

Five ways to become an emotionally intelligent leader

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“Leading” is a people job. Many leaders are good at analyzing and organizing. Yet they may not be naturally strong in people skills like motivating, praising and empathizing. The good news is you can learn and improve these competencies with a little work.

What’s emotional intelligence?

Daniel Goleman is a psychologist who specializes in emotional intelligence (EI). He says EI is “the ability to understand and manage your own emotions and those of the people around you.”¹

According to Goleman, managers who have strong EI enjoy respect and cooperation. Their teams sense they’re fair and tuned in to workers’ points of view and feelings. This helps inspire them to do their best for you.

How do you build EI?

Here are five key areas of EI that can help good leaders become great leaders¹:

- 1. Self-awareness.** Self-awareness means knowing how you feel and how you impact others. You can build self-awareness by slowing down and taking notice of your emotions at work and at home.

Consider keeping a journal. Jot down your thoughts and feelings during the day. When you read your journal after a week or two, you may notice patterns in your moods and behaviors. If you see room for improvement, you can always choose to change patterns and reactions that could be impacting others around you.
- 2. Self-regulation.** Self-regulated people are usually in control of themselves. They rarely make rash decisions or fly off the handle.

You can practice and improve self-regulation by:

- **Staying calm.** The next time you get upset, practice slow, deep breathing. If you have to, remove yourself from the situation until you calm down. Leaders are rarely at their best when they’re angry or frustrated.
 - **Taking responsibility.** Do you tend to blame other people when things go wrong? People with strong EI admit mistakes and take responsibility.
 - **Being fair.** If you’re about to explode, write down your feelings privately. When you calm down, re-read what you wrote. Were you being fair or were you overreacting? Again, this is a way to learn about yourself as you try to increase your EI.
- 3. Optimism and motivation.** You’re a role model. When workers see you upbeat and excited, they’re likely to follow suit. Even in a negative situation, try to find good. This can include the things you’ve learned and achieved. Keep a positive attitude – even when the chips are down.
 - 4. Caring about how others feel.** Leaders with empathy really listen to others. They notice body language, listen for feelings and can put themselves in someone else’s shoes. This translates to showing workers that you’re sensitive to them. You can identify with their situations and you “get” their feelings.
 - 5. Social skills.** The fifth and final aspect of EI is using social skills like good communication, conflict resolution and praise. Good social skills help you manage, give feedback and connect with clarity and honesty.

Overall, leaders with high EI earn trust and respect from their teams. Practice EI to be your best as a leader.

¹www.mindtools.com