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13 Signs of High Emotional Intelligence



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In 1995, psychologist and science journalist Daniel Goleman published a book introducing most of the world to the nascent concept of emotional intelligence. (<https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/what-is-emotional-intelligence-exactly-heres-the-entire-concept-summed-up-in-1-s.html>) The idea--that an ability to understand and manage emotions greatly increases our chances of success--quickly took off, and it went on to greatly influence the way people think about emotions and human behavior.

But what does emotional intelligence (<https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/why-we-all-need-emotional-intelligence-more-than-ever.html>) look like, as manifested in everyday life?

For the past two years, I've explored that question in researching my forthcoming book, *EQ, Applied* (<https://www.eqapplied.com/>). In doing so, I've identified a number of actions that illustrate how emotional intelligence appears in the real world.

Here are 13 of them:

1. You think about feelings.

Emotional intelligence begins with what is called self- and social awareness, the ability to recognize emotions (and their impact) in both yourself and others.

That awareness begins with reflection. You ask questions like:

- What are my emotional strengths? What are my weaknesses?
- How does my current mood affect my thoughts and decision making?
- What's going on under the surface that influences what others say or do?

Pondering questions like these yield valuable insights that can be used to your advantage.

2. You pause.

The pause is as simple as taking a moment to stop and think before you speak or act. (Easy in theory, difficult in practice.) This can help save you from embarrassing moments or from making commitments too quickly.

In other words, pausing helps you refrain from making a permanent decision based on a temporary emotion.

3. You strive to control your thoughts.

You don't have much control over the emotion you experience in a given moment. But you can control your reaction to those emotions--by focusing on your thoughts. (As it's been said: You can't prevent a bird from landing on your head, but you *can* keep it from building a nest.)

By striving to control your thoughts, you resist becoming a slave to your emotions, allowing yourself to live in a way that's in harmony with your goals and values.

4. You benefit from criticism.

Nobody enjoys negative feedback. But you know that criticism is a chance to learn, even if it's not delivered in the best way. And even when it's unfounded, it gives you a window into how others think.

When you receive negative feedback, you keep your emotions in check and ask yourself: How can this make me better?

5. You show authenticity.

Authenticity doesn't mean sharing everything about yourself, to everyone, all of the time. It *does* mean saying what you mean, meaning what you say, and sticking to your values and principles above all else.

You know not everyone will appreciate your sharing your thoughts and feelings. But the ones who matter will.

6. You demonstrate empathy.

The ability to show empathy, (<https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/empathy-the-basic-quality-many-leaders-keep-getting-wrong.html>) which includes understanding others' thoughts and feelings, helps you connect with others. Instead of judging or labeling others, you work hard to see things through their eyes.

Empathy doesn't necessarily mean agreeing with another person's point of view. Rather, it's about striving to understand--which allows you to build deeper, more connected relationships.

7. You praise others.

All humans crave acknowledgement and appreciation. When you commend others, you satisfy that craving and build trust in the process.

This all begins when you focus on the good in others. Then, by sharing specifically what you appreciate, (<https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/the-1-company-perk-that-every-employee-craves-and-its-completely-free.html>) you inspire them to be the best version of themselves.

8. You give helpful feedback.

Negative feedback (<https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/heres-how-you-give-negative-feedback-thats-emotionally-intelligent.html>) has great potential to hurt the feelings of others. Realizing this, you reframe criticism as constructive feedback, so the recipient sees it as helpful instead of harmful.

9. You apologize.

It takes strength and courage to be able to say you're sorry. But doing so demonstrates humility, a quality that will naturally draw others to you.

Emotional intelligence helps you realize that apologizing doesn't always mean you're wrong. It *does* mean valuing your relationship more than your ego.

10. You forgive and forget.

Hanging on to resentment is like leaving a knife inside a wound. While the offending party moves on with their life, you never give yourself the chance to heal.

When you forgive and forget, you prevent others from holding your emotions hostage--allowing you to move forward.

11. You keep your commitments.

It's common nowadays for people to break an agreement or commitment when they feel like it. Of course, bailing on an evening of Netflix with a friend will cause less harm than breaking a promise to your child or missing a major business deadline.

But when you make a habit of keeping your word--in things big and small--you develop a strong reputation for reliability and trustworthiness.

12. You help others.

One of the greatest ways to positively impact the emotions of others is to help them.

Most people don't really care where you graduated from, or even about your previous accomplishments. But what about the hours you're willing to take out of your schedule to listen or help out? Your readiness to get down in the trenches and work alongside them?

Actions like these build trust and inspire others to follow your lead when it counts.

13. You protect yourself from emotional sabotage.

You realize that emotional intelligence also has a dark side (<https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/10-ways-manipulators-use-emotional-intelligence-for-evil-and-how-to-fight-back.html>)--such as when individuals attempt to manipulate others' emotions to promote a personal agenda or for some other selfish cause.

And that's why you continue to sharpen your own emotional intelligence--to protect yourself when they do.

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3 Simple Questions to Improve Your Emotional Intelligence

