# 7 Habits of Emotionally Intelligent People

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**In This Article**


- What Is Emotional Intelligence?
- Self-Awareness
- Empathy
- Self-Regulation
- Motivation
- Social Skills
- Expressiveness
- Perceptiveness
- How to Boost Your EQ
- Emotional Intelligence Tests


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**Key Takeaways**

- Emotionally intelligent people are good at managing their emotions and understanding others' feelings.
- You can learn emotional intelligence by practicing mindfulness and reflecting on your self-awareness.
- Schools and programs teach kids and adults how to improve their emotional skills.

Emotionally intelligent people excel at recognizing and managing their own emotions as well as understanding those of others. These individuals display habits such as self-awareness, empathy, and self-regulation, enabling them to navigate interpersonal interactions and build stronger relationships. By cultivating these habits, anyone can enhance their emotional intelligence and improve their connections with others.

## What Is Emotional Intelligence?

The philosopher Aristotle spoke about emotional intelligence long before the term became popular. He said:

*"Anyone can become angry, that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not easy."*

This quote captures the concept of emotional intelligence, a widely discussed topic in psychology, education, and business. It is often referred to as EQ (emotional quotient).

## Four Skills for Emotional Intelligence

High emotional intelligence includes:

- The ability to perceive emotions
- The ability to reason with emotions
- The ability to understand emotions
- The ability to manage emotions[1]

Perceiving emotions is the most basic or initial level of emotional intelligence. These skills progress to managing emotions, the highest level. This involves handling your emotions and those of others.

**Low emotional intelligence** is marked by insensitivity, poor coping skills, emotional outbursts, and self-centeredness. To improve your skills, it helps you to understand key traits of emotionally intelligent people:

### 1. Self-Awareness

Psychologist and author Daniel Goleman identifies **self-awareness** as one of the key **components of emotional intelligence**.[2] Self-awareness involves the ability to recognize moods, emotions, and feelings.

Part of self-awareness also involves being aware of how your emotions and moods influence other people. This ability to monitor your own emotional states is a basic requirement for emotional intelligence.

### 2. Empathy

**Empathy** is another of Goleman's major elements of emotional intelligence.[2] This involves the ability to understand the emotions of other people.

In order to interact with other people in multiple life domains, such as at **work** or at school, you need to be able to know what they are feeling. If a co-worker is upset or frustrated, knowing what they are feeling can give you a much better idea of how to respond.

### 3. Self-Regulation

**Self-regulation** is central to emotional intelligence.[3] Understanding your emotions is great but not particularly useful if you cannot make use of this knowledge.

Emotionally intelligent people think before they act on their feelings. They are in tune with how they feel, but they do not let their emotions rule their lives.

**How to Develop and Practice Self-Regulation**

### 4. Motivation

Emotionally intelligent people are motivated to achieve their goals. They are capable of managing their behaviors and feelings in order to achieve long-term success.[2]

They might be nervous about making a change in their lives, but they know that managing this fear is important. By taking a leap and making the change, they know that they might make their lives better and come one step closer to attaining their goals.

### 5. Social Skills

Emotionally intelligent people tend to have strong social skills. This is likely because they are so attuned to their own feelings as well as those of others.

They know how to deal with people effectively, and they are invested in maintaining healthy social relationships and helping those around them succeed.

**How to Increase Your Social Intelligence**

### 6. Expressiveness

Sometimes people are empaths and in tune with their emotions, but struggle to actually share these feelings with others. Emotionally intelligent people not only understand feelings, but they also know how to express them appropriately.[4]

What exactly do we mean by *appropriately*? Imagine, for example, that you just had a particularly awful day at work. You are tired, frustrated, and angry about how things went at an important meeting.

An inappropriate expression of your feelings might involve coming home and getting into an argument with your spouse or sending a nasty email to your boss.

A more appropriate emotional reaction would be discussing your frustrations with your spouse, releasing some tension by going for a jog, and coming up with a plan to make the next day better than the one before.

**7. Perceptiveness**

Imagine that you find yourself getting frustrated and angry with a co-worker. As you assess your feelings, analyze what you're really upset about. Are you mad about your co-worker's actions? Does your anger stem from underlying frustrations and pressure from a boss who has heaped too much work and responsibility on your shoulders? Emotionally intelligent people can look at the situation and correctly identify the source of their feelings.[2]

At first, this might seem like an easy task, but the reality is that our emotional lives can be both complicated and messy. Locating the exact source of your feelings can be particularly tricky when you are dealing with powerful emotions such as love and anger.

**IQ vs. EQ: Which One Is More Important?**

**How to Become More Emotionally Intelligent**

Contrary to popular belief, you can learn emotional intelligence. Children and adults alike can learn to strengthen EQ.

To start, try reflecting on your level of self-awareness. For instance, are you aware of your emotions? Do you understand how your emotions impact your beliefs and your behaviors? Do you notice how your behaviors impact others around you?

Becoming aware of how we think and feel, and how our actions affect others, is a great foundation for building emotional intelligence.

**Mindfulness**

**Mindfulness techniques** can help you become more present with your thoughts and emotions. For instance, instead of yelling at someone when you're upset, you might use a deep breathing technique to buy yourself some time, rethink your strategy, and react with more understanding.

### Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is linked with improving emotional intelligence as well.[5] CBT is a form of therapy in which people learn emotional regulation. A therapist will teach you healthy coping mechanisms to handle difficult emotions and improve your relationships.

### Social and Emotional Learning Programs

Social and emotional learning programs (SEL) are implemented in some schools to teach kids how to be emotionally competent. There are also SEL programs for adults. SEL helps people develop their sense of identity, strengthen communication skills, use empathy, and achieve personal goals.[6]

### Emotional Intelligence Tests

There are online tests available that will determine a level of emotional intelligence based on your answers to various questions.[7] The tests are usually multiple-choice; they ask what your reactions would be in hypothetical situations.

For instance, do you respond to an argument by confronting the other person, shutting down, or apologizing? When you make an important decision, do you procrastinate, let someone else decide, or go with your gut? These are examples of the types of questions you'll find on EQ tests.

Remember, though, there are more factors that go into determining your EQ than an online test could compute. However, a test could get you thinking about which of your emotional skills are strongest and which areas you may wish to improve.

### Try Our Free EQ Test

Our fast and free EQ test can help you determine whether or not your responses to certain situations in life indicate a high level of emotional intelligence:

This EQ test was reviewed by Steven Gans, MD.

**Sources**


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