

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

50 Tips for Improving your Emotional Intelligence



Emotional intelligence fuels your performance both in the workplace and in your personal life, but it starts with you. From your confidence, empathy and optimism to your social skills and self-control, understanding and managing your own emotions can accelerate success in all areas of your life.

No matter what professional field you are in, whether you manage a team of two or 20, or even just yourself, realising how effective you are at controlling your own emotional energy is a great starting point. Absent from the curriculum, emotional intelligence isn't something we are taught or tested on, so where did it come from, what is it, do you have it and is it really that important?

Fortunately, it is something you can learn and we've compiled a comprehensive list of tips to help you explore your own level of emotional intelligence and gain important emotional intelligence skills that can be implemented into everyday life. Some of these tips we follow ourselves and others have been revealed to us by our amazing clients and partners who know how to motivate and inspire their teams but first and foremost, themselves.



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Emotional Intelligence

Put simply, emotional Intelligence is how well individuals identify and manage their own emotions and react to the emotions of others. It's understanding how those emotions shape your thoughts and actions so you can have greater control over your behaviour and develop the skills to manage yourself more effectively. Becoming more emotionally conscious allows us to grow and gain a deeper understanding of who we are, enabling us to communicate better with others and build stronger relationships.

We suggest starting with these initial 8 tips, they provide a good starting point to discovering the foundations of your emotional intelligence.

#1 Practice observing how you feel

Often we lead hectic, busy lifestyles and it's all too easy for us to lose touch with our emotions. To reconnect, try setting a timer for various points during the day. When the timer goes off, take a few deep breaths and notice how you're feeling emotionally. Pay attention to where that emotion is showing up as a physical feeling in your body and what the sensation feels like. The more you practice, the more it will become second nature.

#2 Pay attention to how you behave

While you're practising your emotional awareness, take the time to notice your behaviour too. Observe how you act when you're experiencing certain emotions, and how that affects your day-to-day life. Managing our emotions becomes easier once we become more conscious of how we react to them.

#3 Question your own opinions

In this hyper-connected world, it is easy to fall into an 'opinion bubble'. This is a state of existence where your own opinions are constantly re-enforced by people with similar viewpoints. Take time to read the other side of the story and have your views challenged (even if you still feel they are right). This will help you understand other people and be more receptive to new ideas.

#4 Take responsibility for your feelings

Your emotions and behaviour come from you, they don't come from anyone else and once you start accepting responsibility for how you feel and how you behave it will have a positive impact on all areas of your life.



#5 Take time to celebrate the positive

A key part emotional intelligence is celebrating and reflecting on the positive moments in life. People who experience positive emotions are generally more resilient and more likely to have fulfilling relationships, which will help them move past adversity.

#6 But don't ignore the negative

Reflecting on negative feelings is just as important as reflecting on the positive. Understanding why you feel negative is key to becoming a fully-rounded individual, who is more able to deal with negative issues in the future.

#7 Don't forget to breathe

Life throws various situations our way, with most of us experiencing some sort of stress on a regular basis. To manage your emotions when this happens and to avoid outbursts, don't forget to breathe. Call a time out and go put some cold water on your face, go outside and get some fresh air or make a drink – anything to keep your cool and give yourself a chance to get a hold on what's happening and how you should respond.

#8 A lifetime process

Understand and remember that emotional intelligence is something you develop and requires continual improvement; it's very much a lifetime practice.

Self-awareness

A key component of emotional intelligence, self-awareness is the ability to recognise and understand your own character, moods and emotions and their effect on others. It includes a realistic self-assessment of what you're capable of – your strengths and weaknesses – and knowing how others perceive you. It can help highlight areas for self-improvement, make you better at adapting and can limit wrongful decisions.

#9 Learn to look at yourself objectively

Knowing yourself completely is difficult and it's almost impossible to look at yourself objectively, so input from those who know you is vital. Ask them where your strengths and weaknesses lie, write down what they say and compare it. Look out for any patterns and remember not to argue with them – it doesn't mean they're right – they're just trying to help you gauge your perception from another's point of view.

#10 Keep a diary

A great way to get an accurate gauge of yourself is to keep a diary. Start by writing down what happened to you at the end of every day, how it made you feel and how you dealt with it. Documenting details like these will make you more aware of what you're doing and will highlight where problems might be coming from. Periodically, look back over your comments and take note of any trends.

#11 Understand what motivates you

Everyone has a core motivation when they begin a project. The difficulty is keeping this driving force in mind when adversity appears. All too often people start a project but fail to complete it because they lose their motivation to do so. Take time to understand what motivates you and use it to push you across the finish line.

#12 Take it easy

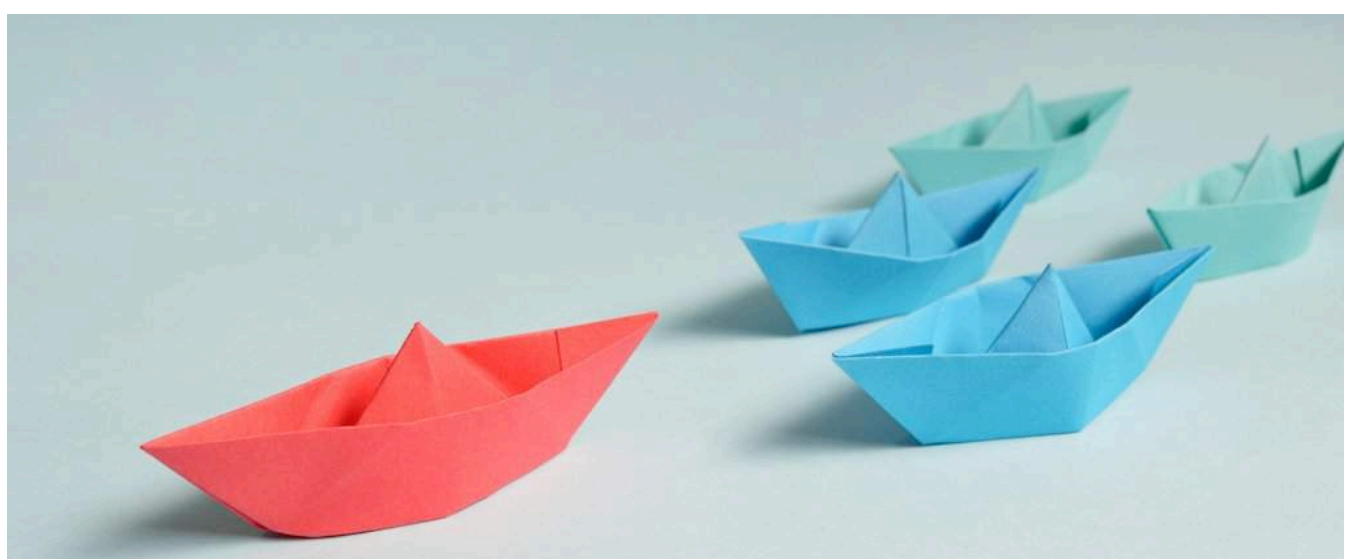
Sometimes emotional outbreaks occur because we don't take the time out to slow down and process how we're feeling. Give yourself a break and make a conscious effort to meditate, do yoga or read – a little escapism works wonders. And then the next time you have an emotional reaction to something, try to pause before you react.

#13 Acknowledge your emotional triggers

Self-aware individuals are able to recognise their emotions as they occur. It's important to be flexible with your emotions and adapt them to your situation. Don't deny your emotions stage time but don't be rigid with them either, take the time to process your emotions before communicating them.

#14 Predict how you will feel

Think about a situation you're going into and predict how you will feel. Practice naming and accepting the feelings - naming the feeling puts you in control. Try to choose an appropriate reaction to the feeling rather than just reacting to it.



#15 Trust your intuition

If you are still unsure about which path to take, trust your intuition. After all, your subconscious has been learning which path to take throughout your entire life.

Self-management

Once you've gotten to grips with self-awareness and how your emotions work, you can get a handle on self-management. Which means taking responsibility for your own behaviour and well-being as well as controlling emotional outbursts.

#16 Snap out of it

One key way to keep your emotions in check is to change your sensory input – motion dictates emotion as the old saying goes. So jolt your physical body out of routine by attending an exercise class or try channelling a busy mind with a puzzle or a book - anything to break your existing routine.

#17 Maintain a schedule (and stick to it!)

Ensuring that you create a schedule and stick to it is extremely important if you want to complete tasks effectively. Paul Minors of Productivityist writes "When you schedule appointments in your calendar, you're saying to yourself: "I'm going to do A, B and C by X date and it's going to take Y hours."

Once you make this promise, it becomes harder to procrastinate.

#18 Eat well

This sounds like an easy one but regulating what you eat and drink can have a massive effect on your emotional state, so try your best to maintain a balanced diet.

#19 Don't get mad

Funnel your emotional energy into something productive. It's okay to keep overwhelming emotions inside, especially if it's not an appropriate time to let them out. However, when you do, rather than vent it on something futile, turn it into motivation instead. Don't get mad, get better.

#20 Be interested

A key factor in managing yourself and your emotions is consciously taken the time to be interested in the subject matter, whether it be business or personal.

#21 Don't expect people to trust you (if you can't trust them)

Establishing trust with a person can be difficult, and once it's lost it's very hard to regain. Try to be mindful that people are only human and will make mistakes. By offering your trust, you are inviting people to offer their trust in return.

#22 It's your choice

You have the ability to choose how you react to a situation - you can either overreact or remain calm. But it's your choice.

Motivation

A personal skills aspect of emotional intelligence, self-motivation refers to our inner drive to achieve and improve our commitment to our goals, our readiness to act on opportunities and our overall optimism.

#23 Personal goals

Personal goals can provide long-term direction and short-term motivation. So grab a pen and paper and have a think about where you want to be and set some targets for yourself. Base them on your strengths and make them relevant to you and ultimately, make them exciting and achievable. This task alone is enough to get you instantly motivated!

#24 Be realistic

When you've set a new goal, be sure to give yourself realistic and clear aims to achieving that goal and understand that change is an inevitable part of life.

Achievement boosts confidence and as self-confidence rises so does the ability to achieve more, see how it works?

#25 Positive thinking

To keep motivated it's important to maintain a positive and optimistic mindset. See problems and setbacks as learning opportunities instead of failings and try to avoid negative people and opt to surround yourself with positive, well-motivated people – they'll have a great effect on you.



#26 Lifelong learning

Both knowledge and information are key for feeding your mind and keeping you curious and motivated. And with information so easily accessible, you have the opportunity to fuel your values and passions at the click of a button!

#27 Be prepared to leave your comfort zone

The biggest barrier to achieving your full potential is not challenging yourself frequently enough. Great things can happen to you if you're willing to leave your comfort zone, so do so as often as you can.

#28 Help

Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it, and vice versa. If others need help, don't hold back in giving it to them. Seeing other people succeed will only help to motivate yourself.

#29 Stand and stretch

For an instant short term boost to your motivation, take a stand and stretch out as far as you can for 10 seconds. When you return to your desk, you'll be in the correct frame of mind and ready to work.

Empathy

Quite simply, empathy is the ability to understand other people's emotions. Understanding that everyone has their own set of feelings, desires, triggers and fears. To be empathetic you're allowing their experiences to resonate with your own in order to respond in an emotionally appropriate way. It's a lifelong skill and the most important one for navigating relationships, and whilst it may not come naturally, there are a few ways it can be nurtured.

#30 Listen

Before you're able to empathise with someone you first need to understand what it is they're saying, which means listening is at the very epicentre of empathy. It involves letting them talk without interruption, preconceptions, scepticism and putting your own issues on pause to allow yourself to absorb their situation and consider how they are feeling before you react.

#31 Try to be approachable

Whether you're the leader of a team or working on a project with others, try to remain accessible and approachable.

#32 Perspective

We're all familiar with the phrase "put yourself in their shoes", and this is exactly that. The simplest way of gaining a little perspective the next time an issue or situation arises is to switch places with the other person and really think about what's happening from their point of view. Sometimes there's no right or wrong but at least you'll understand enough to come to a resolve or offer some useful advice.

#33 Open yourself up

One of the quickest ways to offer a sincere exchange or sign of empathy is to listen to someone's experiences and connect to it with a similar experience of your own. Don't be afraid to open yourself up, it might just be the start of a great and lasting friendship.



#34 Immerse yourself in a new culture

The old saying 'travel broadens the mind' is still true, even in this ever shrinking world. Sometimes the best way to open your mind is to jump on a plane and go somewhere completely different.

#35 Cultivate a curiosity about strangers

Highly empathetic people have an insatiable curiosity about strangers. When we talk to people outside of our usual social circle we learn about and begin to understand opinions, views and lives that are different to our own. So next time you're sat on a bus you know just what to do.

#36 Acknowledge what people are saying

Another useful tip is, whilst listening to what a person has to say, use acknowledgement words such as 'i understand' and 'i see' to show a person you're listening (but of course only say these things if you are actually listening!).

Social Skills

In emotional intelligence terms, social skills refer to the skills needed to handle and influence other people's emotions effectively. It covers a wide range of abilities, from communication and conflict management to dealing with change, meeting new people and building relationships and plays a part in almost every part of our lives, from work life to our romantic life. It's complex and requires utilising almost every point we have already mentioned, but here are a few pointers for you.

#37 Get started

A good way to get started on improving your social skills is to isolate one skill you know you'd like to develop, this narrows it down and gives you focus.

Internationally known psychologist, Daniel Goleman, suggests highlighting someone you know to be good at that particular skill, observing how they act and how they control their emotions and then implementing and applying that knowledge to yourself.

#38 Wear somebody else's shoes

Not literally of course! Everyone has heard the phrase 'walk a mile in somebody else's shoes', but how many people actually practice this advice? Give it a try, you never know.

#39 Practice makes perfect

The idea of practising your social skills might sound strange, but like everything in life, practice makes perfect.

#40 Social media cold turkey

We don't mean to sound old, but taking your social life offline and engaging face-to-face with people will open up so many opportunities for you to gain and develop your social skills. So next time instead of instant messaging your best friend, meet up for a drink! Emotional intelligence doesn't expand within the confines of (un) social media.

#41 Get networking

A good way to practise your social acumen is to attend local networking events.

The great thing about these events is that everyone attending has a shared reason for attending.

#42 It's not what you say, it's how you say it

We're talking about the importance of nonverbal communication and how that can affect a person's opinion of you. Body language, tone of voice and eye contact is key to letting others know how you feel emotionally. So once you've got your emotions intact, think about how you're physically coming across.

#43 The unknown

The ultimate method to building your social skills is to get out there and be sociable. It sounds simple, but you can't strengthen your social skills without being social! Join a group or network outside of your usual circle; it's the perfect way to put all of our tips into play.

What to Avoid

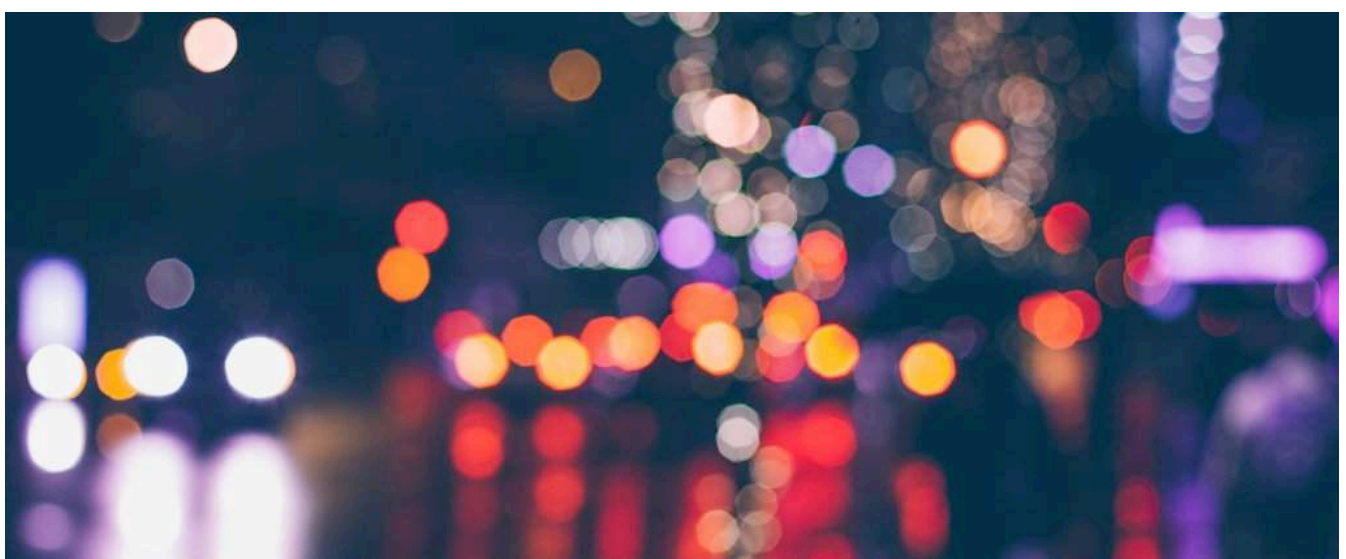
Those with a high EQ very rarely display the following traits, something for you to be mindful of.

#44 Drama

Emotionally intelligent people listen, offer sound advice and extend empathy to those who need it but they don't permit others' lives and emotions to effect or rule their own.

#45 Complaining

Complaining implies two things – one, that we are victims, and two, that there are no solutions to our problems. Rarely does an emotionally intelligent person feel victimised, and even more infrequently do they feel that a solution is beyond their grasp. So instead of looking for someone or something to blame, they think constructively and dissolve the solution in private.



#46 Negativity

Emotionally intelligent people have the ability to curb cynical thoughts. They acknowledge that negative thoughts are just that – thoughts – and rely on facts to come to conclusions as well as being able to silence or zone out any negativity.

#47 Dwelling on the past

Those with high emotional intelligence choose to learn from the mistakes and choices they have made and instead of dwelling on the past are mindful to live in the now.

#48 Selfishness

Whilst a degree of selfishness is required to get ahead in life, too much can fracture relationships and cause disharmony. Try to avoid being overly selfish and consider others needs.

#49 Giving in to peer pressure

Just because everyone else does something, they don't feel compelled to follow suit if they don't want to. They think independently, and never conform just to please other people.

#50 Being overly critical

Nothing destroys a person's morale faster than being overly critical. Remember that people are only human and have the same motivations (and limitations) as you. Take the time to understand another person then communicate the change you want to see.

By understanding and successfully applying emotional intelligence, you too can reach your full potential and achieve your goals.