

Your Emotional Intelligence

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will develop strategies to increase your emotional intelligence at home, school, and work.

Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. What is Emotional Intelligence?
2. Strategies for Raising Emotional Intelligence
 - a. Revisiting Self- and Social Awareness
 - b. Building Relationships through Communication
 - c. Practicing Critical Thinking
3. Your Unique Journey

1. What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, understand, control, and regulate one's emotions and to empathize with others. It means handling relationships with good judgment in a variety of contexts. Emotional intelligence is closely related to your self- and social awareness skill.

You practice emotional intelligence every day as you apply your knowledge and skills to navigate all the feelings a day can bring. But how can you be sure that you're in control and using good judgment? How do you decide which emotions to pay the most attention to? In the next section, you'll learn some productive ways that you can get in tune with your emotions and interpersonal skills at home, school, and work.



TERM TO KNOW

Emotional Intelligence

The ability to perceive, understand, control, and regulate one's emotions and to empathize with others.

2. Strategies for Raising Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is never static. We learn strategies for dealing with situations every time we encounter something new. Just like the 10 Skills, in a competitive workforce, developing strategies for boosting

emotional intelligence is important for professional success (Golhar, 2018). In this section, you'll look at a few of these strategies in detail. As you read, think about how you can customize them to fit your life or how they compare to strategies you've used in the past.

2a. Revisiting Self- and Social Awareness

You already know what it looks like when you're being self- and socially aware. But what are the best ways to manage that awareness? Here are a few thoughts:

- **Keep a positive attitude.** As the saying goes, attitudes are contagious. When you are mindful in keeping a positive outlook, that energy gets passed along to other people and it even shows in your work. Each day, find ways to remind yourself to be an optimist. Meditating just a few minutes a day, for example, can help you get in touch with your positive emotions.
- **Make observations.** We all know people who we admire and would like to emulate. Why not follow in their footsteps? When you see someone with keen awareness skills, make note of what they say and do. Watch how they leverage their strengths and acknowledge their weaknesses so you can learn from them. Consider writing your observations in a journal at the end of each day to keep track of your insights.
- **Accept feedback gracefully.** Have you ever received a performance review at work? What about a letter grade from a college or university? If you answered yes to either of these questions, then you know about feedback. Constructive feedback is one of the most effective tools you can use to improve your performance at school, work, or home. Feedback gives you another lens through which to see yourself. When you act on the sound advice of others without taking offense, it leads to personal growth and improvement.



Check out this useful resource for improving your self- and social awareness at home, school, and work. It shows even more examples of how people might develop this important skill. As you read, identify the strategies people use to understand and manage their emotions and the emotions of others.

2b. Building Relationships through Communication

Emotional intelligence strengthens the relationships with the people around you. When you're in control of your feelings and you express yourself in direct and constructive ways, those around you are in a much better position to receive your message. Communication is at the heart of every healthy relationship. Here are some tips to encourage free and open communication to raise your emotional intelligence:

- **Be assertive, not passive nor aggressive.** How you say something is just as important as what you say. If your communication style is too **passive**, your message might be lost or misinterpreted. If your communication style is too **aggressive**, it can cause confrontation and cloud the judgment of everyone in the conversation, including you.

So which style of communication is best? In professional environments, try to be **assertive** when you interact with others. When you're assertive, you state facts and opinions directly and confidently while keeping your emotions in check. You stay focused on issues, not people, and you hold your opinion and the opinions of others in high regard. One way to assert yourself and stay emotionally balanced is to mentally acknowledge what you're feeling in certain moments and respond positively. After the "temperature" of a moment or situation has subsided, reflect on whether you reacted appropriately or reached the outcome you had intended.

- **Explain, don't defend.** Everyone has misunderstandings and everyone makes mistakes. What matters is what you do to remedy the situation. When you uncover an error or have a disagreement, address the situation by taking these first steps:



STEP BY STEP

1. Avoid the natural tendency to defend your actions.
2. Acknowledge and restate what people are feeling, including yourself, to stabilize and calm the situation.
3. Gather facts that can help identify and explain the problem.

When you take inventory of your feelings and the facts to describe a course of action, you move away from blaming yourself or others and move toward effective problem-solving. Here's an example that shows how these steps might work:



➡ **EXAMPLE** Latif is an architect who designs residential homes. He works for a consulting agency. During a meeting with a client, the client noted a mistake in one of Latif's drawings. The length of the kitchen was off by 6 feet due to a math error. Latif's heart raced because he knew the building supplies and appliances were already ordered. The client was visibly upset, so Latif took a deep breath and began with the following: "Ah, you're right, I can see the kitchen is coming up short. Clearly, I made a mistake. Let me update the drawing and call our suppliers this afternoon to see what can be done. I realize you're concerned about the added cost and completion date, but I'm confident our suppliers can help us work toward a solution."

Latif's client needs to know that Latif is confident, in control, and making good decisions. This is

especially true when something goes wrong. Latif showed poise through his honesty and clear communication as he made plans to resolve the issue.

- **Be an active listener.** Active listening is an important part of good communication. When you're patient and attentive, you're less inclined to jump to conclusions about what a person is saying. You reveal your emotional intelligence to people when you refrain from interrupting them, reflect their ideas back to them, and ask them relevant questions. For example, instead of rushing to quickly respond to what someone is saying in a conversation, take a breath and rephrase what the person has said to you. This enables you to process what has been said and shows that you have been paying attention. A positive side effect of this strategy is that it can also help to build trust between those communicating.
- **Be approachable and social.** Do you have an outgoing personality? Or would people describe you as the shy type? Regardless of your level of inhibition, it's important to be social and **approachable** with people as you go about your daily life. You'll feel more connected to people and situations if you share your thoughts, feelings, and ideas openly and tactfully. When you're friendly and easy to talk to, you can learn a lot from people and everyday problems get resolved with less effort and toil. Try these tips if you need help asserting yourself during conversation:
 - Observe and emulate the behaviors of likable people.
 - Practice making small talk with someone you don't know very well.
 - Avoid judging yourself or others during conversations.
 - Don't be afraid of silence or pauses.
 - Be an active listener.
 - Give compliments appropriately.
 - Find the joy in communication.



TRY IT

Watercooler chat is when colleagues break from work and take time to socialize with one another. This often happens around a water cooler, at a coffee station, or in a break room. Choose one of the skills from above and practice using it the next time you find yourself in social settings like these.



TERMS TO KNOW

Passive

Letting something happen while offering little or no resistance.

Aggressive

Ready to confront; argumentative.

Assertive

Showing confidence without aggression.

Approachable

Friendly and easy to talk to.

2c. Practicing Critical Thinking

Part of emotional intelligence is using good judgment when you solve problems through **critical thinking**. People with the highest emotional intelligence are those who can creatively reason through issues while focusing their emotions in all the right places. Below are just two ways emotional intelligence can help you define and solve problems.



BIG IDEA

Critical thinking is an important component of the problem-solving skill. It's closely tied to self- and social awareness as you have to think about how your actions may affect others.

- **Stay motivated.** People with emotional intelligence are often motivated intrinsically rather than by external factors. They don't need prompting to improve a circumstance they're in or to create an entirely new one. If faced with a problem, they relish in solving it rather than avoiding it. Find what motivates you so you'll have the energy and faith you need to take action when the time comes.
- **Lead by example.** Leadership is about making educated and ethical decisions despite the circumstances surrounding you. It is not reserved only for supervisors. For example, if you navigate tough issues, help other people, meet your deadlines, and take part in continuous education, you're doing the types of things that strong leaders do. Any time you set a good example for others through your actions, you are acting as a leader in your field.



DID YOU KNOW

Ethical leadership and community engagement are good business. In 2019, electronics retailer Best Buy was named America's most sustainable company by Barron's financial magazine (Reilly, 2019). The retailer collects and recycles unwanted products in an effort to reduce global waste. They also further vocational education by teaching young adults basic technology skills. While other electronics retail giants have folded, Best Buy has shown a commitment to ethical decision-making that is vital to their growth.



TERM TO KNOW

Critical Thinking

Skillful analysis and evaluation of an issue or circumstance.

3. Your Unique Journey

Developing your emotional intelligence takes time. It's shaped by your education and life experiences. The strategies in this lesson are just a few of the methods you can use to grow your emotional awareness. We each learn about ourselves in different ways, so it's important to know which strategies work best for you.



REFLECT

In this lesson, you've seen a number of strategies for boosting your emotional intelligence. Which strategies do you use already? Are there any you'd like to develop further? Can you think of situations where the strategies will come in handy?

If you need help implementing the strategies from this lesson, consider taking these steps. Remember, we all need help to grow!

1. Ask a trusted friend or coworker for insight into your emotional awareness.
2. Identify areas for improvement and create a plan to address them.
3. Track your goals and priorities surrounding your development.
4. Schedule time to get regular feedback on how you're progressing.
5. Hire a professional coach or mentor for guidance.

In the next lesson, you'll take a closer look at empathy which is a key ingredient for stretching your emotional



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you reviewed **strategies for raising your emotional intelligence** at home, school, and work. So, **what is emotional intelligence?** It's the ability to perceive, understand, control, and express one's emotions and to help others do the same. Emotional intelligence is closely linked to **self- and social awareness** and interpersonal skills. It is partly a measure of how we **communicate with others to build lasting relationships**. Emotional intelligence also indicates our ability to **practice critical thinking** when faced with complex issues.

Your journey into developing your emotional intelligence is **unique** and takes time. Be sure to identify and use strategies that are right for you and look to others for helpful feedback when you need it.

REFERENCES

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