

Enhancing Our Emotional Intelligence



"Never make a permanent decision based on a temporary emotion." -- Anonymous

Why are Emotions so Powerful?

- Emotions provide essential signals about our feelings and our surroundings, aiding in a better understanding of situations and informed decision-making.
- They significantly impact our thoughts, actions, and physical well-being, influencing how we perceive things, interact with others, and even affecting our health.
- Emotions play a crucial role in forming connections with others, fostering empathy, connection, and collaboration, which is essential for building relationships and communities.
- Emotions are closely connected to our memories and experiences, shaping our recollections and influencing future behavior based on those memories.
- Overall, emotions are a substantial force in shaping our lives and the world around us, influencing everything from the decisions we make to the relationships we form.

Understanding Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

Emotional intelligence (EI) or Emotional Quotient (EQ) involves the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use one's own emotions, as well as being able to comprehend and influence the emotions of others. It encompasses a set of skills and attributes that contribute to interpersonal effectiveness, such as empathy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, motivation and social skills.

The term "emotional intelligence" emerged in the 1990s and gained prominence through psychologist Daniel Goleman's book "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ."

Having a high EQ is often associated with better interpersonal relationships, effective communication, and the ability to navigate social situations with empathy and insight. It is a crucial aspect of personal and professional success, as individuals with strong emotional intelligence are generally better equipped to handle stress, build positive relationships, and make sound decisions in various aspects of life.

Can We Improve Our EQ?

Yes we can. Like any skill, it requires practice and feedback. So let's breakdown the key components:

1. Self-awareness: People that are self-aware are able to identify and acknowledge their emotions and how they impact their thoughts, behaviour, and interactions with others. This improves our ability to recognize our strengths, weaknesses, values and motives.

Tips:

- Incorporate journaling into your routine, setting aside time to record daily feelings and concerns.
- Review your journal entries to gain insight into yourself.
- Integrate Mindfulness and meditation practices to observe thoughts and emotions.

2. Motivation: Motivation is that inner force pushing us to achieve our goals. It's the strong drive to succeed, defined by our personal vision of success. The inspiration to accomplish these goals comes from a desire for personal growth, rather than external rewards such as money, fame, status, or recognition.

Tips:

- Celebrate successes regularly for ongoing motivation.
- Reflect on the reasons behind pursuing new endeavors.
- Break down large tasks into smaller, manageable steps.
- Seek support from someone to help maintain focus and accountability.

Distinguishing Traits of Individuals with Low versus High EQ

Emotional intelligence is a set of learnable skills and behaviours. Here are signs of both low and high emotional intelligence (EQ):

Low EQ:

- Often feels misunderstood
- Easily gets upset
- Feels overwhelmed by emotions
- Struggles with assertiveness

High EQ:

- Understands the connection between emotions and behavior
- Stays calm during stressful situations
- Influences others toward common goals
- Handles difficult people with tact and diplomacy

Interested in testing your EQ?

Check out these online tests:

- [Emotional Intelligence by Greater Good Science Center](#)
- [Emotional Intelligence Test by Psychology Today](#)
- [How Emotionally Intelligent Are You? by MindTools](#)
- [University of British Columbia School of Law EQ Test](#)

Resources:

- University of British Columbia School of Law - [Tools to improve emotional intelligence](#)
- Balance App
- LifeSpeak: Mental Health & Resilience
- Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ by Daniel Goleman
- Compassionate Leadership: How to Do Hard Things in a Human Way by Rasmus Hougaard & Jacqueline Carter

3. Empathy: Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings, thoughts, and perspectives of others. It involves recognizing and resonating with someone else's emotions, often leading to a sense of connection and compassion towards them. Empathy fosters effective communication and relationship-building.

Tips:

- Foster curiosity by engaging with others and asking about their feelings. Empathy involves sincere interest in others' perspectives, experiences, and emotions.
- Take time to understand colleagues, neighbors, and those around you.
- Avoid making assumptions or judgments about others' feelings or experiences.
- Acknowledge personal biases and work to overcome them through reflection and action.
- Recognize the existence of privilege and its impact on society.
- Continuously strive to make better choices and improve based on gained knowledge.

4. Emotional regulation: Emotional regulation is the skill of effectively managing and responding to emotional experiences. People naturally employ emotion regulation strategies to handle challenging situations multiple times each day. The majority of individuals utilize a range of these strategies, adapting them to various situations to meet the demands of their environment. It involves recognizing our feelings, understanding how we naturally want to react, and deciding if that's the best way to respond. Each emotion comes with a natural urge or instinct, like wanting to run when scared or speak up when angry, and deciding whether to follow or resist these urges depends on the situation and how it might affect us and others.

Tips: Our thoughts significantly impact how we perceive a situation:

- When upset, analyze underlying thoughts.
- Question reasons for intense reactions and potential outcomes.
- Consider future significance of the situation.
- Reframe challenges as learning opportunities.
- Embrace emotions and open discussion.
- Practice daily deep breathing and self-care activities to reduce emotional vulnerability.

5. Social Skills: Proficiency in navigating social situations, building and maintaining positive relationships, and communicating effectively. This involves skills such as active listening, conflict resolution, and collaboration.

Tips:

- Seek new experiences to broaden your horizons.
- Be mindful of body language and maintain eye contact in unfamiliar situations.
- Practice active listening, valuing the quote by Gandhi: "Speak only if it improves upon silence."
- Explore additional tips on social skills in resources like **Mindful Moments: Active Listening** and **Mindful Moments: The Art of Skillful Communication**.

References:

Kwame, A., Petrucka, P.M. A literature-based study of patient-centered care and communication in nurse-patient interactions: barriers, facilitators, and the way forward. *BMC Nurs* 20, 158 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-021-00684-2> Linehan, M. M. (2014). *DBT (R) skills training manual*, (2nd ed.). Guilford Publications.

Sun, M., Alam, F., & Ma, C. (2023). How Nurses' Person-Organization Fit Influences Organizational Loyalty, Risk Management and Healthcare Policy, 16, 2019–2036. <https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S425025>

Wen, J., Zou, L., Wang, Y., Liu, Y., Li, W., Liu, Z., Ma, Q., Fei, Y., Mao, J., & Fu, W. (2023). The relationship between personal-job fit and physical and mental health among medical staff during the two years after COVID-19 pandemic: Emotional labor and burnout as mediators. *Journal of affective disorders*, 327, 416–424. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2023.02.029>