

Your Emotional Intelligence

In this section we are going to explore Emotional Intelligence, often shortened to EI or EQ (Emotional Quotient). We will cover what is meant by emotional intelligence, the basic premise of emotional intelligence and its application to the workplace.

Introduction - What is emotional intelligence?

Emotional intelligence (EI or EQ) is first the capacity to identify and be aware of our emotions. Then to be able to control and express our emotions, using them to effectively manage ourselves and in our interpersonal relationships.

It is about catching our initial emotional response to the situation we face, just for long enough to allow our intelligence to enter the situation. We can then use our intelligence to decide if the initial emotion and the level it is at is appropriate for the situation. If it is not, we can change it. We can change it, even if it might seem we cannot or that it is difficult to do!

The concept and theory of Emotional Intelligence was developed in the early 90's as a psychological theory by Peter Salovey and John Mayer. By the mid 1990's Daniel Goleman had played a key role in popularising the concept through his book *Emotional Intelligence Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1995). In his later book *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1999) Goleman acknowledged that his model is an evolution of Salovey and Mayer's early work.

Developing our own self-awareness about how we respond to different situations is clearly linked to improving our self-awareness and our lives more broadly. If we can monitor and regulate our own emotions and further decide whether we are applying the right emotion to the right degree will demonstrate self-regulation and control – it is the 'cool head when everyone is losing theirs' ability that we see in effective management of emotions.

The key point is to be able to identify the emotions in both ourselves and others then to be able to manage them to help us build more effective and trusting relationships.

The challenge is to not respond from the initial emotion we or others have in response to what is happening if it is not the right emotion for that situation, but instead manage the first emotion, let the intelligence in, so that you can make a choice about the best way to respond – or in other words choose the right emotion in the right amount as required by the situation.

However, in order to do this, according to EQ theory and practice, we need to effectively manage our emotions as shown in the cloud in Gribben's diagram above first. Therefore, effectively managing our emotions allows us to effectively manage situations. This in turn allows us to influence others. If others see you responding to a situation with a particular emotion, then, they are more likely to follow your lead and you then have the chance to influence others. It is this influencing others that support everyone getting to the desired outcome, in whatever situation you are involved.

What mood am I in?

This exercise is to help you to understand and identify your current mood and to identify more specifically moods or a mix of moods and emotions that may exist at any time in response to a situation or trigger.

Read the list of words that describe emotions that we might experience.

Consider situations that provoke negative emotional responses in your life. Think about the situation and try to identify the emotions you are experiencing – can you put words to the emotion or mix of emotions you are experiencing.

Take some time on this. Improving our emotional intelligence is first being able to identify and understand the emotions we are experiencing. The more accurate we become the easier it is to overcome the trigger and to manage our responses. Further we start to understand that feelings we might initially think are similar are in fact qualitatively different.

It is also worth trying to understand the mix of emotions you might be feeling. You might be feeling sad but also frustrated. You might be feeling angry but also fearful. Again, a developed awareness of this will help you to understand the feelings you are experiencing in response to different situations.

You can use the table below to think about your situations that create emotional triggers and then how you respond. The next box in the table allows you to think about how you might prefer to respond, or what you might think a better response might be.

Emotion Words List – Seven Emotional Word Families

Happy	Sad	Surprised	Anxious	Angry	Creative	Calm
Content	Down	Amazed	Fearful	Annoyed	Pioneering	Relaxed
Elated	Melancholy	Stunned	Worried	Livid	Innovative	Peaceful
Joyful	Gloomy	Shocked	Concerned	Peeved	Inquisitive	Hopeful
Cheerful	Grumpy	Dazed	Uneasy	Cross	Curious	Comfortable
Pleased	Miserable	Flabbergasted	Frightened	Irritated	Imaginative	Safe
Delighted	Distressed	Taken Aback	Panicked	Bitter	Resourceful	Optimistic
Ecstatic	Apathetic	Confused	Overwhelmed	Resentful	Courageous	Serene
Satisfied	Hopeless	Dismayed	Stressed	Irate	Playful	Tranquil

Blissful	Bored	Astonished	Fretful	Furious	Inspired	Compassion
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Source – adapted from Lynn, A – (2007) Quick Emotional Intelligence Exercises for Busy Managers

What are your observations about your emotions in response to the different situations that trigger your emotions?

Situation that triggered the emotional response:	Describe your emotional response including how and what you are feeling:	What would be a better response in this situation?

Managing our Emotions

We are now more aware of the situations that trigger our emotions and the emotions that then arise for us. We are also aware of how we might prefer to respond. We might then realise this is not that easy to do! This is right because when we are in the middle of an emotional response it can take us over and we almost become consumed by it until it begins to subside.

To begin to **take pro-active control** back of our emotions we must first become aware as quickly as possible that the emotion has been triggered. **Identify it** and remember what the names are you have for it and the particular mix of emotions you are experiencing.

The next step, which might seem somewhat counterintuitive is to accept the emotion and claim ownership of it. It is yours, it is trying to help you, even if it isn't helpful and you don't want it. But it is yours none the less. Denial or suppression of the emotion does not help. Stay with the emotion and breath – don't deny or hide, just accept it and stay with it.

Next you want to really do nothing but **look at the emotion – yes just breath and look at it**. This means 'seeing' the response in whatever way that is for you. When this emotion comes up what do you see, hear and feel? Breath and look and take some time to see clearly the emotion and stay with it objectively without being drawn into it.

This is about **looking at** the emotion and not through it. To look at it is to step back and observe. This creates a space between you and the emotion, and then the time you need to ensure you don't get caught up in it. This means you don't then look and act through it which was your response before.

Take the time to really look at your emotions and the response. You will notice the longer you 'look' at it that eventually it begins to lose its power, it softens and feels less intense. You may find yourself breathing more freely and your head clearing a little.

This takes us to the final step where you can now **choose how to respond**. You can do this because you have managed the initial response enough for your intelligence to kick in and allow you the 'head room' to respond more effectively and from a calmer place than you would have otherwise done.

Broader EQ Matters

It is true that the EQ models by all of the well-known writers go far beyond simply managing one's own emotional response. However, I would argue that you have to start with yourself and understanding your own emotional habits first. This will then lead to you developing your own emotional intelligence and maturity and in so doing, certainly in my experience, helps you to develop your ability to read and have an understanding for the emotional response in others.

This development will help you improve your relationships at home or at work or in whatever situations you find yourself in. We all have our triggers and our responses and whilst we all have our level of emotional development and maturity, we all also have our triggers and a better understanding of what they are and how we respond will help you become aware of and manage them effectively.