Science Societies

# Emotional intelligence workshop preview: An interview with Marilyn Orr

By Dana Ashford-Kornburger

September 21, 2020



*Marilyn Orr (top) leading a workshop at the 2019 ASA, CSSA, SSSA Annual Meeting in San Antonio.*

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During this year's Virtual Annual Meeting, the Women in Science Committee will host a workshop focused on emotional intelligence. Sometimes referred to as emotional quotient or EQ, emotional intelligence is a set of valuable skills to have both in the

workplace and in our personal lives. This month, I provide a sneak peek of the upcoming workshop by interviewing Marilyn Orr, who will be leading the workshop in November. She has been an executive coach for 15 years, specializing in emotional intelligence and resilience. Marilyn lives outside of Austin, TX in a small town called Wimberley and loves public speaking, working with teams, and supporting the growth and development of individuals. I am grateful for this opportunity to have interviewed Marilyn and hope this gets you excited and interested in participating in the virtual workshop in November. See you there!

**Ashford-Kornburger**: First things first, Marilyn, what is one tip you would give people who want to start down a path of improving their emotional intelligence?

**Orr:** Increasing your self-awareness is an essential first step … before you can even start to develop a strategy for improvement. Understanding your own emotions, then recognizing the feelings of other people, realizing what is going on in a situation, and then you can come up with a better strategy of what's next. It all starts with self-awareness.

**Ashford-Kornburger:** Do you have a recommendation for folks who want to improve their social skills and start to increase their comfort with others, meeting new people and building networks with those around them?

**Orr:** Learn to listen really well! Active listening and truly engaging will improve your connections with others and your comfort level with interactions. And always have a few general open-ended questions in your back pocket—this is especially helpful for introverts. It's important to know that it is often about listening and not talking.

**Ashford-Kornburger:** Most of us have been dealing with a lot of change this year related to the pandemic, schedules, work location, and family interactions. Does

emotional intelligence help us when we are faced with change? Is there a tie between emotional intelligence and resiliency?

**Orr:** YES!!! Flexibility and optimism are two key items. We measure these in the emotional intelligence assessment as well as aspects of effective decision-making when emotions are involved like during times of change. I recently heard a Gloria Steinem quote: "Hope is a form of planning." I love that and it is a perfect quote for these challenging times!

**Ashford-Kornburger:** The workshop topics are intended for all members, but they are typically well attended by graduate students and newer professionals looking for tips on building networks and relationship management. Any advice on how to start building a network?

**Orr:** Participate in professional organizations—like the Societies. Organizations are great for building a network of colleagues and connections. Offer up your assistance and service to organizations and non-profits, both in your field and unrelated to your career. Get involved with groups that bring diversity to your life to create a balance between professional and personal interests. Add extra items slowly to your schedule to avoid getting overwhelmed, and set boundaries up front so you don't get overextended.

**Ashford-Kornburger:** Last but certainly not least, how does emotional intelligence play a role in our personal lives?

**Orr:** Emotional intelligence is the foundation to emotional intimacy. Being able to understand your own emotions, having impulse control and the ability to self-regulate, and handling conflict are all critical to healthy relationships. Conflict management can especially be a skill which women need to spend effort on, getting the balance

between empathy and assertiveness. This often means getting out of our comfort zone! Figuring out how to share your thoughts and opinion confidently and professionally is a skill that often develops over time.

*Editor's note: This article is part of a series written by members of the Women in Science Committee, for all Society members. For more information, visit* **www.agronomy.org/membership/women-in-science**, **www.crops.org/membership/women-in-science**, *and* **www.soils.org/membership/women-in-science**.

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