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How to improve emotional intelligence

You're managing a large group of diverse working styles, and no one seems to be getting along. You're a sales person, but your sales have dropped as of late. Perhaps you find friendships falling by the wayside because everyone is always "busy," or your relationships with family are strained by a lack of understanding. What do all of these situations have in common? You can help fix them by learning how to improve emotional intelligence.

What is emotional intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to engage others' feelings while understanding, managing and expressing your own. It involves empathy, or the ability to feel the same way someone else is feeling. But goes beyond that to involve other skills like conflict resolution and building rapport, as well as the ability to regulate your own emotions.

Unlike intellectual intelligence (IQ), which centers on cognitive skillfulness, developing emotional intelligence (EQ) centers on relational skillfulness. Those who know how to be emotionally intelligent are able to take information, process it and respond with empathy and understanding. They are excellent listeners, proactive rather than reactive and are often good in a crisis – all traits that help them get ahead.

Unlock your leading energy to start
mastering emotional intelligence

Take the quiz

Why is emotional intelligence important?

Emotional intelligence is one of the strongest indicators of success in business and life. Forbes reports that, according to a study of more than 358 managers, the highest-performing managers scored high on emotional intelligence – significantly higher than their lower-performing cohort.

Managers who knew how to be emotionally intelligent also demonstrated competencies including skillful leadership, self-confidence and the ability to win and influence others.

Interestingly enough, the winning managers received high scores from their peers and supervisors, but not from their subordinates. Despite having the appearance of emotional intelligence in the company of peers, the managers' EQ was not apparent to subordinates.

What does this science tell us? As much as we're taught to value intellectual pursuits, it's really your ability to feel feelings, nurture relationships and demonstrate strong character that opens doors in life. Since relationships drive all of business and life, learning how to improve emotional intelligence tops improving your intellectual quotient. It's that important.

How to improve emotional intelligence

Is there a trick to improving emotional intelligence? Learning how to build emotional intelligence is a matter of mindset. You must transform your outlook so you're in **control of your emotions**, thoughts and actions.



1. Identify what you're really feeling

The first key to how to be emotionally intelligent is to recognize your own emotions. Dig deep and ask yourself what you're really feeling. **Practicing mindfulness** is a proven way to gain perspective on your feelings so you're able to manage negative emotions and harness positive ones. As you develop an awareness of your feelings, you're able to pay closer attention to how you're talking to yourself and others.

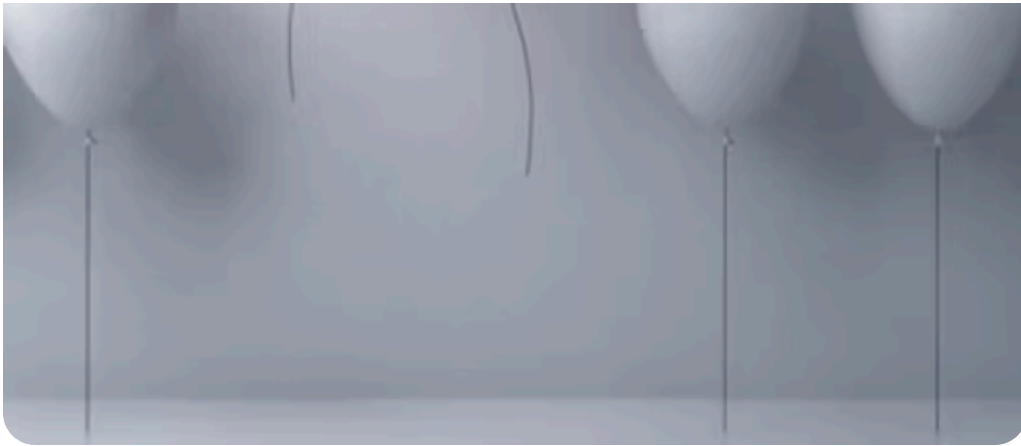
When you're mindful of the words you use, you **develop empathy** for others, which strengthens your relationships and helps you build new ones. As your emotional sharpness increases, you become more resilient to challenges. Rather than feeling overcome by adversity, you're able to learn from it and bounce back.

2. Acknowledge and appreciate your emotions

Improving emotional intelligence doesn't mean denying your feelings. Your emotions are never wrong. They are there to support you, so be honest about how you feel. When you learn to validate your own feelings, you're better able to validate others' emotions, which is a key component of practicing empathy.

Approaching your feelings with an attitude of curiosity lets you interrupt your current emotional trajectory to solve whatever's bothering you. When you're open to your feelings, you're better able to understand your own (and others') thinking and reasoning.





3. Develop a deep belief in yourself

When you truly believe that no matter what happens, you can overcome it, you'll discover an unstoppable confidence – which is key to learning how to improve emotional intelligence. To develop confidence in any situation, think of another time you've successfully handled a similar feeling. If you've done it once, you can do it again. By thinking of previous successes, you're able to navigate uncertain terrain with certainty.

To prepare for facing your feelings in the future, rehearse how you'd like to handle difficult emotions. Use your previous successes as a resource for improving emotional intelligence. By being prepared, you cement your feelings of self-efficacy for handling future challenges.

4. Embrace self-awareness

Learning how to improve emotional intelligence is about getting to know yourself. Embracing your feelings is your starting-off point for a lifelong process of self-discovery. Emotional mastery entails a self-awareness where you not only recognize your emotions but also realize how they impact your behaviors. As you become more self-aware, you're more self-accepting and become more empathetic toward others.

As you use self-awareness to discover how to build emotional intelligence, you become your own inner manager. Instead of reacting to situations without understanding why, you're able to take stock of what's driving you. Instead of being impulsive, you're able to slow down your reactions and make strategic choices. What feelings are getting the best of you, and how can you choose a healthier response?



5. Learn emotional management techniques

Psychology Today reports on the value of emotional intelligence in navigating life and relationships. To really understand how to improve emotional intelligence, experts recommend taking the reins on your own feelings. Improving emotional intelligence means staying cool under stress instead of being reactive. To stay relaxed in a crisis, remember the holistic nature of your peak state. To keep calm, stay attentive to your body in the present moment.

Staying aware of your mind-body connection helps you overcome stress and stay connected to others. If, after addressing your stress, you still need to release difficult emotions like anger, fear or sadness, give yourself permission to take a break. As you develop emotional skillfulness, you'll become better able to manage yourself and relate to others.

6. Attune to others' feelings

Improving emotional intelligence transforms your relationships. Being attuned to your own feelings makes you more aware of other people's emotions, which enhances your capacity for healthy relationships. You're able to understand others' concerns, pick up on emotional cues and interact comfortably with others. When you're able to take care of your own emotional needs, you're more emotionally available – as a partner, friend, coworker and family member.

To really attune to others' feelings, practice **deep listening**. Most people treat listening as waiting to respond. While the other person is talking, they're formulating their own argument or relating the conversation to themselves. That's not really listening. Deep listening involves acknowledging the other person's opinion and seeking to understand it, rather than just respond with your own.



7. Assert yourself

When we talk about being assertive, we're not talking about being aggressive or domineering. Assertive communication is actually the healthiest and most effective **communication style**. It doesn't mean getting in people's faces – that's an *aggressive* communication style. Assertive communication means stating your opinion or emotions in a strong, confident way, while also respecting the opinions of others.

Asserting yourself is part of learning how to improve emotional intelligence, since it requires communicating your perspective, wants and needs directly while still respecting others. As you become attuned to your own emotional terrain, you're able to assert yourself in a way that strengthens and deepens your relationships.

8. Get excited and take action

Tony says that “A real decision is measured by the fact that you've taken a new action.” In order to really master how to improve emotional intelligence, you need to get out there and practice. Set a new goal or milestone and track your progress. **Get out of your comfort zone**. Have more meaningful conversations with people in your life. Be more present.

Consider **finding a mentor**, joining a mastermind group or using **coaching** to help develop your emotional intelligence. Purposely put yourself in situations where emotional intelligence is required. When you put your emotional mastery to work by staying responsive to others, you'll be rewarded in your personal and professional relationships

Ready to boost your emotional intelligence?

Become a master of emotional intelligence by discovering your Driving Force.