

Anxiety, Emotional Quotient and taking care of your own wellbeing

Sharon Critchlow – ACCA Council

These are turbulent times, particularly for accountants. We like order and controls, yet now we have a business, social and community environment which is anything but under control. Clients and colleagues may be looking to us to find a solid solution in an ever-changing situation. However, our need to do the best job possible whilst under this pressure can feel overwhelming.

Having examined initial structures for the change to home working and keeping your team on track it is now time to focus on yourself.

Here are three thoughts to help you to thrive

1 Take a tip from emotional intelligence

Emotional Intelligence starts with self-awareness and being able to identify your emotions as they arise. If you are feeling “stressed” is it really fear, overwhelm or confusion? Describe to yourself in as much detail as you can, how you really feel. Write it down if it helps you to get your thoughts straight. Acknowledge that they are justified and understand that emotions are not good or bad, they are just emotions. If you feel you can share it with someone else, it may help to get clarity. Understanding what it really is may help you to avoid being in that position too often and allow you to build an appropriate response mechanism.

When you feel this emotion rising, pause and acknowledge it. Then decide what outcome you would like. Whilst lots of our buttons may get pushed, we can always choose how we react. Outcome focused responses focus on the long-term result and the bigger picture.

You can also improve your emotional intelligence by:

- Controlling your self-talk. What are you telling yourself? Replace judgement statements such as “I’m an idiot” with factual statements such as “I made a mistake” and accept responsibility for your actions.
- Speaking to someone who is not emotionally invested to get a wider perspective
- Visiting your personal values and deciding if your actions or responses reflect your values.

Mastering Emotional Intelligence or [Emotional Quotient](#) is a key skill identified by both ACCA in its research - “[Professional Accountants - the Future](#)” and by the United Nations as a top 10 skill for 2020. The bottom line here is showing up as a whole human being, being unafraid of transparency and working towards improving communication and relationships.

2 Its OK not to be OK.

We all have mental health the same as we all have physical health. Sometimes it’s great, sometimes it’s challenging. If current events are giving you sleepless nights and leaving you with a heightened state of worry, just remember it’s OK not to be OK. These times will test the resolve of all of us. Check out [rethink.org](#) and [mind.org.uk](#) for helpful support and resources.

Even before this crisis, 1 in 4 of us lived with anxiety and depression, so you are in good productive company and there is a way through this. If you are constantly anxious, try writing an “Anxiety Diary” by writing down the things which are concerning yourself the most at the moment. Check on it in two week’s time, did any of it actually happen?

To counteract anxious feelings, also make a list before you go to bed of 10 good things in your life. They could be as simple as the sun coming out today, or something which made you laugh. What are you grateful for? By doing this just before bedtime you give your brain a chance to refocus on the positive and to create some dopamine to help you to relax.

3 Create a new wellbeing routine

So, you've had to adapt to a new way of living and working, now is the time to make sure your wellbeing habits adapt too.

Review your current habits around food, hydration and sleep. Are you eating a variety of foods which are good for you? If you are living off of caffeine remember to take plenty of water with it and to avoid it in the afternoon to get better sleep.

Consider your wind down routine before you go to sleep. Switch off the tech, take a bath, listen to soothing music and make sure the room is dark enough for you to sleep. Try Rain Rain as an App to play to help you to get better sleep with natural sounds, or Insight Timer Meditation App.

Small changes can have a huge impact. Whatever you decide to do, now is not the time to berate yourself for how you feel or for making "bad choices". Let it go and embrace tomorrow with a different approach.

You can find more from Sharon Critchlow – ACCA Council member [here](#) and also the previous support [Your wellbeing during hard times](#) and [Ideas for team wellbeing](#)