



Addiction is an adaptation.
It's not you—it's the
cage you live in.
– Johann Hari
www.LiveDrugFree.org

Supervisor Newsletter

Emotional Intelligence and the Drug Free Workplace

What is Emotional Intelligence? Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to accurately self-assess, manage/cope, perceive, express, and regulate one's emotions in personal and social settings. Over the past thirty-plus years, research has revealed that a person's EI is the most important predictor of one's self-fulfillment, academic, social, relationship, work, and mental health.

Abraham Maslow, the father of Humanistic Psychology, was the first to identify the concept of intelligence related to emotions in what he called *Emotional Strength*. In 1995, Daniel Goldman, a science journalist and father of EI, wrote the book, *Emotional Intelligence* in which he said that EI is defined "as the array of skills and characteristics that drive leadership performance." Over the past 60 years, many people have written about the subject of EI, expanding the use of EI across every area of life to include addiction and substance use disorders.

Research from Harvard Business School demonstrated "that EI counts for twice as much as an individual's

intelligence and technical skills in determining who will be successful." Most Fortune 500 companies, social service, mental health, and higher education institutions have jumped on the EI bandwagon as they have learned that EI is the "foundation" of all human interaction. The relationship between successful employees and those who lead them is in the leader's EI.

What Constitutes EI?

The four domains of EI are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. The first two domains have to do with developing EI within, while the third and fourth domains address EI with others. The five skills and characteristics of EI, also known as the Emotional Intelligence Competency Model (EICM), are self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills.

The skills of the EICM guide, inform, and make up EI in a person. The beauty of EI is that it is the foundation of every human experience. In the work environment, whether an individual is a frontline worker in a textile plant, a supervisor at a corporation, or the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, developing and maintaining EI will be the deciding factor in the quality and success of work life.

Relevance of EI In a Drug Free Workplace

EI is for everyone, everywhere in all areas of life. EI creates a state of happiness and satisfaction in employees and leaders along with improved job performance. According to Simin Hosseinian, a researcher and counselor at Alzahra University, "EI training boosted employee production and resulted in better job evaluations from management." However, the pertinent value of EI within a drug free workplace, is in it being **the primary prevention mindset for substance use disorder and addiction.**

Researchers Colin Henning, A. Geoffrey Crane, Robyn N. Taylor, and James D. A. Parker published an article, *Emotional Intelligence: Relevance and Implications for Addiction*, and stated, "There is substantial empirical evidence to suggest that EI is an important risk factor for the development of addictions." Licensed professional counselor Amanda L. Giordano, Ph.D., LPC, a writer for Psychology Today, wrote in her article, *Is Emotion Regulation the Key to Addiction Prevention?*, that "difficulties in emotion regulation are consistently linked to addiction." So, while it's true that a supervisor's emotional intelligence will not guarantee that the workers he or

she supervises will be drug free, it can provide an example of how a drug free employee should behave.

While a person's IQ is by and large predetermined and unchangeable, EQ (emotional quotient), is virtually 100% under the individual's control and there to be used and developed as desired.

First Steps to Improving EI

Harvard Business School and others have developed instruments to measure EQ (the level of one's emotional intelligence). The first step to discovering one's level of EI is to take the self-assessment found at this link <https://www.ihhp.com/free-eq-quiz>. After taking the self-assessment, there are numerous online resources available that teach how to develop the five skills and characteristics that make up the EICM. Future *Supervisor Newsletters* will also have more information on this topic.

Improving emotional intelligence not only helps supervisors to be better leaders, it also helps build stronger relationships. As Robin Sharma, a self-help writer has stated, "Investing in yourself is the best investment you will ever make. It will not only improve your life; it will improve the lives of all those around you."



Nitazenes

Nitazenes are a class of synthetic opioid drugs often found in pills and powder sold on the streets. Nitazenes are specifically developed to be cheap, easy to manufacture, highly intoxicating, and most fall outside the official Controlled Substances Act. There are 10 known forms of nitazenes, and the most common are isotonitazene, metonitazene, and etonitazene. There are no quality, purity, or manufacturing standards for these drugs.

Nitazenes are many times more powerful than fentanyl. They attach to receptors in the brain and cause depression of the central nervous system. These drugs have been responsible for many deaths worldwide. They are increasingly recorded in toxicology reports and death certificate cause-of-death fields. According to *The Drug Monitor*, the recent sharp increase in overdose deaths in the U.S. has been attributed to nitazenes.

Nitazene Dangers

Nitazenes cause the respiratory system to slow to dangerous levels. A person who has

overdosed on a drug containing nitazenes will have pinpoint pupils, slow or non-existent breathing, and a low heart rate. They will be difficult or impossible to wake up. Narcan can sometimes reverse the overdose, but first responders never know how many doses of Narcan it will take to save the person's life.

An individual in nitazene overdose respiratory distress will often be unresponsive and unable to provide information to those treating them. But even if they are responsive or accompanied by other people, these overdose victims may not know what they have taken.

Conventional fentanyl test strips cannot detect the presence of nitazenes. The only way to know for sure if any form of powdered drug, or any counterfeit pill contains nitazenes is through advanced laboratory testing. A bag of heroin for example might contain small amounts of sedatives, crushed prescription drugs, cocaine, methamphetamine, quinidine, Benadryl, and nitazenes. An unsuspecting user has no way of knowing what he or she is ingesting. Because of the cocktail of substances in today's street drugs, for too many users, even one-time use can result in death.

No Amount of Nitazenes is Safe

The lethal doses for nitazenes in humans, particularly in combination with other drugs or medical conditions, are not known. Many factors influence overdose-related death, including not only the drug, but also the amount taken, the way in which it was taken, possible drug-drug interactions or drug-alcohol interactions, body weight, opioid tolerance, and underlying health status. But even if an overdose does not result in death, survivors may be left with short-term or long-term mental impairment or physical disabilities. This non-lethal overdose condition is so serious that the term “toxic brain injury” has recently become a phrase used to describe the results of a non-fatal overdose.

Overdose deaths are the main cause of death for Americans between the ages of 25 and 64 years and for every opioid-overdose fatality, there are 6.4 to 8.4 “nonfatal overdoses.”

Dealing with the Problem

Many people who use illicit drugs have not even heard of nitazenes, much less are they aware of their risks. Therefore, addressing the problem of nitazene overdoses in America will require a comprehensive and collaborative response from legislators, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, and the community.

The first step will be to improve the monitoring of nitazene-related incidents to better understand the problem and begin to formulate a response. Next, targeted public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the dangers of nitazenes will be important. We will also need to strengthen and expand treatment to support individuals struggling with opioid addiction, including those affected by nitazene abuse, and implement and enforce strict regulations on the production, distribution, and sale of synthetic opioids, including nitazenes, to curb their availability in the illicit market.

Doctors will need to work with specialized experts to develop protocols to treat a confirmed or suspected nitazene overdose. First responders, emergency department clinicians, and others on the front lines will need to be informed that nitazenes have invaded the street drug market, that polysubstance drug abusers may be taking nitazenes without knowing it, and that nitazenes by themselves may be sold in counterfeit pills falsely labeled as popular pharmaceutical opioids.

The United States already spends about \$11 billion annually on opioid overdoses, but this amount will need to increase substantially in order to deal with the added burden of nitazenes in the U.S. drug supply.