

## **Release your emotions and resolve conflict**

*Published in South China Morning Post on 23 September 2006*

**By Sebastien Henry, Executive Coach & Trainer**

**Leading with Emotional Intelligence Expert for Progress-U Ltd.**



**EMOTIONS, ESPECIALLY** anger and frustration, are part of any conflict. While they are usually seen as a hindrance to a quick solution, they can, in fact, be used as allies to achieve breakthroughs.

To solve a conflict quickly and rationally, we have to keep our emotions under control. We should consider them as a kind of interference that has to be put aside so we can focus on the issue at hand, such as listening to the other person's argument and explaining our own position.

However, we can use emotions in a conflict to find a solution that satisfies both parties. There are two ways to do this and, ideally, they should be combined.

The first is to use the other person's emotions; the second is to use your own.

I like to see people's emotions as a gem in a bucket of sand.

In a conflict, it is my job to find this gem and look at it from all angles. Understanding people's emotions can be even more important than comprehending their arguments. Once you have identified a person's emotions, you can acknowledge them.

Acknowledging does not mean agreeing. "I can see that you are frustrated and angry at what happened, or what I did" does not necessarily mean, "I admit that you are right". Rather, it shows you have made an effort to understand the person's feelings. You have sent a clear message that you care and want to understand. This way you build trust.

Remember how you felt the last time somebody truly understood your feelings? This can have an even greater impact than agreeing at the argumentative level.

It may take a bit of time to find that gem in the sand, but it is worth the effort. And your "opponents" can actually help you. After all, they know best about how they feel. Just ask. "How do you feel about the conflict we are having?" is a question that can have a powerful effect. Try it yourself.

The other gem to uncover is your own emotions.

In a conflict, it is easy to feel angry. But anger comes in many shades and for many reasons. Study your state of mind. When do you get angry? Under what kind of circumstances? For what reasons? What patterns have you noticed?

Many of our conflicts are rooted in ourselves, our insecurities or our desire for recognition. If, in the middle of a conflict, you realise why you got angry, the conflict will not last long. If it was you who, in some way, caused the conflict or let it grow, you can make it disappear.

There are times when we have good reason to be angry with someone in the team. On such occasions understanding our emotions helps us express ourselves better.

Expressing our feelings in a conflict is crucial. Not expressing them can leave us "burning inside", without making much progress in finding a solution to end the conflict.

Expressing your emotions shows where you stand in a way that cannot be denied. Emotions are facts.

*Contributed by Sebastien Henry, certified NLP trainer and emotional intelligence (EI) expert at Progress-U Limited, an innovative training and coaching company whose mission is to develop first-class leaders in the Asia-Pacific region.*



Sebastien Henry is Progress-U's expert for Emotional Intelligence. Developing his Emotional Intelligence in his previous corporate career was a real priority (regional position in Asia at a multinational company). Now he focuses on helping business leaders to become more inspiring leaders, motivate their people and retain the best by developing their EQ.

Sebastien firmly believes in action, and the tools he is using and sharing are derived from 4 areas of his life:

- His business experience as a corporate executive
- Intensive mountaineering and rock climbing (7a onsight and more than 50 alpine routes)
- Teaching and coaching prisoners
- Daily meditations for more than 5 years