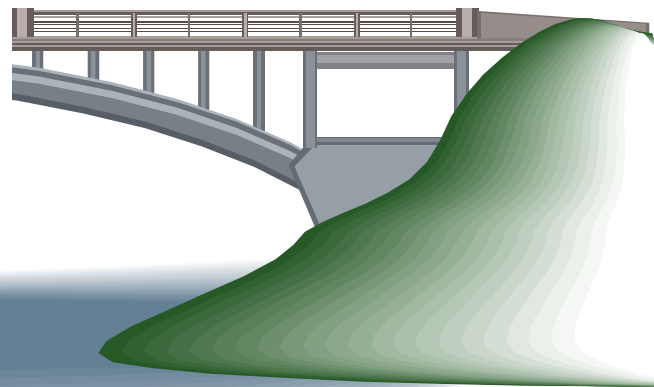
with your perspectives



Understanding Gap

Their Side of the Bridge

with their perspectives



Emotional Connection

If that situation triggers our amygdala, then we start to lose perspective. We get very rooted on our side of the bridge. It's impossible to accomplish anything worthwhile if all we can see is our side. And so we use SOS to gain control of our thinking brain. Then we can re-engage with the other person...but we have to do it on their side of the bridge. That's the goal of emotional connection—to get to the other side of the bridge and understand what they see and what they value.

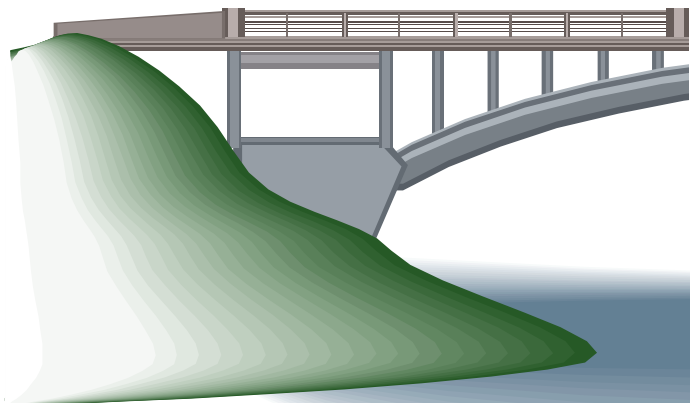
As you do that, recognize that this isn't about

right vs. wrong, or about trying to persuade someone with your status or experience or your intellect. It's about authentically trying to understand another person's perspective. That doesn't mean you abandon your own point of view, but it does mean you become open to the ideas of others.

understanding their viewpoint, you still need to share your perspective, you are now in a better position to walk with them across the bridge to your side, helping them gain a better understanding of how you see things.

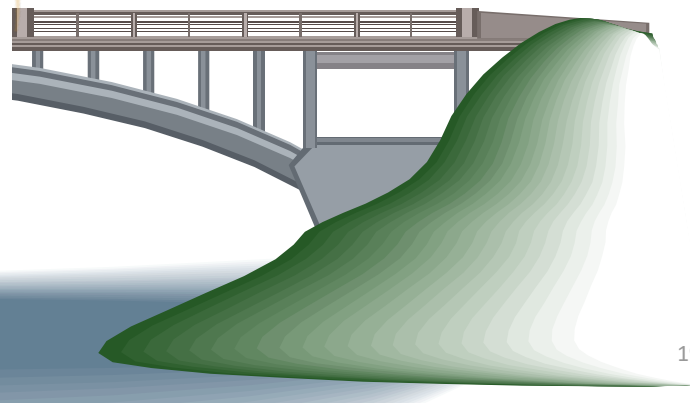
The result of crossing the bridge might be that you change your perspective. But if, after

Your Side of the Bridge
with your perspectives



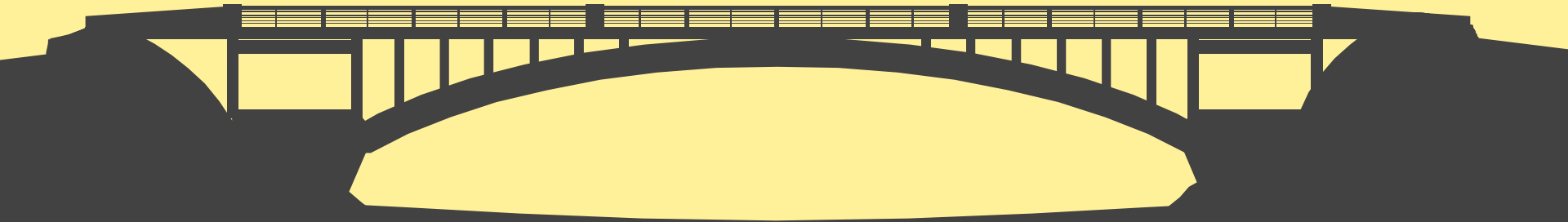
Understanding Gap

Their Side of the Bridge
with their perspectives



Emotional Connection

**If you first meet people where they are,
they are much more likely to let you take them
where you need them to go.**



Take action!



Plan out how you will use these emotional intelligence concepts in your next high-pressure interaction.

1. Recognizing emotional intelligence

How do great leaders you know demonstrate EI?

2. Emotional Self-awareness

What are your amygdala triggers?

3. Emotional management

SOS – Stop, Oxygenate, Seek information

What is your Stop strategy?

What will you ask yourself to seek information?

4. Emotional connection

How do you start on their side of the bridge?

If needed, how can you bring them to your side?

Additional Resources:

[Emotional Intelligence](#) by Daniel Goleman (GetAbstract)

[Influencing Without Authority](#) (eBook)

When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures of emotion.

Dale Carnegie

Emotional intelligence is a broad and deep field of study, but this introduction should provide you with a basic understanding of what happens to your brain during a high-pressure situation, and what you can do to manage it and connect with the other person.

Remember that IQ and technical competency will get you in the door, but it's emotional intelligence that will make you successful as a leader.

