

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence refers to the unique human mental ability to handle and reason about information (Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008).

Thus, emotional intelligence (**EI**):

“concerns the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought”

(Mayer et al., 2008, p. 511).

According to almost three decades of research, emotional intelligence (EI) results from the interaction of intelligence and emotion (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). EI refers to an individual’s capacity to understand and manage emotions (Cherry, 2018).

By the 1980s, psychologists and biologists, among others, were focusing on the important role other skill sets — needed to process emotional information — played in promoting worldly success, leadership, personal fulfilment and happy relationships.

In 1990, psychologists **John Mayer** (University of New Hampshire) and **Peter Salovey** of Yale theorized that a unitary intelligence underlay those other skill sets. They coined the term, emotional intelligence, which they broke down into four “branches”:

- Identifying emotions on a nonverbal level
- Using emotions to guide cognitive thinking
- Understanding the information emotions convey and the actions emotions generate
- Regulating one’s own emotions, for personal benefit and for the common good

As a science reporter for the New York Times, Goleman was exposed to Mayer’s and Salovey’s work and took the concept of emotional intelligence a step further. In his eponymous book from 1995, he argued that existing definitions of intelligence needed to be reworked. IQ was still important, but intellect alone was no guarantee of adeptness in identifying one’s own emotions or the emotional expressions of others. It took a special kind of intelligence, Goleman said, to process emotional information and utilize it effectively — whether to facilitate good personal decisions, to resolve conflicts or to motivate oneself and others.

GOLEMAN’S FIVE COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Goleman broadened Mayer’s and Salovey’s four-branch system to incorporate five essential elements of emotional intelligence — or EQ, the shorthand he sometimes uses:

- **Emotional self-awareness** — knowing what one is feeling at any given time and understanding the impact those moods have on others
- **Self-regulation** — controlling or redirecting one’s emotions; anticipating consequences before acting on impulse

- **Motivation** — utilizing emotional factors to achieve goals, enjoy the learning process and persevere in the face of obstacles
- **Empathy** — sensing the emotions of others
- **Social Skills** — managing relationships, inspiring others and inducing desired responses from them.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness refers to the capacity to recognize and understand emotions and to have a sense of how one's actions, moods and the emotions of others take effect.

It involves keeping track of emotions and noticing different emotional reactions, as well as being able to identify the emotions correctly.

Self-awareness also includes recognizing that how we feel and what we do are related, and having awareness of one's own personal strengths and limitations.

Self-awareness is associated with being open to different experiences and new ideas and learning from social interactions.

Self-regulation

This aspect of EI involves the appropriate expression of emotion.

Self-regulation includes being flexible, coping with change, and managing conflict. It also refers to diffusing difficult or tense situations and being aware of how one's actions affect others and take ownership of these actions.

Social skills

This component of EI refers to interacting well with other people. It involves applying an understanding of the emotions of ourselves and others to communicate and interact with others on a day-to-day basis.

Different social skills include – active listening, verbal communication skills, non-verbal communication skills, leadership, and developing rapport.

Empathy

Empathy refers to being able to understand how other people are feeling.

This component of EI enables an individual to respond appropriately to other people based on recognizing their emotions.

It enables people to sense power dynamics that play a part in all social relationships, but also most especially in workplace relations.

Empathy involves understanding power dynamics, and how these affect feelings and behavior, as well as accurately perceiving situations where power dynamics come into force.

Motivation

Motivation, when considered as a component of EI, refers to intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation means that an individual is driven to meet personal needs and goals, rather than being motivated by external rewards such as money, fame, and recognition.

People who are intrinsically motivated also experience a state of 'flow', by being immersed in an activity.

They are more likely to be action-oriented, and set goals. Such individuals typically have a need for achievement and search for ways to improve. They are also more likely to be committed and take initiative.