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How to influence positive change? Managers' involvement as emotional architects in the solution for relieving forensic examiners' workplace stress

ABSTRACT

This article responds to emerging research findings; forensic examiners are stressed in the workplace by their leaders who push them to improve performance to meet deadlines. Pushing employees causing them moderate stress was an acceptable practice to enhance performance while maintaining motivation. This is not true today! The same factors contributing to the stress of forensic examiners can decrease their stress, and this can be championed by managing employees' emotions. The skill and ability are critical for leaders to have, and these would assist leaders with effectively moving employees along the work continuum. In this opinion piece, I add to a lack of research regarding identification and to the understanding of the skills and abilities used during interpersonal regulation. I introduce the Emotion Regulation Skills-Abilities model (ERSA) developed, empirically grounded, and supported by current theoretical models. I demonstrate how focusing on developing supervisors' skills and abilities improve the workplace with practicing these skills. Leaders are the emotional architects who could positively assure a less stressful environment based on these efforts of being effective managers of other people's emotion.

My research interests focus on emotional management, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy as essential skills. As part of my research, I developed a model that identifies the skills and abilities necessary for effectively managing the emotions of other people, called the Emotion Regulation Skills and Abilities (ERSA) model.[1] My view is that emotional management is a valuable tool for helping individuals who have emotional problems and who cannot work through a situation or event alone. By being open about their personal experiences and feelings, other people can be invited to assist them. These interactions occur in everyday social situations, including in work environments. Thus, when I was asked to write an opinion piece for the journal, it was natural for me to look toward the intersections between my research specialization, my professional work in corrections, and my experience teaching.

I found it disheartening to learn organizationally from managers and supervisors in forensic science facilities that forensic examiners from across various forensic fields were under a tremendous amount of stress, which was exacerbated if the examiner had been in their job for a long time.[2] This suggests that organizational and human factors were, in many cases, doing more harm than good. This was disheartening to learn because managers, supervisors, and leaders can all be good sources of support if they have the right skills and abilities, and they should be able

to alleviate the stress endured by forensic examiners. Particularly, they need to know how to help their employees manage their emotions and cope with what they are experiencing [1] in their study evaluated whether levels of stress moderate improves forensic examiners performances, whereby they where able to keep deadlines and remain motivated. Their study demonstrated forensic examiner supervisors where a factor in causing stress when such an approach is taken. The questions that ought to be asked now. Is who should be responsible for helping employees manage their emotion and cope with what they are experiencing? How does these individuals that are responsible develop the necessary skills to manage other people's emotions effectively?

The issue that is a cause of stress and emotional intensity of employees. Is caused at the organizational leadership level. The responsibility for resolving and for helping people manage their emotion to cope must be done by the organization and its leaders. Organizational activities and organizational change will be initiated at the organizational level within an organization of forensic professionals. Interpersonal managing of emotions is an intimate process between two individuals. Organizational leaders are in the best positions to be taught how to manage forensic examiners' emotion. These individuals, through their learning, would have the requisite understanding of the role and

[1] Harper, D. S. (2021). A leader's abilities to manage work-related emotions during a crisis. In *Emerging Trends in and Strategies for Industry 4.0 During and Beyond Covid-19* (Chapter 5, pp. 81–100). Sciendo. https://doi.org/10.2478/9788366675391-010.

[2] For full details on surveys conducted, see Almazrouei, M. A., Dror, I. E., & Morgan, R. M. (2020). Organizational and human factors affecting forensic decision-making: Workplace stress and feedback. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 65(6), 1968–1977, and Jeanguenat, A. M., & Dror, I. E. (2018). Human factors effecting forensic decision making: Workplace stress and well-being. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 63(1), 258–261. https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.13533.

stressors of the role. They would be aware of the expectations and obligations before a forensic examiner who comes to them and shares their emotion that is causing them to acquire help from them. Three skills are necessary to effectively manage people's emotion, (a) listeners are active participants in changing a person's emotion by using emotional competence and the information gained during the emotional sharing, (b) the listener develops confidence in one's own ability to help the person during the process they are learning, and (c) listeners are then

describes the extrinsic regulator in Fig. 1 of the ERSA model. The manager establishes a goal that they are trying to accomplish with an employee/support seeker, based upon what the extrinsic regulator perceived needs are for the support seeker. An example, forensic examiners are at increased risk of exposure to psychologically traumatic events because of the nature of their work and their repeated exposure to trauma through the performance of their work. They may go to their supervisor to discuss a specific case. This case causes them discomfort in
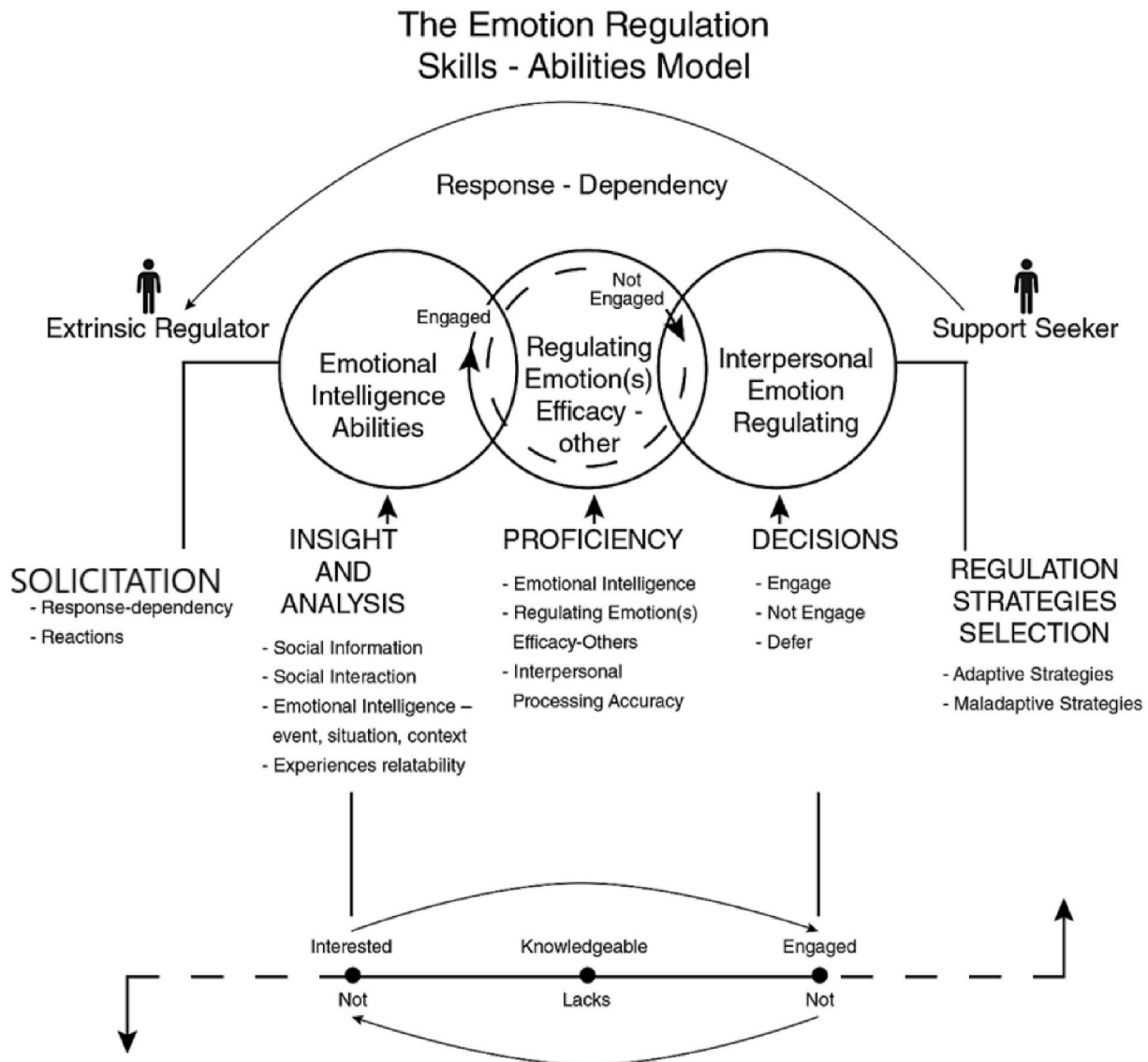
The ERSA Model

Fig. 1. The ERSA model[3].

able to apply a suitable strategy for managing the person's emotion. The ERSA model is a tool used to develop individuals into being effective at managing other's emotion. Through this model, individual strengths and weaknesses can be identified for intervening, developing and training.

Interpersonal emotional regulation involves the active management of another person's emotional experience. This type of active management can occur when someone asks for help. It can also occur when they do not ask for help, but the manager believes that help is necessary. This

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[3] As shown in Fig. 1, three overlapping skills/abilities meet when there is a congruence of high emotional intelligence, regulation of other's emotional efficacy, and interpersonal emotion regulating processing accuracy. The extrinsic regulator reacts to social response-dependent cues and uses social information to determine the level of involvement based on their skills/abilities levels. Any lack of skills/abilities is a disincentive to engage as an extrinsic regulator. The higher the confidence regarding combining additional skills/abilities, the more it incentivizes engagement and increases regulatory effectiveness.

that they cannot sleep at night because they ruminate about the case. They share that this particular case has triggered something in them that no other case had done before, to the point that they are questioning why they do this work. It is not that they do not like what they are doing. Nor is it because they do not think they are good at it. However, this incident has impacted them such that the are struggling to complete other assignments. The supervisor as the emotional manager is familiar with these feelings and in hearing the employees specific situation. Believe they know why this is causing such an emotional reaction. This supervisor is able to help the person in the moment. As the supervisor experiences as an examiner and their experiences as a supervisor. They have been in position to help other forensic examiners with similar experiences. These experiences of the supervisor and their ability to recall this informatioin makes it useful for them to interpersonally engage. They activate their mental capacity and learnings and experiences by working through clues and cues from direct conversations and observations of the person being emotionally managed. The supervisor when they are able to understand what the person's needs are. The supervisor is only then able to help them. As the supervisor or the emotion manager's belief increases about their understanding of what the person needs are. So does the supervisor's confidence increase that they can actually help the person being emotionally managed.[4] Further, the ability identified in the model to interpersonal regulate as a strategy according to Mathews, Webb, and Sheppes [2], found that when individual's are managing others' emotion they do not utilize the same emotional strategy they use for themselves if they did not think it would be effective for the person receiving the emotional management help. The emotional manager of other people's emotion utilized the strategy they felt would be most effective for the person and their situation.

1. Employers responsibilities to manage emotions of employees

In an opinion piece, Annie Haver[5] wrote that managers risk damaging their employees' health and can negatively impact their work performance if they are not good at understanding and managing emotions. Haver places the onus on organizational managers having this responsibility. Their lack of attention to employees' emotional management leads the organization to poor performance and employee health deterioration. Haver's opinion piece responds to the emotional management of employees on organizational leaders. A model helps identify an approach to rectifying this problem. The ERSA is a model that courses a path for identifying the skills needed to manage other people's emotions effectively. The ERSA model is a tool that enables individuals and organizational leaders to formulate plans for building those skills and abilities.

The management of emotions is not exclusively about managing one's own emotions, though this is critical and an indicator of one's ability to manage others' emotions effectively [3]. This implies that those with a high degree of emotional intelligence are likely to be good managers of other people's emotion-eliciting events. Haver was not, *per se,* advocating emotional intelligence that has been popularized as a skill for distinguishing the expressive behaviors of others. Rather, Haver

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[4] See, Campo M, Friesen A, Stanley D, Devonport T, and Lane AM (2019) Regulating own and teammates' emotions before competition. *Movement & Sports Sciences/Science et Motricite*, (105). https://DOI.org/10.1051/sm/2019014. This study, specifically, speaks to how person regulating another person's emotion confidence increases as the regulator. They understand what the regulated person's emotion should be for the situation.

[5] Haver, A. (2021). Managers need to be good with emotions or risk damaging their employee's health and ability to perform at work. OPINION: At worst, managers who lack emotional intelligence can be playing Russian roulette with their colleagues' health. Published *Sciencenorway.no* (January 27, 2020). https://sciencenorway.no/emotions-management-opinion/managers-need-to-be-good-with-emotions–or-they-risk-damaging-their-employees-health-and-ability-to-perform-at-work/1626736.

emphasized the nuances of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a competence. Emotional competence describes the use of intelligence in the assessment of the person, their situation, and the environment to effectively manage other emotions beyond their outward emotional expression. Emotional competence is the first skill among five processes that a manager must utilize to effectively manage another's emotion-eliciting event. It describes the ability to destress, which enables a person to alleviate their stress, such as by seeking intervention through another person.

Forensic professional's workplace stress and its causes have been investigated. These causes can be the work being performed, workload, complexity of work, and lack of training and education (see, [4–8]. Relative to forensic examiners' research, there is a lack of understanding, however, about the impact of workplace stress on forensic examiners' across various forensic fields well-being and the quality of their decision-making when they are being pushed by supervisors to improve performance and meet deadlines [1,9]. Impaired decision-making affects the outcome of the product an examiner produces, which is the most important aspect of their job. The effects of this type of stress on forensic examiners are observable through absenteeism at work and their lack of temper control; moreover, stomach pain and heart problems experienced by forensic examiners are some notable physically associated outcomes [10,11]. Other outcomes include vicarious trauma, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and burnout [4,5]. The quality of forensic examiners' work may also decrease, resulting in the production of inaccurate information, problematic conclusions, and their general lack of confidence or inability to justify decisions. These performance outcomes are often associated with stress [12,13].

2. Stress-causing factors at job

According to Alamzrouei et al. [1], there is a scarcity of literature regarding human and organizational factors associated with workplace stress on forensic examiners. However, recently, Alamzrouei and colleagues conducted a series of studies that helped them identify a range of organizational and human factors that were causing forensic examiners a high degree of stress in the workplace; whereby 25% of forensic examiners indicated they experienced stress at work from managers and supervisors [1]. Alamzrouei et al. [1] in their study evaluated the effects of supervisors pushing employees to meet deadlines this behavior impacted their motivation and performance, for which previous research had identified moderate stress improved performance. Alamzrouei et al. [1] study, one of the first to examine workplace stress from various forensic fields. Did not find that moderate stress improved performance. These same findings were affirmed in a separate study in 2021, where again forensic examiners attributed a significant amount of the stress they experience in the workplace to their managers and supervisors. This perception also seemed to increase in line with a forensic examiner's years of service or longevity; whereby the lengthier their time, the greater their perception that their managers and supervisors were the causes of their stress in the workplace [9]. The recent research findings of Alamzrouei et al. [1] also suggest that feedback given to examiners is a critical factor that can positively or negatively impact their well-being and performance [1,9,14]. [15] found that forensic examiners' supervisor and employee relationships and interactions can be a source of stress, which can be moderated through supervisory support.

3. The ERSA model

The model takes into consideration essential skills that are critical for effectively managing others. These are emotional intelligence, the ability to regulate other's emotional efficacy, and a belief in one's own

ability to manage another person's emotion-eliciting event. Albert Bandura[6] developed the construct of self-efficacy with five tenets that are necessary for a person to demonstrate their ability to perform a specific task or skill. The premise of these is regulating other's emotional efficacy. The final ability is interpersonal regulation as an actual function whereby the extrinsic regulator identifies a suitable emotional regulatory strategy for the support-seeker. Skills in the model converge during the interpersonal process. The extrinsic regulator uses mentalization and their executive function on the person being regulated. Moreover, the ERSA model is a response-dependent model. The support seeker seeks help by an explicit request as observed in the scenario. Behaviors may be obvious to the extrinsic regulator to act upon. As the request is response dependent, it requires some type of response from the extrinsic regulator. The ERSA model features the following: Through the *solicitation* process, a support-seeker initiates emotion regulation from another person based on an emotional event that requires help. *Emotional competence* refers to the use of information from the social engagement using insight and the analytical processes of the model to inform the extrinsic regulator about the needs of the person. If interested, the extrinsic regulator further engages, or if not interested, the extrinsic regulator may disengage or defer to engage. *For regulating other's emotional efficacy*, the extrinsic regulator determines, based on their proficiency, whether one is equipped to help the person. Recalling experiences requires memory and its executive function on behalf of the support-seeker. The more knowledgeable the extrinsic regulator's are about the person, their situation, and their ability to help, the greater is the likelihood of success. Extrinsic regulators are either knowledgeable or lack knowledge, which later leads to disengagement. By their skill of *interpersonal emotion regulation*, the extrinsic regulator works to achieve the goal that they have established for the individual, as observable in the model scenario, that is, the act of engaging, disengaging, or deferring and the identification of an emotional regulatory strategy that is uniquely suited for the person and the situation, thereby making the interpersonal process less about the specific type of emotional regulation strategies, such as the cognitive reframing of the situation or the suppression of the emotion. The suitability of the strategy—that is, whether it is adaptive (manages the emotional experience and is attributed to positive encouragement of another) or maladaptive (may not fully manage the emotional experience)–provides the outcome the extrinsic regulator is seeking.

4. Model scenario

Using the example, discussed above previously. A forensic examiner goes to her manager because she is overwhelmed by work assignments. She has just received a new, high-priority case that has a 20-day turn-around. However, none of her existing work assignments' due dates changed, nor is work removed from her. She also is emotionally impacted by one of her case assignments. The situation with the assignment is that the case is causing her to not be able to sleep at night. She is ruminating over the case. Additionally, the examiner is facing problems at home with caring for an elderly parent. Her supervisor is aware of this. This examiner goes to her supervisor to discuss and specifically ask him for help. Her supervisor knows the examiner to be a good employee; she gets her work done timely and takes on additional work, and he knows her well enough that it is huge for her to ask for help. He also recognizes that to help, she needs to play a part in the decision-making process about her work. He listens to her and shares his insight and relatable experiences. He asks her what work she has that she would be willing to move. The two talk about this and the reasons she feels this way. The manager through the conversation identifies what her needs are. The manager carefully evaluates the benefits of

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[6] Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control*. New York: W.H. Freeman.

maintaining the emotion of the employee against the emotion they wish to change. The emotion they wished to change was the emotion causing the stress in the moment. This was associated with workload and the case she was ruminating over. The manager offered through sharing their experiences and through recommendations. The manager demonstrates knowledge about the person, their situation and their needs, and he is confident and comfortable enough to proceed. Knowing this particular examiner, he has a goal in mind to help her alleviate her event. The forensic examiner feels that her manager listened to her. He acknowledged her input as valuable and used it, recognized what was important to her, and understood the situation and the context. The manager used the strategy most suitable for the employee at the time, given the situation and her needs.

5. Practical application of ERSA—Manager's skill development

Ironically, Annie Haver writes in her opinion piece about organizational managers that these skills are necessary for managers so that they do not damage their employees' health or their work performance. Haver writes that managers need to be emotionally intelligent and should make use of all relevant information to assist their employees. Managers need to have confidence that they understand the person and their situation and needs. I agree with Haver. As Haver identifies, managers must have emotional intelligence and confidence. The ERSA model incorporates the ability to regulate another person's emotions. Being good at dealing with emotions as a manager or supervisor means understanding the usability of these skills and abilities within the specific context or environment.

A manager must understand the critical component identified as a factor of forensic examiners' well-being and performance when receiving feedback. Managers and emotional managers are often solicited for their help. Inviting another person to help with manage one's emotion is a conscious decision of the person needing help, and their selection of a person they believe can help them describes emotionship [16]. This support that is sought out by a particular person may be based on past experiences with the emotional manager or a belief that they possess a specialization that can help them [16]. Therefore, it is necessary for managers and supervisors in this scenario to pay attention and identify what the person's needs are and what the person desires their emotional state to be so that they can fulfill them.

Here is more good news! This occurs in some cases intuitively with self-management and in interpersonal management when the emotional manager acts on the person's behalf based on the information provided during their social interaction. By "this," I refer to extrinsic proxying, which is a process involving identifying another person's emotional desires during an interpersonal process and then guiding the person toward those desires. When managers and supervisors provide feedback with this in mind, success is achievable. As Haver identifies, managers must have emotional intelligence and confidence. The ERSA model identifies skills, which when working together, can lead to greater effectiveness (see Fig. 1 description). The emotional regulatory strategies selected for the process is based on it's effectiveness as determined by the extrinsic regulator. The effectiveness of social interaction occurs through the interpersonal process. This is the reason why various regulatory strategies can be used in similar situations. It is the extrinsic regulator and their skills and abilities that are the critical factors to achieving a successful outcome.

The practical application of the ERSA model considers emotional intelligence as an ability when engaging with examiners for developing and obtaining insights from the examiner's perspective. So that the emotional manager can understand the examiner's who is being emotionally managed situation that is causing them stress. This would identify the situational needs of the examiner while factoring in the social context of a particular event or interpersonal process. The manager or supervisor would identify relatable experiences, either from previous experiences similar to the situation. This occurs through

mentalization and their use of their executive brain function. They factor in their understanding of the context in which the stress occurs. They can then consider the emotional management the person needs and their ability to provide the examiner with what they need. This mental analysis is a process phase by which managers and supervisors determine whether they can help the examiner with their situation. They are either confident enough to help the person. They are confident that they understand and know the needs of the person being emotionally managed desires. Or they are not knowledgeable enough. It may be the case that the manager and supervisors lack sufficient knowledge or are not comfortable; therefore, they should seek out others to support the examiner by deferring to them and their other resources or seek out someone more knowledgeable than they are. Any deficiency that a manager has related to the critical skills. Allows for the focusing on the deficient skill so that managers can develop in the area of need.

6. What should organizations do?

Organizations often do not have the right structures for supporting managers, supervisors, and examiners. They need to have models underpinning coaching, as opposed to simply responding to pressure and producing an output-based matrix.[7] This is not to say that organizations should do away with matrixes, but rather that they should employ a model in which the employees are at the center, as they have the know-how and will likely accomplish their tasks based on their skills and experience. Managing others' emotions is highly personal and becomes interpersonal when management decides to engage fully. Management has a significant influence on the individuals in an organization. Managers must cultivate employee performance through coaching and mentoring. They must be able to manage their employees' emotions to maintain their health and for the orderly functioning of the organization. Finally, organizations should identify and adopt a suitable model for developing and training personnel.

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'The Author declare that there is no conflict of interest'.

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