

## What is emotional intelligence and how does it apply to the workplace?

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to manage both your own emotions and understand the emotions of people around you. There are five key elements to EI: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. People with high EI can identify how they are feeling, what those feelings mean, and how those emotions impact their behavior and in turn, other people. It's a little harder to "manage" the emotions of other people - you can't control how someone else feels or behaves. But if you can identify the emotions behind their behavior, you'll have a better understanding of where they are coming from and how to best interact with them.

High EI overlaps with strong interpersonal skills, especially in the areas of conflict management and communication - crucial skills in the workplace. Employees who can self-regulate their emotions are often able to avoid making impulsive decisions - they think objectively before they act. Operating with empathy and understanding is a critical part of teamwork; being able to attribute someone's behavior to an underlying emotion will help you manage relationships and make others feel heard. On an individual level, being aware of your feelings is the first step in not letting those feelings control you. Recognizing how you feel and why will help you to sit with those feelings and then move forward in a productive way.

Effective leaders are often very emotionally intelligent. In the workplace, it's important for leaders to be self-aware and able to view things objectively. This translates into understanding your strengths and weaknesses and acting with humility. This has to be balanced with empathy - employees who feel appreciated and valued at work aren't only happier, but more productive.

Fortunately, you can improve your EI skills with some thoughtfulness and practice:

- Try to slow down your reactions to emotions - next time you feel angry, try to sit with it before lashing out. Why are you angry? Did someone upset you? What do you think was the emotion underneath their behavior?
- Think about your strengths and weaknesses. No one is good at everything, and that's okay! Know yourself and when to ask for - or offer - help.

- Put in the effort to understand what people are communicating non-verbally. If you ask someone to help you on a project and they agree, but sound hesitant, recognize that they may feel overwhelmed or confused or they come from a different background and understanding than your own. It's important to validate and address that before moving forward.
- Work on communicating effectively and openly. Make sure your main point is clear, cut out information that isn't relevant to the person you're talking with, and give your full attention when someone else is speaking.
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- [From Mental Health America](#)