

Healthy Habits



Habits to Build Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence, sometimes called **EQ** or **EO**, is a set of skills that influences our ability to build healthy productive relationships. Unlike personality or intelligence, which are consistent over the lifespan, EQ is a *set of skills* that can be learned, practiced, and put in place over time.

Like all habits and behaviors we want to change, building EQ requires mindful effort and practice to improve. Below are some habits that will enhance your EQ and help you improve at home and at work.

- **Take time to journal.** Block 15 minutes on your calendar late in each day to reflect on the events of that day. Write down what went well, what did not, and things you can improve. Include job performance events and interpersonal interactions.
- **Know your emotional triggers.** Keep a mental list of situations and people that “push your buttons” or trigger emotional reactions. Consider why they elicit such emotions, your role in that relationship, and how you can respond differently to control your emotional reaction.
- **Control your body.** Our bodies often send us messages about how we feel emotionally. Get to know your physical reactions when you are emotional or distressed. Practice mindful meditation to control your physiological reaction to the day’s stress: find a quiet place, take slow deep breaths, relax your body, etc.
- **Control your thinking.** It is often not what happens around us that causes emotions but rather our interpretations of those events. When you are emotional following an event or the action of another, consider the messages you are sending to yourself. Are your thoughts rational and objective? Are they perfectionistic, all-or-nothing, or black-and-white thinking? Are you accepting of what you cannot control? Sometimes small adjustments to how we think about an event can have a big impact on how we feel.
- **Get a mentor or coach.** Sometimes we don’t see ourselves the way others do. Having someone to provide objective, constructive feedback can help us understand how others perceive us.
- **Practice active listening.** Listening to others is a building block of EQ and good relationships. Let them know you understand and show empathy.
- **Learn names.** Call people by name as often as possible. It helps build relationships and make others feel valued. When you meet someone new, take time to repeat his/her name. Write it down. If you work near someone you don’t know, introduce yourself and remember names.

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- **Be present.** Clear your head and pay attention to the people around you. Take note of the tone or climate in the room. Avoid digital distractions when around others.
- **Notice body language.** When trying to understand the behaviors of others, sometimes it's what they *aren't* saying that is the most informative.
- **No mixed signals.** Be transparent in your communication. Say precisely what you mean and ensure your behaviors follow your words.
- **Only get mad on purpose.** Having high EQ isn't about *not* showing emotions. It is more about using emotions effectively. It is OK to show emotions, even anger, so long as you are doing it with intent and purpose.
- **Share emotions.** Recognize emotions when you have them or see them. When you care, show it.
- **When in doubt, just ask.** EQ is about understanding ourselves and others. If you aren't sure (about your behaviors and emotions, or those of others) *just ask*. Rarely will someone be offended if you are just trying to understand them better.