

# Emotional Intelligence: What It Is and Why It Matters

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## You've probably heard of "IQ," but have you heard of "EQ"?

EQ – or emotional intelligence quotient – is a measure of an individual's emotional intelligence. Like IQ (intelligence quotient), you can use an assessment tool such as an online test to quantify your EQ. This value encompasses an individual's ability to perceive, use, understand, manage, and handle emotions. Emotional intelligence involves both personal competence and social competence and is made up of 4 primary traits: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. It is intuitive that a strong understanding of personal and interpersonal emotions is important, but EQ also has a tangible relationship with success and salary. In fact, EQ accounts for 58% of performance in all types of jobs, and every point increase in EQ correlates with a \$1300 increase in annual salary.<sup>1</sup>

Growing EQ is about more than just personal success and performance. Most hope to bring empathy, positivity, and professionalism to their workplace and beyond. However, we often discount the role emotions play in our ability to achieve these goals. We may think of emotions as fleeting or even trivial, as something that must be "overcome". This mindset does not allow us to use the power of emotion. But with emotional intelligence, we can harness our emotions with self-reflection, while also showing empathy and warmth by anticipating and managing the emotions of those around us. These skills directly translate to success both personally and professionally and allow us to be intuitive and thoughtful friends and co-workers.

Let's explore the four traits that define emotional intelligence. First, self-awareness. This is our ability not only to perceive our emotions in any particular moment, but also understand our own tendencies and the greater trends in our emotions. Self-awareness requires critical evaluation of how we feel and react, and an understanding of our own tendencies allows us to anticipate our reactions. Self-awareness is less about discovering our deep dark secrets, and more about taking an honest and straight forward approach to what we do well and what pushes our buttons. Self-management is the natural corollary to self-awareness and involves how our emotions affect our actions. With self-management, we apply our self-awareness to our behaviors, putting our emotions in the context of our greater goals.

The two other traits relate to others – social awareness and relationship management. You may have heard the common saying, “don't judge another until you have walked a mile in their shoes.” This quote summarizes social awareness, which can loosely be defined as the ability to pick up on and understand another individual's emotions. Social awareness is all about listening and observing. In relationship management, our understanding of ourselves is just as important as our understanding of others. Relationship management is the application of all aspects of emotional intelligence, including self-management and social awareness.

If you take away nothing else from this editorial, let me summarize the most valuable statement here: **relationship management, and in the broadest sense emotional intelligence, can be learned and practiced.** While it's tempting to assert that some people are just “better” at social interactions, or “more charismatic” than others, this is simply false. We all have the power to increase our emotional intelligence and by doing so, can become better communicators and can have a more positive impact on those around us. Strategies to improve relationship management include<sup>1</sup>:

- being open and curious,
- avoiding mixed signals,
- enhancing our inherent communication styles through self-awareness and self-management,
- acknowledging and complementing the emotions and feelings of others,
- explaining decisions, and
- offering “fix-it” statements during broken conversations, with the goal of resolution rather than being right.

People with high emotional intelligence can manage social situations better by using emotional information to guide their behaviors. With practiced and purposeful emotional intelligence, we can create more positive working and learning environments, positively impacting those around us.

Gauge your own emotional intelligence using this free quiz: <https://www.ihhp.com/free-eq-quiz/>

## References

1. Bradberry, Travis, and Jean Greaves. *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. TalentSmart, 2009.