
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



An Introduction

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Introduction to Emotional Intelligence

In general terms, Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate emotions – your own and those of other people.

Emotional Intelligence is a relatively new area of study. Its earliest roots can be traced back to Darwin's work on the importance of emotional expression for survival. In the 1900s, the issue of intelligence was discussed mainly in terms of cognitive aspects such as memory and problem-solving, although several influential researchers had begun to recognize the importance of non-cognitive aspects.

In 1920, E. L. Thorndike used the term “social intelligence” to describe the skill of understanding and managing other people.

The term "Emotional Intelligence" is usually attributed to Wayne Payne's 1985 doctoral thesis, *A Study of Emotion: Developing Emotional Intelligence*, but mainstream media interest was really only piqued in 1995 after a *Time* magazine article on Daniel Goleman's bestseller, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*.

Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer have been the leading researchers on emotional intelligence since those days, and they define emotional intelligence as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions”.

Currently there are several different models proposed for the definition of EI, and researchers still disagree how the term should be used. Some think emotional intelligence can be learned and then strengthened, while others claim it is something you are born with. This field of study is growing so fast that researchers are constantly amending even their own definitions.

Three Main Definitions

- Ability EI models
- Mixed models of EI
- Trait EI model

Ability EI models – This is "the ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth".

1. Perceiving emotions is the ability to spot and decipher emotions in faces, pictures, voices, and cultural artifacts. This represents a basic aspect of emotional intelligence, as it creates the opportunity for all other processing of emotional information to take place.
2. Using emotions is the ability to apply emotions to cognitive activities such as thinking and problem-solving. This allows the emotionally intelligent person to use their moods to better manage their lives.
3. Understanding emotions is how we interpret the language of emotion and thus are able to better manage complicated emotional relationships.
4. Managing emotions is the way we regulate our own emotions and those of other people so that we achieve optimum results.

Mixed models of EI – This is the model introduced by Daniel Goleman that defines EI as a wide range of competencies and skills that drive leadership performance. There are four main tenets to this:

1. Self-awareness is the ability to understand your emotions, recognize their impact, and use them to inform decisions.
2. Self-management involves controlling your emotions and impulses and adapting to circumstances.

3. Social awareness is the ability to sense, understand, and react to the emotions of others within social situations.
4. Relationship management is the ability to inspire, influence, and connect with others, and to manage conflict.

Trait EI model – Trait EI is "a constellation of emotion-related self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality". Trait EI refers to an individual's own perceptions of their emotional abilities, as opposed to the ability-based model which refers to actual abilities. However, assessing actual abilities has proven highly resistant to scientific measurement, so the reality is that there may actually be little to choose between them.

The Emotional Brain

The emotional brain (EB) is that part of the human brain that generates emotions. The EB operates subconsciously, processing the same information that enters the conscious thinking brain (TB). Because the EB responds more quickly, we can find ourselves acting before we have applied any logic to our actions. That is left to the TB once the action has passed, and it may have no answer to give because gut reactions, despite their misnomer, originate in the emotional brain.

In the last few years there has been an explosion of interest in the emotional functioning of the brain, and the areas responsible for the brain's emotional responses have been termed the limbic system. The very term indicates that study of this sort remains on the periphery of accepted science, since "limbic" comes from the word "limbus", which is Latin for "edge". However, limbic also describes where these areas are believed to reside.

The term "limbic system" was first used in 1952 to describe a set of functionally-related structures in the brain that border the midline and inner surface of each cerebral hemisphere. These structures were also called the "visceral brain", as they were believed to be ancient parts of the brain inherited from lower mammals that primitive man used to mediate his behavior. Although this link with other species is now rejected, the concept of the limbic system controversially survives.

Although there is no agreement over exactly which structures make up the limbic system, most researchers consider it to be various parts of the cerebral cortex (the layer of the brain often referred to as "gray matter" – the outer portion of the cerebrum) that are linked to a central core of structures lying below the cerebral cortex. These various sub-cortical areas then extend down through the core of the brain to the upper part of the brain stem.

There is also disagreement over what function the limbic system has. Early notions relating it to emotion and motivation have been expanded to include the processing of sensory and cognitive information, learning and memory, sexual function as it relates to a reward system serving emotional reactions,

and motor functions. It is also suggested that the limbic system is concerned with mentally integrating all functions that relate to our personal “experience” – what makes us who we are.

Most modern brain research focuses on sensory and cognitive functions, because these processes are more amenable to objective study in the laboratory. It is clear, however, that the brain is far more than this. The goals, hopes, desires and fears that we have all originate in the brain, and our ability to express emotions is a fundamental form of behavior. It is equally clear that our “emotional brain” influences the decisions made by our “thinking brain”, and vice versa.

With this in mind, neuroscience is taking an avid interest in the emotional brain. Studies cover all areas, including genes and their molecular products, cellular physiological properties of neurons in dishes as well as in living brains, pharmacology of synaptic transmission, behavioral processes, computer simulations of brain function, and imaging of normal subjects alongside neurological and psychiatric patients.

It is now known that the amygdalae – part of the limbic system and considered to be the emotional center of our brain – perform a primary role in the processing and memory of emotional reactions. The amygdalae are almond-shaped groups of nuclei located deep within the medial temporal lobes of the brain in complex vertebrates, including humans.

Why do we Act Emotionally?

Neuroscientists have recently discovered that much of what we see and hear goes directly to the amygdala without passing through the neocortex where logic and rational decision-making occurs. This means that we often feel and act before we think.

One of the easiest ways to study responses within the amygdalae is with Pavlovian fear conditioning. Research indicates that sensory stimuli during

fear conditioning reach the central nuclei of the amygdalae where they form associations with memories of the stimuli.

The more often the synapses are affected, the quicker they will trigger a response, such as freezing (immobility), tachycardia (rapid heartbeat), increased respiration, and stress-hormone release.

It is only through exercising emotional intelligence that we are able to manage these responses more rationally, although we should not forget that some of our emotional responses – such as our fear response – happen for very good reason, and ignoring or damping them too quickly could lead to our succumbing to a dangerous situation.

The important point is to differentiate between “acting” emotionally, and “reacting” emotionally. If we take the obvious connotation of the word “acting”, then this implies that our *acting* emotional is quite within our power to control because it is simply that: an act. Although the stimulus may have been very real, and the *reaction* to it genuine enough, our *continued* display of emotion is now being falsely perpetuated since the thinking brain has had ample opportunity to analyze the situation and factor in some sense of calm. Being able to rationalize our emotional reactions and not have them create an unnecessary ongoing drama is the essence of emotional intelligence.

The simple advice often offered to individuals who are prone to flying off the handle is to take a deep breath before reacting. This makes perfect sense when you consider how our emotional responses can fire up before our rationale has had a chance to moderate the situation.

What Is Emotional Hijacking?

Emotional hijacking is when your emotional brain takes control, subverting your rational thinking responses. The term first appeared in Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*.

Extremes of emotion can trigger emotional hijacking, such as a panic attack in which your emotional response actually bypasses your thinking brain and produces a super-quick instinctive response. Whilst this is happening, it is very difficult, even impossible, to think straight because the part of the brain you think with is inhibited.

These are your amygdalae at work, behaving in their primitive way to protect you. They are designed to ensure your survival, rather than for problem-solving in complex situations. People who experience panic attacks are well aware they are not acting rationally, and this causes further upset, but there is little to be done to forestall a panic attack because it's not the rational part of the brain that deals with this emotional response.

Emotional hijacking happens to people every day to varying degrees, and it does not have to manifest itself so obviously as a panic attack or a loss of temper. Our society and the frantic way in which so many of us live our lives mean we are often “living on our nerves”, and can therefore be teetering on the edge of being emotionally hijacked for hours at a time, especially when we are in stressful or potentially aggravating situations that have gone awry in the past. In this situation, our emotional synapses can be firing in preparation for a major attack.

In the workplace, emotional hijacking can cause all sorts of problems. Relationships can be damaged and productivity halted. Confidence in one's own abilities can be undermined, or in that of our working colleagues.

You can tell when you are experiencing an emotional hijacking because you start to feel drained, frustrated, irritated, angry, sad, fearful, or any emotion that really has no place within a professional working environment. It can

happen quite subtly, even as you are talking to someone who appears not to be listening.

That mounting sense of frustration that you feel means you are already being hijacked by your emotions. It may never lead to an emotional outburst as such, but if you are feeling any emotion where you know you shouldn't be, you've been hijacked.

What is especially telling is how long it subsequently takes you to return to a normal state of mind where your professional activities can carry on unimpeded. As long as your mind keeps returning to the cause of your upset, you have still not been fully released from the emotion.

One of the best ways of being able to reclaim your equilibrium is to be aware of what is happening. The best way to ward off a hijack in the first place is to spot potential triggers the very second they appear. If a colleague has a habit of winding you up to the point that you feel emotionally hijacked, you have to learn to condition your response back down. Replacing anger with humor can help.

The following three simple steps can help fend off emotional hijacking in the workplace:

Manage yourself – Take a few deep breaths and face your anxiety, anger, frustration, or whatever emotion you are feeling. This provides the opportunity to practice your emotional response ability. Think about how exactly you would prefer the situation to progress, and make sure you keep that as a focus. Try also to understand where your colleague is coming from, so that you can anticipate the worst they can throw at you, and also try to understand their point of view so that you can establish some common ground.

Manage your team – Make sure you ask for clarification about any matter you have to deal with. Lack of understanding, or being confused, can cause immense frustrations. Make sure all parties know how you want to be involved and that you want your input to be valued. Don't be shy about asking

questions and challenging ideas and methods you object to. This may cause a little friction initially, but is preferable to your being emotionally hijacked by regret once the moment has passed. Regret or shame at not taking appropriate action can lead to an emotional hijacking that can last for days, and that may even negatively color the way you view yourself on an ongoing basis. Some people spend their entire lives emotionally hijacked.

Enlist support – If you really feel that you are making every effort but are being consistently undermined, take it up with your superiors. Bring everything out into the open. Remember that, by their very nature, hijackings are sudden events. Scheduling time when the problem can be addressed can help to remove the surprise element from the situation. You are taking control.

How To Strengthen Your EI & Increase Your IQ

When dealing with this issue, we have to understand that a person's IQ can be severely undermined by an inability to manage their emotions properly. In other words, those lacking in emotional intelligence may also find that their overall intelligence suffers.

In traditional terms, this is the balancing of the head and the heart. More accurately, since we know that our emotional intelligence also resides in the head, this is about creating a better relationship between the emotional brain and the thinking brain.

As the emotional brain can hijack our thinking processes, it does not take a great leap to realize that our intelligence can be adversely affected by our emotions. How effective can you be if you are unable to think clearly because you are gripped by a certain emotion and cannot apply rationale to a subject? This is the bottom line.

In reality, there will be individuals who are supremely intelligent, with the highest of IQs, but who lead chaotic and unfulfilled lives purely because they are unable to set aside their emotional reactions. In some cases, of course, we will be talking about emotional hijacking that has led to mental problems. These are the archetypal “mad professor” types whose IQs are off the chart but are wound so tight, and so driven by their emotions, that they cannot free their true potential.

We may also be able to interchange “emotional intelligence” with “common sense”. IQ and common sense are not the same thing. An intelligent person without common sense can quickly reduce their ability to problem-solve because they do not have the wherewithal to see situations for what they really are.

In this respect, you could also list “streetwise” as synonymous with emotional intelligence, as this can provide the ability to react more rationally to more extreme situations that might provoke an emotional hijacking in someone less “street”.

IQ may not even be the correct term to use when speaking about the possibility of enhancing thinking intelligence by improving emotional intelligence.

A person's IQ is a measurement at one point in time that is established by means of testing. It does not take into account the vagaries that exist in the real world that may cause that same high IQ individual to fail when circumstances prove too fractious.

The real improvement that can result from improved emotional intelligence is better real-world problem-solving skills, because emotions will not cloud the issue. Strengthening your emotional intelligence is not, therefore, about increasing IQ, but rather about allowing your existing IQ to shine through under more and more testing circumstances.

It is all about controlling the initial emotional response to a given stimulus that might render the highest IQ effectively worthless. It is about applying intellectual rationale to the risk factors for emotional overreactions *before* they occur.

Emotional intelligence – such as self-managing intense feelings, developing empathy, listening to others without fear, judgment or contempt can often determine our destiny far more so than our IQ.

We should also be cognizant of the profound effects our emotional stability can have on the emotional health of other people. Learning not to react aggressively towards another person benefits both you and the other person. They learn by default that emotions can be controlled, and may be inspired to improve their own emotional responses as a result.

Strategies for Self-Awareness

How to Manage Yourself Better

According to the Greek writer Pausanias, “Know thyself” was inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. This saying has also been attributed to at least six ancient Greek sages, including Socrates.

There is no way to manage yourself better unless you know what makes you tick. Your mental and emotional health depend entirely on your ability to understand why you behave the way you do, and your power to effect the changes necessary if your behavior leaves something to be desired.

Achieving self-awareness involves exploring our individual personalities, values, beliefs, natural inclinations, and tendencies. When we have a better understanding of ourselves, we are empowered to make changes and to build on our strengths. Self-awareness is the first step to goal-setting, because how can you set goals for yourself if you don’t know who you are? Knowing what you want is impossible without knowing who you are. Craving fame and fortune without assessing if you truly have the personality to cope with all its pressures is a thoroughly rocky road, and evidence would suggest it is a road much-travelled.

Self awareness can cover a lot of ground, but here are a few areas to consider:

Preferred learning styles – There are known to be various styles of learning that suit certain individuals better than others. Learning in the wrong style can hinder your accomplishments and create the impression, to yourself and others, that you are not intelligent. The three main learning styles are auditory, visual and kinesthetic.

Auditory learners better process information when they listen to it; visual learners need to see the information in front of them for it to properly sink in; and kinesthetic learners are truly at their best when they are physically involved in the learning process, actually hands-on feeling their way through it.

There are many other sub-types of learning styles beside these, and unless you know which suits you best, your progress may be hampered. It does not mean you will have access to the correct style in all situations, but it does mean you will know why your concentration may be drifting and that you need to make that extra effort to concentrate.

Aptitude for specific fields – This includes your natural academic or sporting prowess, so you can play to your strengths and improve in weaker areas.

Personality traits – You need to know whether you are a natural introvert or extrovert, and whether are you prone to being sensitive or judgmental. Introverts who fail to address their feelings can find they are emotionally hijacked whenever they feel socially exposed.

Religious & political beliefs – You may or may not take interest in these areas, but you should know exactly where you stand if you do, so you can rationalize your viewpoints if challenged, or keep quiet when discretion seems the better part of valor. Emotions can run very deep with both of these subjects, and it may be that managing yourself better means keeping quiet, lest you run the risk of being emotionally hijacked by the ferocity of your views, and alienating all around you.

Values – This would include your ethics, morals, integrity and scruples. These will underpin your character, and you must be aware if any views you hold are perceived as contentious if you are to avoid conflict. You should also accept that others will not always see your point of view, however “correct” it is, and therefore you should again be prepared to fight your corner with rationale rather than pure emotion, or keep quiet.

However, managing yourself better is a more fundamental skill than simply listing your likes and dislikes. As our emotions are subject to fluctuations, even on a daily basis, we need to develop strategies that allow us to always stay in charge of them as best we can. The main areas to focus on with our emotional intelligence are:

- Emotional awareness – This is our ability to correctly identify core emotions when they appear, including anger, sadness, fear and joy. It is also useful to spot these in other people, especially as there may be attempts to disguise them.
- Emotional self-management – This is our ability to control our emotions and express them in an appropriate manner.
- Emotional flexibility – This is the ability to recover from stress, loss, and shocking events that have damaged your emotional equilibrium.
- You should also develop the ability to use your emotions in decision-making, balancing thoughts and feelings.

How to Become Socially Aware

Being socially aware is about knowing how you react to social situations, and modifying your interactions with other people to achieve the best results. The net result of social awareness is the development of social skills.

Steps to become socially aware:

1. Learn to identify which types of situations make you uncomfortable, and then alter your behavior to make the best of your circumstances.
2. Learn to become aware of behaviors in other people that may cause you to respond negatively. As you are unlikely to be able to change the other person, you must be able to modify your own behavior to turn the situation into a positive experience.

3. Take responsibility for your own behavior and be willing to apologize for errors in judgment or insensitive actions.
4. Ask others for honest feedback about the way you interact with them. Accept the negative feedback along with the positive and make changes accordingly.
5. Be aware of your body language. Non-verbal communication is as important as the things you say. Positive body language is a boon in your interactions with other people.
6. Learn to listen with genuine interest. Fight the urge to respond immediately and really listen to what the other person is trying to say.
7. Accept that improving your social skills is not an overnight process. Trying to improve or change too many things at once will be counter-productive as you will feel so uncomfortable that you may suffer an emotional hijacking.
8. Maximize your positive personality traits and use them to your advantage when interacting with others.

How to Manage Your Relationships

Managing your relationships must start with managing yourself. You cannot manage the bad traits out of other people very easily, so you must present yourself as positively as you can. In this way, you may find that your good example is reflected by the other person.

Whether in the home or the workplace, relationships have to be managed. This is because relationships cannot be allowed to become stagnant. To work well, they must continually develop and grow. A good working relationship is a dynamic one. This keeps everyone on their toes and performing at their best. This means being proactive, tackling issues head-on, seeking resolutions, and searching for areas in which improvements can be made.

When people are in well-managed relationships they feel aligned, committed, on board and motivated. They know their needs are being considered, their individual ways are being accommodated, and their contributions are acknowledged. People want to know that they are important to an organization, and that their work is important to the goals of the organization.

Communication, as ever, is key to building successful relationships, because where there is no discourse, no party can know how anyone else truly feels – not until resentments begin to bubble over and cause problems. Effective communication involves asking questions and listening to the answers.

Humor is a great boost to any relationship and this does not have to create a flippant attitude. In fact, flippancy is more likely to develop in the absence of healthy humor. You should also make sure you do not ask for too much from people. You must be reasonable. Making unrealistic demands is only going to breed resentment.

Other people like to feel they are being treated fairly; that means fairly according to their behavior, and in relation to how you treat others. Consistency is important in creating expectations of fairness that take the kick out of any unpleasant situations you have to manage. If everyone knows they are being treated according to a set of guidelines that apply to everyone, they will be less likely to react emotionally.

Remember to say “please” and “thank you”. It takes no time or effort, but has a significant effect on the quality of a relationship, especially if the person saying these things does not, strictly speaking, need to because they are in a position of power.

10 Exercises to Strengthen Your Team's EI

Exercises of any sort carried out in the workplace are fraught with danger. Many people just want to come into work, do their job and go home again, and feel that their emotional output has been kept to a minimum, and has certainly not been manipulated in any way.

Exercises to increase emotional intelligence necessarily involve dealing with emotions or emotional issues, and there will without question be individuals who openly resist the idea that this has any place in a work environment, and more who feel this way but are unwilling to openly voice their feelings for fear of rocking the boat. This latter resentment can be used as a starter exercise.

If you do feel that emotional intelligence exercises are the way forward, you should be very sure that you explain all the possible benefits that can be gained individually, and as a team. Any exercise that remains a mystery is likely to stir up resentment and confusion, and will create more problems than it may solve.

The last thing you want is for any of your team to end up a seething mass of angst because you have created the very internal environment in them that you were meant to dispel.

It follows that there needs to be a certain level of trust in the workplace to start with for emotional intelligence exercises to be effective. The type of team most in need of increased emotional intelligence will probably be the team most likely to resist their implementation.

If you do wish to go ahead with these exercises, here a few suggestions of the type of exercise you could use:

1. As mentioned, your first exercise could be to ask your team to react honestly to how they feel about being asked to perform such exercises. What you want is their emotional response, and then you can discuss what this

reveals of their social responses and their ability to manage their feelings in social situations.

2. Wallet, purse or pocket – This exercise focuses on helping the participants to explore how they feel by telling stories about the personal possessions they may have with them. This provides the opportunity to elicit feedback on behavioral patterns.

3. Naming feelings – This exercise helps support the participants' development of a vocabulary for their feelings, and introduces the idea that feelings can be altered by paying attention to the fact that they exist. Emotional responses to each emotion can be discussed.

4. Watch-words – This can follow on from the last exercise in drawing attention to any words that have been used that might have raised eyebrows. By really understanding the impact of our words we can enjoy better interactions with other people. This can provide a framework of acceptable language within the workplace.

5. Assessing trust – This concerns how the group feels about trust in a group situation and individually. Trust, or lack of, is a major factor in emotional intelligence, and you can discuss why some people trust whilst others don't.

6. Observation – Some way into the exercises, you can ask what exactly the participants think they have been doing for the past five minutes. The obvious answer is “joining in”, but what you are after is the true extent of their participation; what sort of body language and facial expressions they believe they have been demonstrating that could have caused a positive or negative effect within the group. This improves both self-awareness and awareness of how non-verbal communication happens all the time and how we must monitor ourselves.

7. Non-verbal gossip – Following on from the previous exercise, this is about using purely body language and facial expression to spread a rumor around the group. No words can be used. This will demonstrate how easily our emotions can be read if we are not aware how they manifest themselves.

8. Goal-setting – This is an exercise designed to inspire positive thoughts for the future, and should involve the positive use of emotions to underpin your plans. Participants are asked to discuss their goals and how they might be achieved. There should also be an awareness created of how change must begin internally before it appears in the outside world
9. Problem-solving – This involves discussing several commonly-experienced workplace problems and how they might be tackled. This could involve role-play that demonstrates the wrong way to deal with the situation first, before reassessing and attempting a new approach based on a more intelligent use of emotions.
10. Reversing negativity – This exercise deals with the instant emotional reactions we can experience towards certain individuals, and how we can use our emotional intelligence to put a more positive spin on “annoying” character traits. For example, if we usually regard an individual as being “stubborn”, we might change our interpretation to one more positive, such as viewing their behavior as “committed”. We may also realize by doing this that we share the exact same characteristics, but we just label ours in a positive way.

Final Thoughts

There is an oft-quoted prayer that goes like this: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

It doesn't matter if you are not religious – the wisdom inherent in this saying is undeniable. In fact, it could easily be adopted as the emotional intelligence motto. It covers all the important factors for improving emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

The serenity to accept the things I cannot change – Unless we are able to gracefully accept that there is a limit to how much change we can effect, especially in other people, our emotions will be run ragged by our frustrations and petty annoyances. Emotional hijacking is the obvious net result of an inability to accept certain immutable facts.

The courage to change the things I can – We must grasp the nettle and take action where change is possible. This may not always be easy, especially when it relates to our own emotional shortcomings that may seem set in stone after too many years, but accepting unsatisfactory situations is undoubtedly an emotional failing. Learning to rationalize and control our emotions can help us formulate a plan of attack that can lead to positive change.

The wisdom to know the difference – This is the key. Emotional intelligence must be fed by our thinking intelligence. Our emotional brain has to receive and accept the guidance of our rational mind to ensure that the decisions we make and the reactions we have are correct for the given circumstances.