

BUILDING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

A Practical Guide for Personal
and Professional Growth





Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in how we interact with others, manage our own behaviour, navigate stress, and make decisions. This guide is designed to deepen your understanding of emotional intelligence and provide practical steps to develop it, with a focus on real-world application in both workplace and personal contexts.

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to recognise, understand, manage, and influence emotions - both your own and those of others.

“Emotional Intelligence is the “ability to monitor one’s own and other people’s emotions” (Salovey and Mayer, 1990)”.

Emotional intelligence includes your capacity for:

SELF-AWARENESS Recognising your emotions and how they affect your thoughts and behaviour	SELF-REGULATION (EMOTIONAL CONTROL) Managing impulsive feelings and behaviours in healthy ways	MOTIVATION Using emotional energy to pursue goals with persistence	EMPATHY (SOCIAL AWARENESS) Understanding how others are feeling	SOCIAL SKILLS (RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT) Building and maintaining healthy relationships

WHY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE MATTERS

Research shows that 95% of people believe they are self-aware, but only 10–15% actually are.

In the workplace, emotional intelligence helps you:

- Communicate clearly and confidently
- Navigate conflict and workplace challenges
- Support and lead teams with empathy
- Stay calm and focused under pressure
- Foster respectful and inclusive environments

Outside of work, emotional intelligence helps you:

- Build stronger personal relationships
- Better manage stress and emotions

- Increase self-confidence and resilience
- Improve mental health and emotional wellbeing

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL AWARENESS AND ITS EFFECTS

Developing emotional intelligence starts with improving emotional awareness and recognising the effects emotions have on your behaviour and decisions.

Tips for improving self-awareness:

- Seek constructive feedback from others.
- Journal your thoughts and feelings.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Learn new skills and enforce goal setting.
- Use positive self-talk daily.

HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

Improving your emotional intelligence is an ongoing process. Below are some key strategies:



1. PRACTICE SELF AWARENESS

Self-awareness means recognising how you're feeling, understanding the cause, and noticing how your emotions influence your behaviour.

 *Tip: If you're feeling anxious or frustrated, take a moment to reflect before reacting. Self-awareness gives you the space to respond more intentionally.*



2. RECOGNISE HOW OTHERS ARE FEELING

Understanding others' emotions involves observing verbal and non-verbal cues and adjusting your own communication accordingly.

 *Tip: emotional state of the person you're engaging with. Empathy builds stronger connections.*



3. COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Expressing yourself clearly - both in writing and speech - helps others

understand your perspective and reduces the chance of misunderstandings.

 *Tip: Choose your words carefully, and pay attention to non-verbal signals like body language and tone. Avoid reacting in the heat of the moment.*



4. BE OPEN-MINDED

Being emotionally intelligent includes staying receptive to others' ideas and perspectives. Listening with empathy builds trust and rapport.

 *Tip: Practice active listening, seek to understand before responding, and be willing to embrace new ideas or feedback.*



5. STAY CALM UNDER PRESSURE

Being able to manage stress and remain composed in challenging situations is a key sign of emotional strength.

 *Tip: Take a breath, pause before reacting, and maintain a positive, solution-focused mindset.*

MANAGING EMOTIONS

Managing your emotions isn't about pushing them down and ignoring them. It's all about finding the right moment and place to let them out. Keeping control means sharing how you feel the right way. Before you react, take a moment to calm down instead of just jumping in. Don't forget to pause, take a breath, and do what it takes to manage your own emotions.

 *Tips for managing emotions:*

- View challenges as opportunities.
- Be mindful of thoughts and feelings.
- Practice communication and social skills.
- Recognising that you have control over how you respond
- Develop calming tools like deep breathing, pausing, or seeking support

STRENGTHENING EMPATHY AND SOCIAL AWARENESS

Empathy is the ability to comprehend how other people are feeling and it is key part in forming emotional intelligence. It allows you to identify the emotional state of others and determine how you will respond.

 *Tips on strengthening empathy:*

- Practice active, non-judgmental listening.
- Try to see situations from another's point of view.
- Provide validation to the feelings of others – even if you don't fully understand them.
- Ask open-ended questions to better understand someone's experience.
- Don't always assume that you understand – take time to check in and clarify.



UNDERSTANDING AND PREVENTING BURNOUT

If you're feeling drained, overwhelmed by even simple tasks, or finding yourself easily

frustrated or angry due to stress, you might be experiencing burnout.

Burnout is defined by the APA Dictionary of Psychology, as *"physical, emotional or mental exhaustion, often accompanied by reduced motivation, decreased performance, and negative attitudes toward yourself and others"*.

UNDERSTAND THE SIGNS OF BURNOUT

Everyone experiences burnout differently, but it's important to remember that you are not alone. Common signs may include:

- Constant fatigue, even after rest
- Frustration or irritability
- Loss of motivation or interest in work
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleep disturbances or headaches
- Feeling emotionally distant or detached

RECOVERY AND PREVENTION TIPS

Recognising that you are experiencing burnout is the first step to recovery. Make sure to prioritise your mental health and practice mindfulness techniques.

💡 *Tips for managing burnout include:*

- Identify and address the sources of stress
- Create clear boundaries between work and personal life
- Practice mindfulness or daily relaxation rituals
- Move your body - regular physical activity can help
- Take regular breaks and use your leave
- Talk to someone - a friend, trusted colleague, manager, or mental health professional

GETTING HELP

If you, or someone else, is in immediate danger you should call the police on 000. For non-emergency police help, contact 131 444.

If you are experiencing crisis and need support, there are many free, confidential support services available:

- **Lifeline** is a free and confidential service staffed by trained telephone counsellors to assist people in crisis. Lifeline is open to people of all ages. Phone: 13 11 14
- **TIACS** is a free phone and text counselling service offering mental health support to Australia's blue-collar community. Phone: 0488 846 988
- **Beyond Blue** is available for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to support people struggling with mental health. Phone: 1300 224 636

Reaching out is a sign of strength - you do not have to go through challenges alone.

REFERENCES/FURTHER READING



<https://mtaq.com.au/building-emotional-intelligence-a-practical-guide-for-personal-and-professional-growth/>

Note: The information contained in this factsheet, including contact details and links, is current at time of drafting (January 2025)