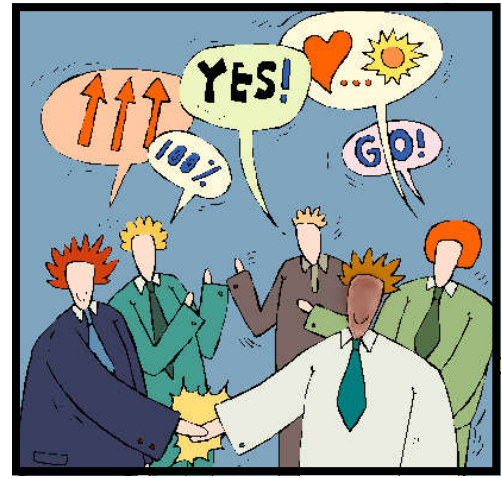


# Emotional Intelligence for Coworkers



**Y**ou may believe that your ability to be successful on the job is linked primarily to your IQ, but in recent years social science researchers have observed that workplace success is more dependent on emotional intelligence, or EI.

EI is your ability to recognize and be aware of your emotions, to accurately perceive emotions in others, and to use this awareness to empower successful workplace relationships. Good EI promotes positive interactions with others and leads to more cooperation and a better ability to adapt to a changing work environment.

## Examples of EI include . . .

- Knowing that missing a deadline will have a negative impact on coworkers, and deciding to finish early in order to enhance goodwill
- Sensing a coworker's frustration, and inquiring about it rather than ignoring it
- Knowing that your attitude affects others, and therefore choosing to display a pleasant demeanor despite the way you might actually feel
- Sensing when there is a need to resolve tension between you and a coworker, and being proactive in initiating that discussion

## Improving Your EI

You can improve your EI by focusing on your feelings and those of others. Pay attention not just to what is said, but to tone of voice, nonverbal cues, and ac-

tions. Consider the most effective and suitable response to the message you perceive.

## Challenges to Work On

The ability to consciously decide how you react to certain emotions you experience is an EI skill called self-regulation. For example, self-regulation allows you to taper your response to provocations and incidents in the workplace to avoid an inappropriate emotional response that would cause you to lose control over the outcome.

Try asking your supervisor or good friend about areas where you need improvement in self-regulation. Turn these into personal goals for change. Use a coach, a counselor, or your employee assistance program to help you develop strategies for tackling these habits. Check out the book titled *The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book*. It's loaded with great exercises for personal change and improving EI.

Do you frequently interrupt coworkers while they are talking? Do you pay more attention to your phone than to those speaking to you? What are some of your EI challenges?

## Positively Influencing Others

It is well known that attitudes—both positive and negative—are contagious. Appreciating this dynamic can help you become a positive force in your workplace. You may not feel your best every day, but remember this will empower you to intervene with negative feeling states.

(Hint: To improve your attitude and be a positive influence, take care of yourself: get enough sleep, eat right, get daily exercise, and take appropriate time off from work to recharge and renew.)

## Improve Your Empathy Reach

Empathy is your ability to understand another person's needs and the emotional state that person experiences regarding those needs, and then to respond appropriately. Improving your ability to empathize (your "empathic reach") allows others to feel heard and prompts a give-and-take response from people that enhances relationships.

Listening well and talking less is the key to improving your empathic reach. Helping others really feel heard is a learned skill. For example, if a coworker says, "Oh no, it's raining outside," don't just say, "Yes, it is." Instead, reach with empathy by saying, "Let's hope it stops before your tennis match today. You've worked so hard to prepare for it." This is an example of a more meaningful and relationship-building response.

## EI is about People Skills

Emotional intelligence is about people skills. Practice a bit of self-awareness, and believe in your ability to positively affect others and your organization. And be open to learning about areas where you can improve by listening to others, considering the feedback they provide, and acquiring new habits of positivity and self-regulation. This approach will add to your job satisfaction and happiness, and will promote a positive work culture for all.

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