

Don't Be a Barrier: Emotional Intelligence Approach to Customer Service

By Shawna Kristin.

Johanne Walesch and Jennifer Wile of Surrey Libraries presented Saturday's session entitled *Don't Be a Barrier: Emotional Intelligence Approach to Customer Service (S11)*. Johanne and Jennifer used an interactive approach to explain the benefits of using Emotional Intelligence (E.I.) in customer service. The session was based on their extensive research on emotions, brain function, and customer service as well as their experiences presenting a workshop on E.I. to staff at Surrey Libraries.

They began the session by stressing how important it is for library staff to provide fitting customer service to library patrons. They used the words of Maya Angelou to highlight their point: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." If a patron has an unpleasant interaction with library staff, they may not return to our libraries in the future.

The presenters talked about the basic concepts of E.I. They highlighted the work of Daniel Goleman, who breaks E.I. down into four main concepts: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Johanne and Jennifer stressed that self-awareness is key. It is essential that we know our personal triggers, and that we have the ability to choose to not react in certain situations and to choose to get help in other situations.

Practicing E.I. involves addressing our own emotions and reactions. It can be used to reduce stress,

conflicts, personal assumptions, and triggers and it can also help staff to maintain self-awareness and self-control in difficult situations. Johanne and Jennifer have found that when staff implement E.I. in their customer service interactions it is 58% more likely that customers will have their information needs met.

Attendees also learned about the activities and tools that Johanne and Jennifer used during the E.I. workshop at Surrey Libraries, the outcomes and challenges of teaching E.I., and some of Johanne and Jennifer's favourite E.I. resources. Two resources they highly recommend are:

Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam, 2006.

Goulston, Mark. *Just Listen: Discover the Secret to Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone*. New York: AMACOM, 2010.

A full bibliography and more can be found on the Don't Be a Barrier: Emotional Intelligence Approach to Customer Service blog at <http://dontbeabARRIER.wordpress.com/>.

Shawna Kristin is a recent graduate of The School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, The iSchool at The University of British Columbia. She works as an Auxiliary/On-Call Librarian at a variety of libraries in the Lower Mainland.