

Becoming Emotionally Intelligent at Work

Objective

To increase your emotional intelligence at work.

What to Know

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to understand, use, and manage your emotions to reduce stress, effectively communicate, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and manage conflict. Emotional intelligence also helps you build stronger relationships, succeed in your career, and achieve your goals. Research indicates EQ is a strong predictor of job success. It is defined by:

- **Self-Management**—the ability to control impulsive feelings and behaviors, manage emotions in healthy ways, act and follow through, and adapt to change
- **Self-Awareness**—the ability to recognize emotions and how they affect thoughts and behavior; awareness of strengths and weaknesses
- **Social Awareness**—an understanding of the emotions, needs, and concerns of others; ability to empathize and pick up on emotional cues
- **Relationship Management**—the ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships, communicate clearly, inspire and influence others, work well in a team, and manage conflict

Employers value people with high EQ. For example, staff members with EQ cooperate better with co-workers, are open to feedback, and exhibit empathy. If you believe you are lacking EQ, there are ways to become more emotionally intelligent. Here are some suggestions.

1. Practice acknowledging thoughts and feelings. The intensity of emotional reactions can be reduced when you acknowledge your emotions. Pause, acknowledge, and label what you are thinking and feeling.

2. Test your pessimism. Ask yourself these questions related to a current work-related problem.

- Do I think this is permanent?
- Do I believe this is prevalent and widespread?
- Am I giving up my power? Do I believe there is nothing I can do?

Reflect on your answers and begin to gather evidence for your points of view. If they are false or inaccurate, choose more realistic, accurate, and positive thoughts.

3. Focus on what you can control. When you face a problem or setback at work, step back and take a wider view of the situation. Identify what you can control or influence. Focus on what you can control and notice how much more confident you become.

4. Pause. When you are frustrated, angry, or upset, pause for six seconds to assess how you feel (and possibly avoid saying something you might later regret!).

5. Prioritize kindness. Engage in positive, caring dialogue with your co-workers and supervisors. Say good morning and offer a kind word to people that pass by. Ask meaningful questions and listen to the answers.

6. Ask for feedback. Informally share how you feel. Ask co-workers and supervisors for genuine feedback.

7. Effectively use nonverbal communication. Recognize the nonverbal messages you send to others. Do you make eye contact when speaking to others? Are your arms crossed, or are you frowning when you receive feedback from others?

8. Appropriately use humor and playfulness to relieve stress. Humor, laughter, and playfulness all naturally reduce stress and help you keep things in perspective. Use humor to calm yourself down.

9. View conflict as an opportunity to build relationships. Resolving conflict in healthy, constructive ways can strengthen trust between people. It can also enhance creativity.

This worksheet will help you increase your emotional intelligence at work.

What to Do

Rate your EQ at work, where 1 = I don't think I'm emotionally intelligent at all, to 10 = I am extremely emotionally intelligent: _____

Think about a time when stress, frustration, conflict, or problems overwhelmed you at work. Was it easy to think clearly or make rational decisions? Describe what happened.

When you experience a problem at work, are your emotions accompanied by physical sensations that you experience in places like your stomach, throat, or chest? Describe.

Do your emotions factor into your decision-making at work? Explain.

Answer these questions related to a current work-related problem. Describe the problem:

- Do I think this is permanent?
- Do I believe this is prevalent and widespread?
- Am I giving up my power? Do I believe there is nothing I can do?

What can you control or influence in this situation?

For the next two weeks, practice building your EQ at work. Use the suggestions above and do one thing every day to increase your emotional intelligence. Using the following chart, record the date and describe the situation. For example, this might involve a work-related problem, overwhelm related to a deadline, or a conflict with a co-worker. Write down who was involved, and what you did to practice building your EQ.

Reflections on This Exercise

After completing this worksheet, did you successfully increase your EQ? Why or why not?

What did you find difficult about this exercise? Explain why.

What else can you do to increase your EQ at work?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
