

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

CRASH COURSE



PETER WATSON
IMPACTFACILITATION.COM.AU

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What is Emotional Intelligence?

There's been a recent explosion in literature on emotional intelligence (EQ), replacing the traditional idea that success is determined by our IQ measurement. Instead, emotional intelligence has been shown to play a crucial role in your success at work.

Salovey and Mayer define emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action." [1]. What this means is that people with a high EQ manage their emotions, instead of letting their emotions manage them.

A wrong view of EQ

Before we dig into the elements that make up this concept, let's consider what emotional intelligence isn't. There are two extremes we need to avoid:

- Ignoring and suppressing emotions in the quest for rationality and objectivity
- Making emotions the main determiner of our decisions, and trying to please everyone

Neither of these descriptions match up with someone who is emotionally intelligent. In the first case, you're neglecting the basic truth that emotions do impact us: "denying emotions doesn't make them go away. It just makes them harder to deal with" [2]. Rationality is not about rejecting emotions, but rather seeking to "exercise self-control over how we express them, and enlist them." [3]

We make the second mistake when we think that we must put emotions at the forefront of our decisions. The goal becomes to avoid all negative emotions, and make sure nobody is disappointed. This is naïve. Part of leadership is making difficult decisions—you'll never be profitable if you try to perfectly satisfy everyone's interests. Instead, you can lead people through hard decisions by understanding their emotions, demonstrating you care, and managing your own emotions during the process.

Two aspects of emotional intelligence

There are two main steps to handling emotions well: perceiving an emotion, then managing it. This applies both to your own emotions and those in other people.

The first step may seem easy and obvious. But most of us are actually terrible at it! Fisher and Brown write:

"We are often unaware of feelings. Insecurity, frustration, fear, or anger can take hold and begin to affect our actions without our realizing what is happening. Someone else may notice that my neck muscles have tightened, my face has begun to flush, or an edge has crept into my voice long before I recognize anger in myself." [4]

It takes practice and self-awareness to get good at identifying your emotions. We'll cover how to grow this skill in more detail in chapter 3.

Managing your emotions is not just about getting rid of negative feelings. Lisa Feldman Barrett, author of *How Emotions are Made*, says that emotional intelligence involves “getting your brain to construct the most useful instance of the most useful emotion concept in a given situation” [5]. For example, you don’t want to eliminate anger—there are situations where feeling and displaying anger is perfectly appropriate, and even helpful or necessary! But there are plenty of other situations where anger will hinder and harm your relationships.

So once you’ve developed the skill of perceiving emotions in yourself and others, you’re in a good position to be able to manage those emotions.

Five components of emotional intelligence

Daniel Goleman, who popularised the concept of emotional intelligence, describes the five components which make up your EQ: [6]

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social skill

You may notice that these aspects follow the pattern we identified earlier. The first three components are internally focused, about dealing with your own emotional life. The last two involve the emotions of other people.

Now you have a big-picture view of emotional intelligence. Later in this ebook we’ll expand more on how to recognise and use these five components, and give practical steps to improving your EQ.

References

[1] P Salovey & JD Mayer, ‘Emotional intelligence’. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, [online] vol. 9, 1990, p. 189. Available at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG> [Accessed 4 May 2018].

[2] R Fisher & S Brown, *Getting Together: Building relationships as we negotiate*, Penguin Books, London, 1988, p. 54.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[5] L Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, Pan Books, London, 2018, p. 179.

[6] D Goleman, ‘What Makes a Leader?’, in *On Leadership (Harvard Business Review)*, Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, Boston, 2011, p. 3.

Why Should Leaders Care about Emotional Intelligence?

In the last chapter, we defined emotional intelligence (EQ) as the ability to manage your emotions, as well as those of other people. We recognised that you could only skilfully handle your emotions once you've learned to identify them.

But why does this matter? As a leader you've got a hundred things to be thinking about at any one time—why should you worry about managing your and others' emotions? What's the point of investing in your EQ?

These questions are important to ask, and easy to answer. Let's consider five reasons why leaders need to be paying attention to their emotional intelligence.

Emotions are already affecting your work

Even if you decide EQ is a waste of time, you're going to experience emotions anyway. And if you have emotions, they are affecting your work performance and the way you interact with peers, bosses, and direct reports. Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves write:

"Since our brains are wired to make us emotional creatures, your first reaction to an event is always going to be emotional. You have no control over this part of the process. You do control the thoughts that follow an emotion, and you have a great deal of say in how you react to an emotion—as long as you are aware of it." [1]

It helps your employees be more effective

Emotions are "the root of motivation" [2]. By harnessing your own emotions you can unlock new levels of productivity—and the same goes for your team.

Consider an employee who has been passed up for a promotion which you gave to someone else. They may resent the person who got the promotion, perhaps becoming difficult to work with. They also take their feelings out on you, turning in inadequate work or giving you the cold shoulder.

You could ignore this behaviour, which will probably make them feel more marginalised. You could discipline them for their bad behaviour—which could backfire by causing further problems down the track. An emotionally intelligent leader may take a different approach.

They'll recognise the employee is upset (whether by their words, actions or body language). They will be proactive: setting a meeting with the employee to talk about it, and preparing by thinking through their own emotions about the situation. They'll listen carefully to the worker, hearing and affirming their difficulties; and kindly explain the decision they made in selecting who to promote.

They can affirm the good work this person has done in the past without endorsing current behaviour. Their commitment to the employee's success could be demonstrated by setting up future meetings to discuss other avenues of career progression.

Others will see you as a better leader

When you think about leaders you've worked under in the past, you'll probably notice that elements of emotional intelligence set the bad apart from the good. People love working under managers who will listen, care, and take their emotions into account.

The opposite is an authoritarian leader who has no idea about how his bad moods impact on everyone else, and simply wants to squeeze as much work as he can out of his employees at the expense of their wellbeing.

Other people notice emotional intelligence, even if they can't put a label on it. Empathy is a particularly obvious component of emotional intelligence, as demonstrated in the situation I described in the last point. As long as you pair your emotional intelligence with competence (rather than wimpiness), you'll be viewed far more positively than if you avoid dealing with emotions.

You'll be more capable and flexible

In an article for Harvard Business Review, Daniel Goleman describes six different leadership styles. Individual leaders don't have a single set style—rather, we tend to switch between them: [3]

- Coercive
- Authoritative
- Affiliative
- Democratic
- Pacesetting
- Coaching

The best leaders are highly skilled at knowing when to use these different styles depending on the circumstances, and have the flexibility to effectively switch between them. Emotional intelligence skills are crucial to this ability.

You can get better results in negotiations

All leaders negotiate, whether internally (negotiating pay and benefits, or role scope) or externally (haggling with suppliers, drawing up contracts for customers). Emotions play a key part in determining how successful you are at deal-making.

One reason for this is that our emotions escalate with the pressure of negotiations. According to the authors of *Getting Together*, "we rarely think clearly when our emotions are running high...The more intense our emotions, the more likely they are to overwhelm our reason." [4]

Your negotiation opponent will also be experiencing their own emotions, and reacting to yours (whether real or perceived). Therefore harnessing your skills in emotional intelligence will make you better at a variety of business skills, including negotiation and problem-solving.

We've seen why leaders should care about their EQ: it's an irreplaceable skill in the business world. In the final two chapters of this book, we'll cover the practical steps you can take to improve your emotional intelligence.

References

[1] T Bradberry & J Greaves, *Leadership 2.0*, TalentSmart, California, 2012, p. 131.

[2] R Fisher & S Brown, *Getting Together: Building relationships as we negotiate*, Penguin Books, London, 1988, p. 46.

[3] D Goleman, 'Leadership That Gets Results, in *On Managing People (Harvard Business Review)*, Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, Boston, 2011, p. 2.

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How Can You Improve Your Emotional Intelligence?

Part 1: Manage Your Own Emotions

We've previously looked at what emotional intelligence is and why leaders should care about it. At this point you may be worried if you don't think you've got a high EQ. The good news is that anybody can learn to improve their emotional intelligence. It's not like IQ, which is largely set from your childhood [1].

Like any skill, this will take hard work: "Growing your emotional intelligence takes practice and commitment. But the payoffs are well worth the investment" [2].

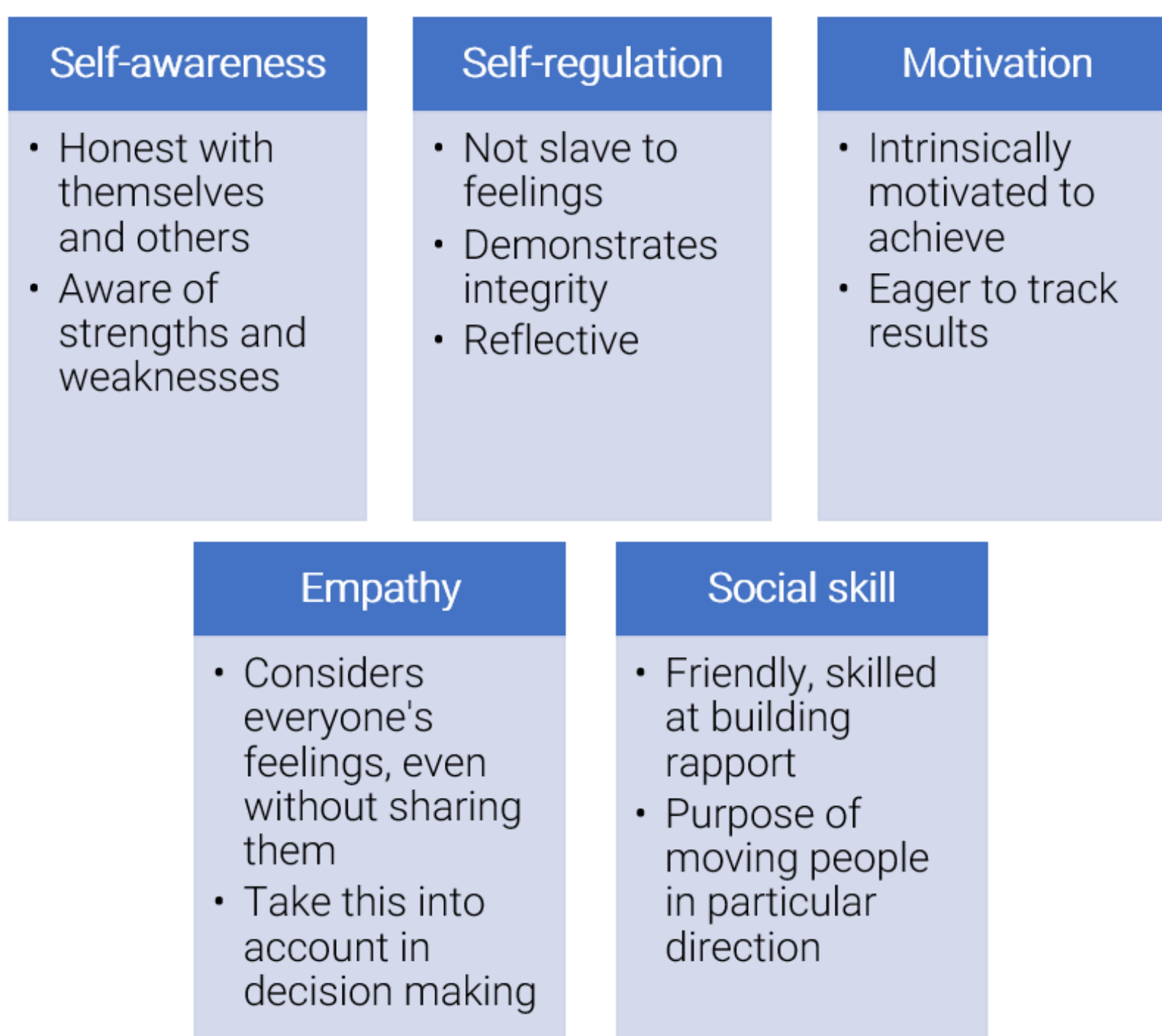
Get accountability

The reason it takes time to improve is that you need to rewire your brain to form new habits. By continually deciding to act in new ways in response to emotions, you'll eventually train your brain to respond this way automatically [3].

It can be helpful to get a coach or mentor who can help you through this process. Of course, it's best to ask someone who has strong emotional intelligence skills. First get feedback on which specific skills you need to improve, then meet to discuss your progress and get regular accountability.

Assessing your own EQ

As we explored in the first chapter, Daniel Goleman has explained emotional intelligence as consisting of five components. This diagram will help you to understand what each of these components looks like: [4]



Which of these components are you weakest in? Which are you strongest in? Understanding your own merits and shortcomings will help you to make more targeted improvements.

Label your emotions

Improve your self-awareness by getting practice labelling your emotions. Throughout the day, pause and ask yourself what you're feeling and why. If you take brief notes, you'll be able to notice patterns in your thoughts. These may be helpful to talk through with your coach.

Say you often find yourself snapping at your co-workers on a Thursday afternoon. This could simply be because you're getting tired towards the end of the week. But after tracking your emotions for a few weeks, you may realise that you get frustrated after the weekly staff meeting because you never feel like your views are heard. Recognising this is a powerful first step, and you could make a plan for how to overcome this frustration in the future.

Don't get overwhelmed

A key part of emotional intelligence is not getting overwhelmed by emotions. This can be difficult in highly charged situations—for instance, during negotiations and other hard conversations. In these cases it's important to take time out to relieve the pressure. How can you do this? [5]

- *Take a break*: This is the best thing to do if you can manage it. Get out of the immediate situation and clear your head.
- *Count to ten*: If you can't actually get a break, pause and count to ten before replying. One tactic in a meeting is to acknowledge what the other person has said, and do something like pour a glass of water before responding.
- *Consult*: Sometimes you're too close to a situation to see it clearly. Getting another point of view will help you moderate your emotions (or confirm that they're appropriate for the situation).

Recognising and managing your own emotions is the crucial first step to emotional intelligence. In the next chapter, we'll consider how to build on this foundation by managing the emotions of other people.

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[1] D Goleman, 'Leadership That Gets Results, in *On Managing People (Harvard Business Review)*, Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, Boston, 2011, p. 24.

[2] Ibid.

[3] T Bradberry & J Greaves, *Leadership 2.0*, TalentSmart, California, 2012, p. 131.

[4] Summarised from D Goleman, 'What Makes a Leader?', in *On Leadership (Harvard Business Review)*, Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, Boston, 2011, pp. 1-21.

[5] R Fisher & S Brown, *Getting Together: Building relationships as we negotiate*, Penguin Books, London, 1988, pp. 53-54.

How Can You Improve Your Emotional Intelligence?

Part 2: Manage Others' Emotions

Of course you can't actually control other people's emotions. But you can learn to understand, influence and harness them better. We previously covered how to manage your own emotions, and in this final chapter we'll build our emotional intelligence to better understand and lead other people.

Why it's so hard

Some emotions are obvious—like when your employee blows up in anger in the middle of a staff meeting. You may think you can figure someone out just by watching their actions. But even in this case there could be more to it. Perhaps that person is frustrated by another team member who is constantly make their job difficult. Or they could be scared of looking incompetent in light of impending job cuts. There are a million possibilities.

It's harder to understand and manage other people's emotions, because we can't make them be honest with us. Ideally, you'll have a strong relationship with your employees so they feel safe enough to be upfront, but you'll also have to handle the emotions of people you don't know very well. You'll need to rely on asking good questions, listening well, and noticing nonverbal cues.

Active listening

The authors of *Leadership 2.0* write: "Your authority makes it hard for people to say what's really on their minds. No matter how good a relationship you have with your subordinates, you are kidding yourself if you think they are as open with you as they are with their peers. So, you must become adept at understanding unspoken messages" [1].

This is why becoming skilled at active listening is so crucial. You can't manage people's emotions unless you know what they are. When you're meant to be listening, it's easy to be distracted thinking about what you'll say next. Instead, focus your attention on what the other person is actually saying. Here are a few tips: [2]

- Listen more than you talk
- Don't interrupt
- Ask clarifying questions
- Rephrase what they're saying to make sure you understand correctly
- Pay attention to their body language
- Maintain appropriate eye contact, rather than looking at your phone or around the room

It's particularly important to pay attention to body language. Don't get so fixated on listening to their words that you miss the more subtle cues. Your employee may say they're fine, but their body language will reveal their anger or fear.

The difficulty is that listening and observing body language still doesn't enable you to definitively know what people are feeling. It's good to ask people questions to make sure you're on the right track.

For example, use reflection questions: “It looks like you’re upset. Has something happened?” This will help you know if you’ve interpreted a situation the wrong way. People will appreciate that you’re taking the time to make sure you understand, instead of making assumptions.

Having tough conversations

Another sign of emotional intelligence is being willing to have tough conversations. If you’re not afraid of emotions, you won’t shy away from discussing things that may be uncomfortable. You’re equipped to handle any frustration, anger or embarrassment that may surface.

So one of the best things you can do to build your emotional intelligence is to practice having difficult conversations. When there’s a problem with or among your employees, address it quickly and calmly. People will respect you for being willing to face emotions head-on.

Remember during the conversation to listen carefully to the other person. The more you do this, the better you’ll get at navigating emotions. This skill will help you in many management situations, including negotiations.

Developing the skills of emotional intelligence is by no means quick or easy. Daniel Goleman provides some encouragement: “building one’s emotional intelligence cannot—will not—happen without sincere desire and concerted effort...But it can be done.” [3]

Keep it at, and you’ll reap the benefits for the rest of your life.

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[1] T Bradberry & J Greaves, *Leadership 2.0*, TalentSmart, California, 2012, p. 73.

[2] Summarised from *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

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About the Author



I'm Peter Watson, and my passion is to help leaders regain their joy so they can build successful teams and businesses.

I've been involved in teams for decades, as a manager, board member, and pastor. I was the senior leader of non-profit organisations for 18 years, and during that time brought significant growth. My particular focus was on team development, and I want to share with you what I learned over those years.

I train individuals, groups, and organisations in a variety of topics, including team development, negotiation, emotional intelligence, and productivity.

CONTACT ME

I'd love to hear your thoughts on this resource. Feel free to get in touch with me if you have any feedback or questions.



impactfacilitation.com.au



peter.watson@impactfacilitation.com.au



[linkedin.com/in/peterwatson01](https://www.linkedin.com/in/peterwatson01)



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