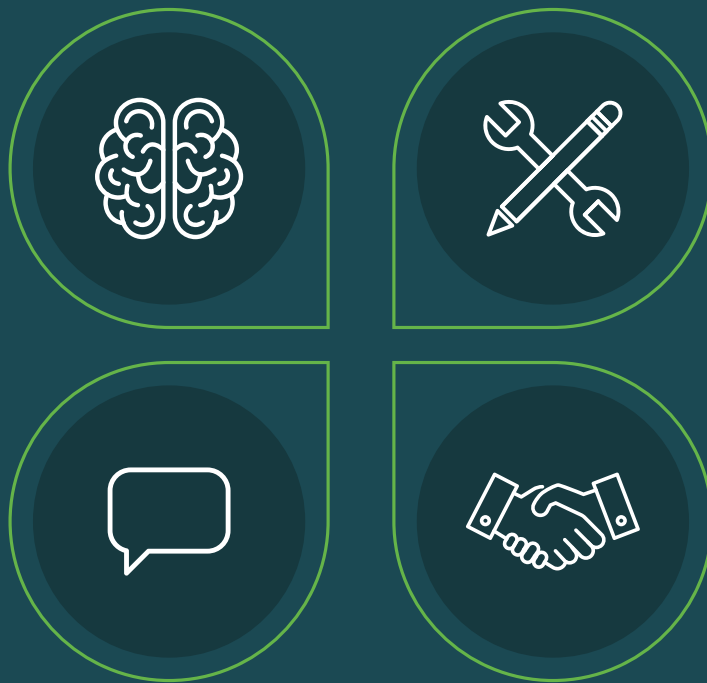


# PRACTICAL EQ

A Handbook for Developing Your Emotional Intelligence



**BIZ**  **LIBRARY**

Emotional intelligence (also known as EQ) is a fairly new concept that has received a ton of attention in the last couple of decades.

All that attention is certainly for good reason – researchers who study emotional intelligence have found that those with high EQ are, on average, seeing greater success in their careers (which includes making more money) and proving more effective in their roles compared to those who don't demonstrate high emotional intelligence.

EQ skills aren't confined to performance and success at work, though – they carry over into nearly every aspect of life, and they can have a tremendous impact on overall well-being.

Luckily, EQ isn't a “you have it, or you don't” kind of characteristic – it's a set of skills that can be learned and continually improved. There are many ways to work on your emotional skills, but the important thing to remember is that it takes patience and practice. These aren't skills you can develop overnight.

We've created this handbook to guide you through each facet of EQ, and to help you recognize your own growth and development by reflecting on how you've practiced the suggested applications.

## How to Use This Handbook

According to author Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence skills can be divided into four main domains:



SELF-AWARENESS



SELF-MANAGEMENT



SOCIAL  
AWARENESS



RELATIONSHIP  
MANAGEMENT

This handbook is divided into four sections, one for each of these domains. Each section defines the domain, talks about why it's beneficial to improve in that area, and shares several **practices for furthering your EQ skills** within that domain.

Each section has several questions for reflection at the end. These should be completed **after you've already taken some time to focus on and practice your skills in each area**. Taking the time to think through these questions and write down responses will help you to recognize which practices are helpful, and how your behaviors are affected by intentionally working on your EQ.

Each of these four areas build on each other, so when you're working on improving your emotional intelligence, the best path is to **start with self-awareness practices and move forward from there**. As tempting as it can be to skip right to managing relationships, it will be very difficult to improve those if you haven't been practicing skills in the first three categories.

So, if you're ready, let's jump in!

## What It Is

Self-awareness is the conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires.

## How Improving It Helps You

The key word in the definition of self-awareness is "conscious."

You may subconsciously be aware of your emotions and their effect on you, but if you're not consciously addressing them then you won't be able to manage them. They'll manage you instead!

Self-awareness is foundational in how you relate to yourself and others. Gaining a better understanding of your own emotions, why they're arising, and how you're reacting to them will help you to choose more mindful and beneficial responses.

Having a clearer understanding of the motives behind your everyday actions is the first step in making intentional, positive changes in your attitudes, behaviors, relationships, and circumstances.

*Take some time to think about why you want to gain more self-awareness, and write your response here:*

### Why do I want to improve my self-awareness?

---

---

---

---

## Practices to Be More Self-Aware

### Journaling

Take quick notes throughout the day on emotions that you've felt. Try to use one or two specific words to name the emotion and describe why you think you felt that way. Be honest with yourself, even if you think it isn't good to feel a certain emotion. You can keep this journal private, so don't worry about others judging your emotions.

To gain more insight into your emotions, here is some further information you can record about your interactions throughout the day and how they made you feel:

- Who you interacted with and your relationship to them
- The topic of the interaction
- What emotions you felt during the interaction
- How strongly you felt those emotions
- Whether you felt in control of those emotions

## Mood Meter App

If you'd rather not use a journal, download the free Mood Meter app, developed by researchers at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.

This app allows you to record your emotions whenever you want, choosing from pre-selected words on a grid. You can set reminders to check in, describe why you're feeling the way you are, and view reports of past emotional check-ins. Learn more at [www.moodmeterapp.com](http://www.moodmeterapp.com).

## Assess Your Self-Talk

What you think affects how you feel, and what you do and say. Pay attention to how you speak to yourself in your own mind. Are you often bolstering your own confidence? Or do your thoughts tend to be self-defeating?

Self-talk can change your emotions for better or worse, so it's important to evaluate how you address yourself. Start listening in and pose these questions to yourself:

- Would I be comfortable saying these things to someone I love?
- Am I overreacting to this situation?
- Am I making assumptions about what others think?
- Am I giving myself labels?
- Am I making things more black and white than they really are?
- Are these thoughts helping me to move forward or making me feel stuck?

## Be More Mindful

Mindfulness has been scientifically proven to have innumerable benefits, and each of the techniques above could fall under improving mindfulness. Being mindful and being aware of your own thoughts and feelings go hand in hand. Here are several more ways to increase your self-awareness through mindful practices:

1. Learn simple meditation techniques that help you to focus on the present moment.
2. Eat slowly and intentionally, noticing how your senses respond to the experience.
3. Practice yoga, tai chi, or any physical activity with slow, controlled movements.
4. Go for a walk or run in a natural setting as regularly as you can.
5. Close your eyes while listening to music you enjoy, paying close attention to each aspect of it.

Mindfulness is all about keeping yourself present. When your mind is focused on the present moment, you'll be more adept at noticing how your emotions are affected by both internal and external sources.

Choosing from these techniques or others you've learned, commit to at least one method of improving your self-awareness and write it here:

**To improve my self-awareness, what steps am I going to take right now?**

---

---

---

---

## Questions For Reflection

Once you've spent some time using these or other practices to focus on improving your self-awareness, think through the questions below to reflect on what you've found.

***What are some patterns I can see through my journal entries?***

---

---

---

---

***Is there a particular emotion that I feel more often than others?  
When and why do I feel it?***

---

---

---

---

***Are there certain situations or interactions with certain people where I could improve how I respond to my emotions?***

---

---

---

---

***How would I describe my own self-talk? Harsh, gracious, critical, supportive, cynical, mindful? Is it primarily one view or multiple?***

---

---

---

---

***What are some things I've learned about myself by paying more attention to my emotions?***

---

---

---

---

***How am I going to use these insights?***

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What It Is

Self-management is how you direct and control your behavior by recognizing and responding to your emotions. It may also be referenced as self-regulation or self-control.

## How Improving It Helps You

Once you've taken steps to improve your self-awareness (your ability to accurately identify your own emotions), you can use that awareness to influence how you respond in a given situation.

Self-management helps to turn reactive instincts into intentional responses.

**Emotions can help or hurt situations and people, so being able to manage your emotions allows you to avoid unintentional hurt – both to yourself and others – and create more positive outcomes through the way you manage your behavior.**

For clarification, self-management does not mean ignoring emotions – it's about handling them appropriately, not pretending they're not there.

Regardless of how well you're able to manage your emotions now, this is a skill that can continually be improved to see benefits to your mindsets, behaviors, ambitions, and relationships.

*Take some time to think about why you want to commit to better self-management, and write your response here:*

### Why do I want to improve my self-management?

---

---

---

---

## Practices to Improve Your Self-Management

### Seek Feedback from Others

We often judge ourselves by our intentions, while simultaneously judging others by their actions. That's why it's so easy to justify our own behavior as okay, even though we judge others to be in the wrong when they do the same thing.

To get a better idea of how well you're responding to your emotions, seek feedback from others to look at your actions, rather than only your intentions. Ask the people who you're closest to, since they'll be more accurate and honest than someone you've met recently.

## Don't Dwell Downward

Being aware of negative emotions is helpful – dwelling on them is not. For instance, in the case of anxiety, when you become aware that you're experiencing it, you can take steps to lessen it. But if you keep thinking about how anxious you are and everything that's going wrong and all the ways you're failing and how everyone is upset with you and you'll never accomplish anything and... you get the point.

Negative emotions build on each other, and when you dwell on them you're closing yourself off to positive realities. So, what's the secret to getting out of that downward spiral?

Gratitude. Choose to be thankful, even for the tiniest thing you can come up with at the moment.

Gratitude is a magnet for other positive emotions, so it can be a powerful way to move your mind from dark to light.

## The Five Chairs

Behavioral coach and author Louise Evans has developed a method for managing your emotions by considering five choices, represented by five different chairs. Thinking about the choice that each chair presents can help you to respond to a situation with helpful, appropriate emotions.

Here are the basics of The Five Chairs, based on [Evans' 2017 TEDx Talk](#):

### 1. Attack

This is the "I'm right" chair, and it represents the choice to put your own pride ahead of others' emotions and well-being.

### 2. Self-doubt

This chair represents judgment of yourself, succumbing to fear, or playing the victim.

### 3. Wait

This chair means choosing to step back and observe the situation, asking yourself "why" questions to gain understanding and perspective.

### 4. Detect

This chair is where you choose to become self-aware and assertive (not aggressive) in who you are and what you need.

### 5. Connect

This chair is the choice to display empathy and compassion, putting your ego on the back-burner and listening to others.

When you're responding to an emotional situation, you don't have to choose one of the first two chairs. Visualize yourself sitting in the Wait chair first, so you can move to the fourth and fifth chairs more quickly.

## Pick Up the Remote

Shainna Ali, Ph.D. uses a [remote control analogy](#) to describe how you can take control of your own emotions. Through self-awareness, you can learn to recognize your limits when your emotions are heightened, and determine if you need to pause, stop, or turn off and recharge:



## 1. Pause

This is simply taking a few moments to gain control of your reactions – breathe deeply, count to ten, take a sip of water, stand up and walk around the room, etc.

## 2. Stop

This is when you need to remove yourself from the situation – leave the room, go for a walk, go get a glass of water – then come back once you feel more in control of your emotions.

## 3. Turn off and Recharge

If you're noticing emotions frequently getting the better of you, it's probably time to turn off so you can recharge. Disconnect from technology that can be a distraction, then take time to reconnect with yourself and what grounds you. Recharging can look different for everyone, but common preferences are spending quality time with people you love, getting in a focused workout, meditating or praying, or spending time in nature.

*Whether through these techniques or others you've learned, write down some ways you can immediately start managing your emotions better:*

**To improve my own self-management, what steps am I going to take right now?**

---

---

---

---

## Questions for Reflection

Once you've spent some time using these or other practices to focus on improving your self-management, think through the questions below to reflect on what you've found.

***What have I learned about my behaviors from others' feedback?***

---

---

---

---

***How have I used feedback and/or self-awareness to respond more positively to my emotions?***

---

---

---

---

***What techniques have helped me pull myself out of negative thought patterns?***

---

---

---

---

***When thinking of the five chairs, which one have I typically gone to first?  
Has that changed since I've been practicing self-management?***

---

---

---

---

***How have I seen improvement in my responses to heightened emotions through  
pausing, stopping, or turning off and recharging?***

---

---

---

---

***How am I directing my behaviors to be more aligned with my personal values?***

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What It Is

Social awareness is about recognizing and understanding others' emotions, needs, and concerns. It involves practicing empathy, learning how organizational structures affect people, and understanding how to meet others' needs.

## How Improving It Helps You

Social awareness is a prerequisite for building solid relationships, whether that's with friends, family, neighbors, colleagues, clients, or anyone else in your life.

**The key to social awareness lies in your ability to empathize with others** – to imagine yourself in their place, understanding their motives, worries, joys, pains, hopes, etc. Showing genuine empathy helps others to trust you, and trust opens many doors.

The opposite is also true – a lack of empathy creates distrust, resulting in others wanting to keep their distance from you. Some see empathy as a sign of weakness, but research has proven that the most successful leaders and organizations are those who highly value empathy and the bridges it builds.

Improving your social awareness starts with tuning into others' emotions, so you can better understand them and use that understanding to strengthen relationships.

*Take some time to think about why you want to heighten your social awareness, and write your response here:*

### Why do I want to improve my social awareness?

---

---

---

---

## Practices to Improve Your Social Awareness

### Active Listening

Hearing is not the same as listening, and listening is not always active listening. To recognize others' emotions and be able to empathize with them, you have to actively listen beyond the words they're saying and imagine yourself in their position, feeling what they're feeling.

A few tips for doing this are:

#### Putting your thoughts on mute

- It's too easy to get side-tracked by our own thoughts when we're listening to someone, so give yourself a mental cue to mute your thought stream and tune in fully to the other person. This helps to

stop your mind from wandering and formulating what you want to say, and it forces you to listen to everything they're saying before jumping in with a response.

### Laying aside assumptions

- Janet Sprimont says in an *Inspireity* article, "Good listeners don't assume they know or understand a situation before hearing someone out. They listen, look for the facts of the situation, and then analyze the emotions surrounding it."
- You may think you fully understand a situation, but you don't until you listen to others' perspectives. Do a mental check of any assumptions you may be carrying and let them go so you can reserve judgment while you listen.

### Noting energy in tone of voice

- Listen for the energy in how someone speaks and whether you know this to be their typical energy level, or if they sound more or less enthusiastic than usual. This could give you a clue to how they're feeling – regardless of the words they're saying – and help you determine the best response.

### Facial Expressions and Body Language

Whether someone is speaking or not, their physical expressions often give away their emotions. Do they keep looking away from the person they're interacting with? Are they fidgety? Completely stoic? Then there's probably something on their mind more interesting or pressing (to them) than the current conversation.

Or, are they focused on the speaker, making eye contact, and nodding while they listen? Paying attention to these factors can tell you a lot about how engaged people are in their interactions with others, or whether there may be something on their mind that they deem more important.

Keep in mind, people have different levels of expressiveness, so if you don't know someone very well, don't assume they're more or less engaged than someone else solely based on their outward enthusiasm.

### Empathetic Acknowledgment

Showing understanding and empathy toward someone doesn't mean you have to agree with their point of view.

What's important is to acknowledge their emotions as valid, whether or not you agree with what they're saying. **If someone's emotions weren't valid, then they wouldn't be having them, so pay attention to how you respond and ensure you're not dismissing, judging, or rejecting their emotions.**

Here are some example responses to show you're aware of their emotions, without either agreeing or disagreeing with them:

- "I can understand why that is upsetting for you."
- "I can see this is an uncomfortable situation for you."
- "I hear your concern and appreciate that you care."
- "I haven't had that experience myself, but I can imagine how difficult it is."
- "I appreciate that you trust me enough to share that."

## Asking Guiding Questions

If you are in a situation where you think someone doesn't have good reason to be feeling the way they are, again, don't invalidate their feelings. **Instead of responding by telling them that they don't understand or they're wrong, ask questions so you can better understand why they feel the way they do.**

These thought-provoking questions will help you to see the other person's perspective more fully, and being asked to explain will help them process through their emotions, perhaps even coming to the conclusion themselves that they aren't reacting appropriately.

You don't need to be a psychologist to know what kinds of questions to ask. Here are some basic ones that apply in many contexts:

- "Why do you think you're feeling that way?"
- "Do you think that's really what's upsetting you, or could it be something else?"
- "Could this stem from a miscommunication or an assumption?"
- "What was it about that decision/situation/interaction/etc. that made you feel that way?"
- "What do you think would be the best next step?"

*Whether through these techniques or others you've learned, write down some ways you can work on better recognizing and understanding others' emotions:*

**To improve my social awareness, what steps am I going to take right now?**

---

---

---

---

## Questions for Reflection

Once you've spent some time using these or other practices to focus on improving your social awareness, think through the questions below to reflect on what you've found.

***What steps have I taken to become more aware of others' emotions?***

---

---

---

---

---

---

***When listening to others, what do I do to consciously focus on the meaning of what they're saying?***

---

---

---

---

***What's an assumption I've made that turned out to be inaccurate when I listened to someone else's perspective?***

---

---

---

---

***Have there been times where I've dismissed or judged someone's emotions?  
What could I have done or said to validate them instead?***

---

---

---

---

***How have I noticed others showing empathy to me?***

---

---

---

---

---

---

***How have my relationships been affected by practicing greater awareness and empathy?***

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What It Is

Managing relationships is about intentionally building bonds with others, learning how to positively influence interactions, and negotiating through difficult situations.

It's more than just having relationships – it's proactively taking steps to ensure they're healthy and beneficial to both parties.

## How Improving It Helps You

We as humans are a social species – we survive and thrive when we have healthy relationships with those around us. When meaning and fulfillment are scarce, strong bonds with family, friends, and colleagues can work wonders on our emotional health and behavior.

There are many complexities in negotiating relationships, but continually working to improve your self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness will help you to stay confident and clear-headed in every interaction.

Maintaining healthy relationships includes practices like monitoring your conversation habits, setting and keeping boundaries, and developing a mindset that assumes goodwill in others.

**Taking steps to improve the health and depth of your relationships, whether at home or at work, can blot out any feelings of purposelessness or isolation, and steady you in any circumstance.**

*Take some time to think about why you want to be better at managing your relationships, and write your response here:*

### Why do I want to improve my relationships?

---

---

---

---

## Practices to Better Manage Relationships

### Having Great Conversations

Can you think of people who seem to be natural-born conversationalists? Not those who are just inspiring speakers, but people who you've talked with and left feeling energized or completely understood.

Great conversations are essential to great relationships, but many of us lack confidence in this area. Radio host Celeste Headlee did a TEDx Talk where she translated her interviewing skills into tips for having meaningful conversations. Her ten tips are:



## 1. Don't Multi-task

Be present and in the moment – don't be half in the conversation and half out.

## 2. Don't Pontificate

Conversations are an opportunity to learn from others. They are not the place to state your opinion while staying closed off to what others have to say.

## 3. Use Open-Ended Questions

Start questions with who, what, when, where, why, or how – you'll get more interesting and thoughtful responses when you ask questions that encourage others to be descriptive.

## 4. Go With the Flow

Let go of thoughts that come up while the other person is still speaking. If you're locked onto thinking how you want to respond, you've stopped listening to what they're saying.

## 5. If You Don't Know, Say That You Don't Know

Be cautious with your words. If you don't know something to be true, don't state it as fact.

## 6. Don't Equate Your Experience with Someone Else's

Our experiences are individual and unique – don't turn the conversation to your similar experience and make it about you. Keep asking questions.

## 7. Try Not to Repeat Yourself

Don't keep rephrasing the same point over and over – it becomes condescending and unhelpful to the conversation.

## 8. Stay Out of the Weeds

Little details that you're struggling to remember (years, dates, names, etc.) are often unimportant and you can let them go to keep the conversation moving.

## 9. Listen

Listening is perhaps the most important skill you can ever learn. Distraction comes easily, but meaningful connection happens when you quiet yourself to hear others.

## 10. Be Brief

Respect others' time – don't monopolize it.

## Setting and Keeping Boundaries

The care you show for yourself should mirror the care you show for others. Many people struggle with either not setting boundaries for themselves, or not respecting others' boundaries. In her work, researcher and author Brené Brown discusses how **people who lack boundaries often end up feeling mistreated or bitter – which is beneficial to neither party in a relationship.**

Brown suggests keeping this mantra top of mind, so you're able to extend the benefit of the doubt to others (which is the next practice we'll discuss):

***"What boundaries do I need to put in place so I can work from a place of integrity and extend the most generous interpretations of the intentions, words, and actions of others?"***

*Here are the basic steps to ensure you have appropriate boundaries in your personal and professional relationships:*

### 1. Identify What You Need

You should have a clear goal in mind – for example, feeling safer, being treated fairly, or relating to one another in a more positive way.

### 2. Define Boundaries to Help Meet Your Needs

Make them concrete, easily understood, and define consequences so others know what you expect.

### 3. Communicate Your Boundaries

Be firm, but kind and respectful. Don't place blame, explain excessively, or apologize for setting a boundary. Reinforce that you value the relationship and that's why this boundary is important.

### 4. Enforce Those Boundaries

If someone violates your boundary, enforce the consequences you outlined right away, don't let it slide. Your consequences must be realistic and you must follow through with them to let others know your boundaries cannot be disregarded.

## Always Assuming Goodwill

Giving others the benefit of the doubt is a highly beneficial and rewarding practice. Assuming goodwill in others' intentions can be tough to keep as a habit with everyone you meet, but it's absolutely worth it to nurture that mindset.

The idea is to **assume others are operating based on positive intentions, rather than negative ones.** That makes it much easier to manage your responses. If someone does or says something that upsets you, pause to acknowledge their positive intentions. Then, if you have the opportunity, offer constructive feedback on why those intentions aren't resulting in positive outcomes.

It's especially important to foster this mindset in your closest relationships, but work on extending this habit to acquaintances and strangers, also.

**If you're after more fulfilling everyday living, then make it your goal to always assume goodwill in others.**

*Whether through these techniques or others you've learned, write down some ways you can work on better managing your relationships:*

**To improve my relationships, what steps am I going to take right now?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Questions for Reflection

Once you've spent some time using these or other practices to focus on improving your relationships, think through the questions below to reflect on what you've found.

***What conversation habits have I noticed that I could replace with more helpful ones?***

---

---

---

---

***What negative feelings am I holding that stem from not setting a boundary with someone?***

---

---

---

---

***What boundaries do I need to set or enforce more firmly?***

---

---

---

---

***How am I making sure I'm staying respectful of others' boundaries?***

---

---

---

---

*How am I focusing on a mindset that assumes goodwill in others' intentions?*

---

---

---

---

*By being proactive in nurturing my relationships, how am I seeing them improve?*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Get Started with  
Emotional Intelligence  
Training in Your  
Organization**

If you've found these practices helpful, imagine how your workplace could transform if more people were working to improve their EQ! Learn how you can provide and encourage emotional intelligence training in **this article**.

**\*If you've typed in this handbook within a web browser, make sure to save your work before clicking to the article.\***