



## Bringing Emotional Intelligence to Work

Emotions are part of life. Emotional intelligence – the ability to understand and manage emotions in ourselves and others – is a crucial life skill that also helps us deal with certain demands in our work lives.

The skills associated with emotional intelligence include:

- understanding and relating to other people's feelings;
- non-verbal communication skills;
- understanding how our emotions affect others;
- the ability to use positive emotions to motivate ourselves and inspire others;
- the ability to manage and control our own feelings when it's important to do so.

No one can control all feelings perfectly, but we all need some emotional control. When people are frequently overwhelmed by emotion, it affects their judgment and ability to make decisions.

They also find it more difficult to get along with others and recover when they are upset. Emotional skills help us communicate our positive ideas. They also help us express concerns or negative feedback in a way that improves communication and understanding, rather than upsetting people.

That is very important in the workplace.

Emotional intelligence assets:

- ability to calm ourselves
- ability to talk about feelings;
- ability to take a step back and look at a situation objectively;
- ability to see another person's point of view;
- sense of humor;
- being able to allow ourselves to enjoy good feelings;
- ability to distract ourselves from bad feelings.

Jamal has just been criticized by a co-worker in front of several people. He knows the criticism was partly valid, but his colleague – who he has never really gotten along with – used language that was harsh and humiliating. Jamal pokes his head into the next cubicle and whispers, “Did you hear what that jerk said to me? I’m going to march right down to his office and tell him exactly what I think.”

“I have a better idea,” says his friend Zach. “Let’s go grab a coffee.” When they sit down together, Zach says, “You have a right to be offended, but don’t go rushing in when you’re upset. You might make the situation worse. Here’s what I’d do,” he continues.



Emotional skills help express concerns or negative feedback in a way that improves communication and understanding

“Give yourself until tomorrow to cool off, then send him a polite e-mail and ask if you can have a word with him. Don’t get yourself worked up before you go in there.”

Then he asks Jamal, “Do you think any of the criticism was justified?”

“Well, it wasn’t my best work,” says Jamal.

“OK. Start with that,” suggests Zach. “Tell him you’re going to rewrite those sections of the report. Then tell him how it felt to be criticized publicly, but use neutral language. Even though he was partly in the wrong, it won’t help to make him defensive. Say that in the future you’d like to talk about that kind of thing in private.”

“Yeah, you’re right,” says Jamal. “I’ll think carefully about how I handle this.”

## Five ways to build your emotional intelligence

1. Be aware of your emotions and how they affect you. Try to act and react on the basis of thoughts and ideas, instead of feelings.
2. Empathize. Pay attention to the feelings of others and ask questions. It will show you are interested and also help you understand how they feel.
3. Be mindful of how you express strong feelings. Avoid accusations and don’t exaggerate your feelings to make a point. Give people information rather than a display of emotion. Pay attention to your body language and other ways that you communicate non-verbally. Non-verbal communication, which we are often unaware of, can have a

big impact on how people interpret our words and actions.

4. When you’re feeling bad, keep reminding yourself that you have felt bad before and always felt better eventually. You won’t feel this way forever.
5. Invest in your emotional well-being by making time for social networks and activities that energize you and add to your enjoyment of life.

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## More information

### Books and Websites:

*Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Bradberry, Travis, Jean Greaves and Patrick Lencioni (Jun 2009)

*Emotional Intelligence: How To Quickly Develop Your Emotional Intelligence* by Jessica Cambridge (Jan 2014)

*Emotional Intelligence: 10th Anniversary Edition* by Goleman, Daniel (Jul 2009)

*Emotional Intelligence (EQ): Five Key Skills for Raising Emotional Intelligence.* [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/eq5\\_raising\\_emotional\\_intelligence.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/eq5_raising_emotional_intelligence.htm)

*The Psychologically Healthy Workplace Program (PHWP)* <http://www.apa.org/practice/programs/workplace/index.aspx>

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