



Emotional Intelligence

with Dr. Russell Robinson, EdD & Faroshia Ashley

Russell Robinson speaks with Faroshia Ashley, founder of EmoWorks. EmoWorks, which is based in the Netherlands, provides services to help managers and leaders strengthen their emotional intelligence skills, and develop a culture of connection in organizations. In this conversation, Faroshia talks about how a leader's ability to manage stress impacts his/her interpersonal connections, self-perceptions and ultimately decision making. Additionally, she shares how emotional intelligence has a direct relationship with resilience and can be used to counter loneliness.

[ACCESS THE PODCAST RECORDING »](#)

ABOUT FAROSHIA ASHLEY



I help executives improve their emotional and leadership skills so that they become excellent leaders. They can shape changes in a connecting way with which they build the organizations of the future.

You hear it; leadership and emotional intelligence (EQ) are the main foundations of my work. These themes fit perfectly with our time in which change is constant and with what organizations and professionals need to be successful.

I coach and train managers to inspire their people from their personal development and to take them to new levels of working and performance. I offer trajectories aimed at creating change in innovative organizations. My programs consist of an optimal mix of training, (executive) coaching and organizational advice. Ultimately, it's about measurably better results. On a personal, departmental and organizational level.

ABOUT DR. RUSSELL ROBINSON, ED.D.



Dr. Russell Robinson is the founder of Amplified Research and Consulting, LLC, which provides research, analysis and consulting solutions regarding employee engagement, voice and silence, and talent management. Russell's focus is helping leaders create a culture of learning and listening.

In addition, Russell has spent over twenty years as a civil servant within the US Federal Government. In his current role as the Senior Advisor of Training & Engagement of an agency's component, Russell provides solutions to improve the workforce experience; and help leaders inspire and influence those within their span of control. Additionally, Russell is an adjunct professor at American University where he teaches graduate-level leadership classes.

Russell received his Doctor of Education (EdD) degree in Human Organizational Learning from the George Washington University. He received a Master's in Public Administration from American University's Key Program, and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree from the University of Dayton.



RUSSELL ROBINSON So, I am here with for Faroshia Ashley, founder of EmoWorks, based in the Netherlands. How are you doing today?

FAROSHIA ASHLEY I am doing well, thanks.

RR Awesome. We're going to talk about emotional intelligence. So, tell me about you and what you do at EmoWorks.

FA Yes, EmoWorks focuses on letting leaders experience the value of EI and particularly in building their leadership skills in the way to shape change. When I started in 2011, I had a need to really help leaders on a more personal level than I had done with my management consultancy services. I brought emotional intelligence (EI) to the center of the coaching and training I do to help leaders form meaningful connections. And ultimately, that is to lead to them creating successful work environments.

RR So, you mentioned meaningful connections. In the book, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, Klaus Schwab argues that organizations need to have empowered employees and customers, and having emotionally intelligent leaders is critical to that process. But let's get a basic understanding of what emotional intelligence is, and why you think it's important.

It's all about recognizing being able to recognize and understand emotions starting with yourself, being able to do that for others, and also influence those emotions.

FA It's all about recognizing being able to recognize and understand emotions starting with yourself, being able to do that for others, and also influence those emotions. Now, I immediately wanted to say that from a leadership perspective, it's about a leader's ability to manage his or her own emotions, and those of others. And I like to make the addition and say that it's about doing that appropriately and effectively. That really means it's about meeting a goal. In a leadership role the goal is about benefiting the different work relationships that a leader has. This ability to manage these emotions, if you look at the model as the construct of EI— it's split up in several areas.

There's a difference in the skills that change yourself and others. There are different aspects. Self-awareness is one of the aspects of it. So is self-expression, which is how you manage to give expression to the processes that go on within you, and there's the interpersonal skills which bridges over to how you connect to others, which is really important. And then there's stress management and decision-making; we can see how those fulfill the full responsibilities that you have as a leader. It's within those five areas that you will find the individual skills of empathy or flexibility. It really impacts a person's ability to interact with others, but also handle stress or being resilient. Overall, research has shown that it has as a positive correlation with work performance.

RR So, when you look at stress management, can you walk me through the impact of not managing stress and how that's going to impact the other four components of EI?

FA It kind of makes me think about where we are right now in the post-pandemic area. What I see is the way we think about work has changed tremendously and stress management, work-life balance and well-being are so much more important now than they were pre-COVID. Where that comes into play, is leaders are not just dealing with feelings of burnout and overwhelmed in their



team members, but they themselves are struggling with it, and constantly feeling these effects of being under pressure and being under stress for prolonged periods of time. That's going to affect the way they deal with their team members. Add to that, the mix social injustice, people's concerns around sustainability, and all of these sorts of big topics, which are affecting people at a personal level. That's going to bleed into work and work relationships, which requires leaders to find a balance for all these new priorities. All these new topics have now become more visible in the workplace. On the other hand, there's this ever-present demand for work performance where it's still business as usual. The challenge is finding that balance and you can imagine that if stress management is something that's not under control, it's going to affect your interactions with your co-workers.

Leaders are not just dealing with feelings of burnout and overwhelmed in their team members, but they themselves are struggling with it, and constantly feeling these effects of being under pressure and being under stress for prolonged periods of time. That's going to affect the way they deal with their team members.

I can give an example that I thought was really interesting. This article in a recent Harvard Business Review spoke about the it emotional labor of being leader. It called out for us to recognize the emotional burden that comes with leadership. It's hard to be in a position of leadership these days because we have this sort of picture perfect image of what we want. Leaders have to be sensitive, compassionate, flexible, and be able to lead remote workers. And at the same time, we hold them to the standard of being authentic. So, we can imagine that meeting all these demands, ticking of all these boxes is going to really draw a lot of energy away from these leaders. So, stress management is essential for them to be able to deal with all these challenges. Throw in having to retain current staff and at the same time hiring new staff in a job market that's really high-strung. Stress management is about recognizing the need for leaders to be able to let off steam but also to express self-compassion. For example, leaders have the acceptance of not being able to meet all these demands from a place of balance while try to manage what is possible. Stress management in this time has become even more (challenging).

RR But there has to be a link between stress management and the outlet of it, good or bad, at work. But then it would also happen at home and in the "life" part of the work-life balance, correct?

FA True. I think one of the things that we've seen from a home perspective, as well as work, is the need for support and the need of a trusted environment of peers in the work environment where we can be free to share, and where we can feel like we can be not judged for these feelings of being overwhelmed. The article I just mentioned the importance of supporting leaders. You make a very good point that we also need to have this in a more private setting. COVID, in that sense, has given us an opportunity to become more aware of how work and home life blend in together. We've all had to deal with sickness in one way or another, and we've had to deal with maybe caring for loved ones. The understanding that leaders have of all the different challenges that their workers go through, and could inform the way they themselves deal with the whole challenge of hybrid working while trying to balance what needs to be done with the work environment, and needs while at home.

The self-compassion and the compassion for others, and, the drive to want to connect, to want to check-in with one another is going to be at the center of all of it. And, that's where EI comes in. That, On the other hand, there's always the danger that being exposed to all this emotional information can be overwhelming. One of the things that can be very valuable is to learn to reframe emotions as information. Yes, that sounds a bit like, "Oh, you we're taking something away from it." But what that helps you to do is not to become emotionally overwhelmed. That's exactly where EI can be a value to teach you how to balance taking in all this information, and the same time being able to continue to work. At the end of the day, there are demands to be made of our performance, especially for leaders.



EI can be very helpful in shaping the type of leaders we need right now, and in turn, can help to shape the organizations that we're going to need for the future. Like you said, we're in this revolutionary era right now, where the way we look at work, and the way work and our private life, sort of intertwine. It's changing and we need leaders who understand how to navigate that process.

RR I just talked to a colleague who just started their job within the past year, and she talked about how she doesn't feel connected to the group, and she does not feel that she belonged. She doesn't have a supervisor who realizes this. Can you talk about how EI can foster belonging within the work group?

FA The first point I would go to is to mention this time with all its challenges and all these different topics and needs really requires leaders to start with an open mind, and that seems really basic. It's really about being open to learn where there is going to be a process where we're going to tread in uncharted water. We need to be open to learn to new experiences, and also acquire some new skills. Nobody knew what remote managing was until about three years ago. But we learned, and we found a way. Being open to learn about new ways, and new needs is important.

I would say on a skill level, that automatically brings me to listening. The value of listening is underrated. I'm talking about listening with the intent of truly understanding not just a message, which we're very trained to be focused on. It's also understanding the meaning of the messenger, which is about connection. Learning to listen in a different way, not to answer or not to convince, but to engage. I refer to this as "connective listening" and there are different listening techniques. Many of us have learned about active listening. You let you ask questions, and you summarize, but connective listening gets to the point that you just made about connecting to each other. And that means listening with the intent of building a long-term relationship, which surpasses sort of the applying the technique in the here and now and trying to get to the core of the message.

Listening as a skill has a link to empathy, which is one of the social skills in the EI domain. It's your ability to feel along with someone else's experience.

Listening as a skill has a link to empathy, which is one of the social skills in the EI domain. It's your ability to feel along with someone else's experience. As you were mentioning, a lot of people feel disconnected, not just because of the challenges of digital work, but because we are reshaping the way we feel, the way we define, and the way we organize work. The social part of the EI Spectrum can help us to rethink how we form bonds and I think leaders can be at the center of that. I see a huge opportunity for leaders to be there, to check in, to do that connective listening, to hear what it is that people really need and to step away from the idea that this is going to be one for all solution. This is going to be individualized and catered to a personal level, you need these emotional skills to find out what each and every one of your team members might need because it's going to be different for everyone.

RR When I talked to leaders on this journey, they often talk about being recognized and being promoted for having the answers. So much of listening, really gets to pivoting to asking questions. How hard is that transition, and what are some tips for leaders who are used to having answers to pivot to that leader who asks questions and listens more?

FA What I recognize about what you're describing here is it might seem like a really big task. Let's break it down into smaller pieces. I would say focus on one aspect of your interactions that you want to change at the time. If you want to build trust or you want to become a better listener, then try to define what aspect you want to delve into. One thing I often do with my coaches is have them ask employees a conversation after how well have they actually listened? You can do that as a form of self-reflection or you could ask the person that you've just been in conversation with. In that way, you're shifting the attention from you doing everything



right or having all the answers to asking how well you are doing or where you can improve, which is of a collaborative approach to leadership I think the newer generation will respond very well to this sort of collaborative approach, where we put these social skills at the center of the way we connect to each other, and take baby steps in trying to shape the interactions that we need for us to do our jobs in a connected way.

RR For someone in an organization, whether it's a leader or an individual, when they're in a position where they feel like they are not managing stress well—because if they're not managing stress, well, that's going to impact. How they feel about themselves how they feel about themselves, how they interact with others and their decision making, what tips or practices can people do to manage stress better?

FA First, I think it might be very hard for people to even realize that when they're in the middle of it. Self-reflection is a process that belongs to EI, but when you're overwhelmed it's hard to sort of do that self-assessment. I would encourage those people to set up a few conversations with the people that work very closely with them to get an idea of what the stress level is like from other side of the table. The first step is to engage and ask how have you experienced me over the last couple of weeks, and what are some of the things that stand out in my behavior. The second step would be to look towards some practices that may help in stress management and there are a variety of things. Some people will turn to mindfulness. Others will turn to more physical activity to see if they can regulate in that way. But I think an assessment of what's a forum that allows you to process stress and what's a forum, that allows you to relieve of that stress. You have to discover what that's like for you. I'll give you an example. I used to really thrive on going to the gym and just exercising in that form and I've noticed in the post-pandemic, that just doesn't work for me anymore. So, I've turned to journaling, finding relaxing moments with music, or even just taking long walks. It took me a while to figure out that the form in which I wanted to deal with stress had changed. And so, a short assessment of what form is appropriate and applicable for you in this moment is a very needed step.

I would encourage those people to set up a few conversations with the people that work very closely with them to get an idea of what the stress level is like from other side of the table.

Next, measuring the level of stress either by using a questionnaire, or even talking about it with a health professional is another way to sort of gauge if you're making progress because we all know that stepping back into the day-to-day can sometimes suck you in and you may not even notice stress levels going back up. So, I think it's about finding a way to monitor it with more regularity and see if the impact on your health is moving forward, or if it's getting worse. I think it is very important for people to have that level of awareness to stress manage.

RR Last question, if I'm intrigued by this and want to learn more about EI, what are some good resources?

FA When I first learned about EI, the books of Daniel Goleman were very central to my understanding. The concept is at the basis of many assessments and programs on EI as we know them today, which is very foundational. What I think is an easy read is a package of articles that the Harvard Business Review published, which is called, 10 Must Reads on Emotional Intelligence. What I like about those articles is that they make a specific application to leadership. So, if you want to look at some practical ways in which EI impacts leadership, and some of the research that was done, that's a very good resource. If you're more of a practical person and you want to get to work right away, I would advise the book by Dr. Travis Bradbury, which is called Emotional Intelligence 2.0. I think it's an absolute gem for its practicality. So, you literally can go through the individual skills.

RR Faroshia Ashley, founder of EmoWorks. Thanks for educating me on emotional intelligence and how it links to wellness.