

# Emotional Intelligence

## There's More To It Than Empathy with Kristy Dean

On the 11th February 2021, Kristy Dean joined me on an edition of 'On The Spot' to discuss the important topic of *emotional intelligence*. [You can see the original broadcast here.](#)

If you'd rather read an edited transcript of our discussion you'll find that below. You can view previous episodes by visiting [onthespot.today](https://onthespot.today).



[Kristy Dean](#)

*Digital BA & well known BA speaker*



[Adrian Reed](#)

*Principal consultant*

Please note, this is an edited version of an automated transcription. We apologise for any mis-transcription or typos!

-- Adrian

**Adrian Reed:** Hello, and a very warm welcome to this episode of "On The Spot", the experimental coffee-break shaped LinkedIn live show. My name is Adrian Reed, and I'm really pleased to be joined today by Kristy Dean. Kristy is a digital BA specialist and well known speaker in the BA community, you may well have seen one of her webinars or you might have seen her present at the BA conference Europe. Today we're going to be talking about a topic that's really important and relevant now more than ever: Emotional Intelligence (EI), and whether there's more to it than empathy. Kristy, thanks very much for joining.

**Kristy Dean:** Thanks for having me on Adrian.

**Adrian Reed:** So Kristy, for anyone who hasn't heard of Emotional Intelligence, how would you describe it?

**Kristy Dean:** Out of many explanations from books and research I conducted online, the definition I most connected with, is from the handy pocketbook: "Emotional Intelligence" by Gill Hasson. It's about using your emotions to inform your thinking and then using your thinking to understand and manage your emotions. So it's like a dynamic and never-ending circle (like a feedback loop). If you take it one step further, once you can understand what's happening with you, you can try to understand what emotions other people are feeling and experiencing. You can use that information to manage how you would respond to them in any given situation. So it's like a sense of self and sense of others, and using that information as you would any other input into conversations that you're having.

**Adrian Reed:** It's interesting, the idea of a feedback loop is a really powerful one. Springboarding from that, I suppose we can use it to understand ourselves and manage our own emotional state, but also recognise patterns in others. This may be seeing distress in others, for example, which helps us respond to them in an empathetic way.



blackmetric

[www.blackmetric.com](https://www.blackmetric.com)

**Kristy Dean:** Yes, and that feedback loop isn't just for those difficult situations. We have a whole range of emotions, and that start point of actually putting your finger on which emotion you may be experiencing at any particular time can be the biggest challenge. So, once you've established how those thoughts and feelings come about, and how to name them, you can put in the full range, not just those difficult and challenging ones. You might consider how you can inspire others, or how you can put positivity into a conversation at the most appropriate time. I heard a phrase the other day: "using fake positivity": you know, the unwanted "Oh, it'll all be fine. It's great". Better to read the situation from an emotional standpoint, and then manage your responses.

**Adrian Reed:** Very interesting. We've had a comment come in: George says "great topic, especially for those in the technical space." Which is interesting, isn't it? Because I do think that sometimes there's almost a perception (which isn't necessarily correct) that people in a technical role can just 'get on with it' and be automatic and heads down. But we're all human, we're all going through stuff all of the time. So, that brings us on to the next question, which is, how does EI differ from empathy? We've talked about how it might help us manage ourselves manage our response to others. That sounds similar to empathy. So where would you say the differences are Kristy?

**Kristy Dean:** I think empathy is a part of how you use your Emotional Intelligence. But it's not the only part, there's been a lot of conversation recently about being more people-oriented, exercising your empathy. Empathy is a really important skill. It's about, trying to understand somebody else's situation, from their perspective, it's not putting your own own feelings and emotions onto them, but trying to understand where they're coming from. So that is part of that feedback loop we spoke about earlier. To be able to understand others, it's important to gain an understanding of yourself first. I think that that's where the difference comes in. It's learning—trying not to sound too hippie—to be in touch with yourself, knowing what's going on in here and managing that in a way that will help you understand others, which is where empathy comes in. So your Emotional Intelligence isn't just about empathy. But empathy does play a part in that process.

**Adrian Reed:** It's interesting, I remember an analogy that's stuck with me about knowing yourself first, and looking after yourself first. When you're flying on an airplane they tell you if the oxygen masks are activated: "always fit your own oxygen mask before helping somebody else." Because otherwise, if you pass out because the lack of oxygen, then you can't help anyone. Would you say there's an element of EI in this too: Unless you really know where you're at, it's really hard to know where someone else is at and actually offer any kind of empathetic support. Is there an element of that?

**Kristy Dean:** Yeah, I would agree, there is an element of that. It isn't a "cut and dry type thing" of having to have one before you can exercise the other. Certainly there would be some key indicators. If somebody was having a particularly difficult day: down to the level of detail, if you notice somebody is a bit quieter on a call than they would normally be, or slightly less enthused in their interactions.



blackmetric

[www.blackmetric.com](http://www.blackmetric.com)

There's that level of detailed awareness that would increase with your own awareness.

**Adrian Reed:** Vince is clearly tuned in because Vince has submitted a comment saying "we all feel...most of us at least!" Yeah, absolutely!. We're all human, feeling what we feel. I guess the \$64,000 question is why does this matter for business analysts, project managers, product managers change and product people generally?

**Kristy Dean:** Yes, I'd say think about your day to day, do you complete your work by yourself in isolation? The majority of time the answer is going to be no. As change practitioners, we work through projects that affect other people's work, and how they would do their day to day. Change management is a key part of it. So having an awareness of your Emotional Intelligence fits into that. But also, if you look at jobs within the tech industry, you might say, as you've already said Adrian, about you just get on and do the job. But then the question becomes "how do you get your sense of fulfilment from that?", We are building digital journeys and transformations for our customer to go on so they can self serve. So in that respect we're interacting with our customers less in the digital platforms. But in order to build those journeys, we need to work with people. So it's all about, considering how to manage working relationships overall.

**Adrian Reed:** That's really interesting. As you're speaking there, Kristy, I was thinking of two aspects. There's the first aspect of us as practitioners of change, working with people to help define those journeys. Those stakeholders might be in particular places, we might be in a particular emotional state or whatever and so might they. But then there is the challenge of designing journeys, digital or otherwise, that are actually suitable for people who are going through different life events. For example, I always remember, I was working for a financial services firm and I did some observation. One of the first calls that I heard the person take was, "my spouse has died, I need to know how to get access to their financial affairs." As a BA, I was amazed the empathy with which this person dealt with that. And it was something we probably never specified a process for. That was a wake up call for me. It's like, yeah, the 80/20 rule goes out the out the window in those in those situations. So it's multi layered, perhaps.

**Kristy Dean:** Yeah, it's life, isn't it? It's life coming into those processes that we build and having those human touch points. It's very interesting when you look at 'bot' technology and how that may play a part in our future. It's all very interesting.

**Adrian Reed:** Absolutely. Vince has put another comment: "cognitive skills, because I hate the term soft skills, are the differentiator", I think that's probably right, isn't it? When you think about good change people, good Business Analysts, good product or project managers, it's the ones with the good people skills that you remember.

**Kristy Dean:** Yeah, I don't like the term soft skills, either Vincent, to be perfectly honest, they are core skills for me.



blackmetric

[www.blackmetric.com](http://www.blackmetric.com)

The very core of what we can do within our roles and are potentially one of those differentiators between a really good BA and a great BA. I think one of the key elements to your Emotional Intelligence is that it's something that you can learn about; something that you can enhance within your skill sets. And it's different to your IQ, which is a fixed value. Your EQ is not dependent on your gender, or your age, it's something that you can learn on and enhance.

**Adrian Reed:** I find that almost liberating and inspiring. The fact that it EI is elastic, we can change it, we can improve it, we can become better. I guess it becomes better with practice too. So Kristy, my final question for you: what would your biggest tip or takeaway be around this whole idea of Emotional Intelligence, empathy, and so on?

**Kristy Dean:** I would say, just learn about it some more. If you're one of those types of people that thinks, oh, it's not for me, I'd invite you to have a shift in that mindset. Read a bit more about it and dig into a bit more detail. And to quote another one of our BA community members, Christina Lovelock, "retrospect yourself". You know, dig in, spend some time with yourself and get in touch with your Emotional Intelligence.

**Adrian Reed:** That does seem so important, doesn't it? Particularly given that at the moment we're all working in a different environment than perhaps we would ideally be working in. So it seems like that this is a really timely skillset both for our for ourselves, and for that ability to work with our stakeholders. So Kristy, thank you very much for taking the time out to have a chat today. A really, really interesting set of topics. We could talk about this for hours, So if people want to follow you stay in touch, what's the best way for people to stay in touch?

**Kristy Dean:** LinkedIn is the best. [You'll find me by searching for Kristy Dean](#)

**Adrian Reed:** Fantastic. And there's a previous [recorded webinar](#) that we've done, that people can tune into, as well. So Fantastic. Well, thank you very much, Kristy. Enjoy the rest of your day and we'll speak again soon.

**Kristy Dean:** Thank you too, Adrian, thank you.

---

## Want more free content?

Stay connected by following us



LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/blackmetric-business-solutions-ltd/>

Twitter:

<https://www.twitter.com/blackmetric>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/blackmetric.co.uk/>