

## Emotional Intelligence: What Is It, Is It Important and Can It Be Developed?

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If you have wondered what Emotional Intelligence is and if it is an important trait to have, look no further.

### What is Emotional Intelligence?

The term Emotional Intelligence was first introduced in 1990 by Psychologist Peter Salovey and John Mayer. The simple definition for Emotional Intelligence (also called Emotional Quotient, EQ) is the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as to identify with and be empathic towards other's emotions. It includes the ability to name emotions correctly and to use emotional information to help guide thinking, behavior and the influence one might have on others (Ackerman, 2019)<sup>1</sup>.



Thinking of this definition, it's easy to see how important Emotional Intelligence can be in our daily lives. Emotional Intelligence is what us *helps facilitate deep conversations with others, enhance relationships and help deal and relate with children*. An emotionally intelligent person is able to stay in the moment when dealing with emotion as opposed to focusing on the past or towards the future.

### Components of Emotional Intelligence

According to the American psychologist Daniel Goleman, there are five key components to Emotional Intelligence.

1. **Self-awareness:** Knowing how you feel and how your emotions and actions can affect others. It is being aware of your strengths and weaknesses and behaving with humility. Knowing what you are good at and being open to working on what you might not be good at.
2. **Self-regulation:** Maintaining control. Not judging or stereotyping others. Not making decisions from a place of reaction and holding yourself accountable.
3. **Motivation:** Working towards your goals and being optimistic. Being curious and open-minded to explore other ways of thinking/being.
4. **Empathy:** Putting yourself in another person's position. Reading and understanding body language and address the feelings and being.
5. **Social skills:** Being good at communication. Managing conflict and affirming others. Being able to work as a team.

### How important is emotional intelligence?

Firstly, it is important to distinguish the difference between Emotional Intelligence and intellectual quotient (IQ). A person's IQ score is directly related to how well they can understand information and apply it to different situations. It is measured by standardized testing designed specifically to measure cognitive abilities. There are no tests to measure Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Intelligence is more about how a person uses their emotions to think and enhance their reasoning, therefore, affecting how they process information and interact with others. Individuals with high Emotional Intelligence are able

to manage their emotions and use them to facilitate their thinking and respond by understanding the emotions of others. Many experts believe Emotional Intelligence may be more important than IQ and can be a better predictor of success, quality relationships and overall happiness (Scuderi, 2018)<sup>2</sup>. According to Scuderi<sup>3</sup>, Emotional Intelligence is responsible for 58% of a person's job responsibilities and 90% of top performers and people with higher annual income have a high Emotional Intelligence. It is the "gateway to a balanced life" and is essential for our physical and emotional well being, healthy relationships, conflict resolution and also contributes to a person's success.

Emotional Intelligence is an important trait to have if you are in any type of leadership role. The higher the EI, the better the leader is able to motivate others and relate in a more positive manner than those who don't have a high Emotional Intelligence. By recognizing and meeting the needs of others, an emotionally intelligent leader encourages a higher performance and workplace satisfaction (Scuderi)<sup>4</sup>.

### Can emotional intelligence be developed?

The simple answer is yes. While IQ is something we tend to be born with, Emotional Intelligence is something that can be improved. Although it starts in childhood with how we are raised and as adults there are steps you can take to become emotionally smarter. According to Justin Bariso<sup>5</sup>, there are seven ways to improve Emotional Intelligence.

- Reflect on your emotions. The more aware you are of your emotions and your reactions, the more in control you can be.
- Ask for perspective. Get input from others to understand how you come across.
- Observe. Pay attention to your emotions and how you are coming across.
- Pause. Stop and think before you act and speak.
- Become more empathic by understanding the "why" behind a person's feelings or emotions.
- Choose to learn from criticism. It is inevitable. When you choose to learn from it rather than become defensive, you can grow.
- Practice, practice, practice. It doesn't happen overnight, but it can happen with effort, patience and practice.

It is never too late to learn anything. It may be a lifelong process, but if the payoff is to become a better employee, leader, spouse or friend, and an all-around better person, then it's worth it!

### We Can Help

As part of your VITAL WorkLife Employee Assistance Program, you can work with a counselor to develop your Emotional Intelligence skills and knowledge, for a situation at work or at home. Your Member Site also has a number of resources to help you develop your Emotional Intelligence. Contact us at **800.383.1908** to access your resources today!

Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Ackerman, C., *What is Emotional Intelligence?* Nov. 14, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Scudeti, R., *What is Emotional Intelligence and Why It is Important.* Sept. 11, 2018

<sup>3</sup> Scudeti, R., *What is Emotional Intelligence and Why It is Important.* Sept. 11, 2018

<sup>4</sup> Scudeti, R., *What is Emotional Intelligence and Why It is Important.* Sept. 11, 2018

<sup>5</sup> Bariso, J., *EQ, Applied: A Real-World Approach to Emotional Intelligence.* May 17, 2018.

*Emotional Intelligence in Leadership, Mind Tools*

**Additional Reading:** Houston, E., *The Importance of Emotional Intelligence.* June 2, 2019