

# What is EQ and Why Should You Care?



**EQ** is the acronym for Emotional Intelligence. So not only do you and I have an IQ (Intelligence Quotient), we also have emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is not about traditional intelligence. It is about our ability to handle ourselves and others. It is all about our ability to get along with others and build relationships.

The concept of EQ became popularized by Daniel Goleman in 1995. His book (also called Emotional Intelligence), helped us to understand that it is not just technical and analytical abilities that make a successful leader. IQ is not the only predictor of your success, a high IQ is not a guarantee of career success. You do need your technical abilities, your competencies at a specific skill or within a specific subject matter, but to thrive you need your ability to get along with other people. The most successful leaders also have a high degree of emotional intelligence. And here is the great news; EQ (unlike IQ) can be developed.

Emotional intelligence: *“the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action.”* - Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer.

*“The abilities to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and others”* – Daniel Goleman and Gary Cherniss.

**Why should you care about your EQ?** Perhaps you will humor me by reading just one more quote:

*“75% of careers are derailed for reasons related to emotional competencies, including inability to handle interpersonal problems; unsatisfactory team leadership during times of difficulty or conflict; or inability to adapt to change or elicit trust.” — The Center for Creative Leadership, 1994*

So 75% of careers derail for reasons that relate to something that we can all work on and improve? Of course you care!

**What makes up EQ?** There are five components:

*Self-Awareness* – A person who is self-aware understands their own moods and emotions and also how those moods and emotions may impact others.

*Self-Regulation* – Someone who exhibits self-regulation thinks before they act. Remember that person you worked for? The one who used to get red in the face, yell and scream and throw notebooks across the room? They were not exhibiting self-regulation at all.

*Motivation* – If you love to work and it is not just for money or for status; if you have a strong drive to achieve; then you know about motivation.

*Empathy* – The empathetic individual is able to understand the emotions of others and also learns to treat them as they wish to be treated.

*Social Skill* – Do you know someone who is able to meet new people and immediately develop a rapport with them? It is likely that they are very accomplished in the area of social skill.

Why don't we take a moment and examine someone who is working on their self-awareness and their self-regulation:

“Do you think you could stop surfing the web long enough to get me a latte? I would hate to think your horoscope for the day includes bad customer service.” For some reason, snapping at the coffee house barista made Jane feel just a bit better. Jane slammed some money on the counter and waited for her coffee. When it was ready she picked it up and marched out of the coffee house, letting the door close in the face of the person walking out behind her.

Wow in the above scenario Jane is definitely not being self-aware and definitely not exhibiting self-regulation.

If Jane came back to the coffee house after she verbally abused the barista and apologized, she would be exhibiting one of the behaviors associated with trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is considered to be a competency of self-regulation; a behavior that is associated with this competency is the ability to admit our own mistakes.

In this version of Jane and the coffee house, we see self-awareness and self-regulation:

Jane took a deep breath as she opened the door to the coffee house. She knew that she was tired and really on edge. Jane also knew that when she was tired she had a tendency to be impatient and say things she would later regret. With this thought in mind, Jane approached the counter, smiled and said, “Excuse me; I would like to order a latte please.”

Because Jane is aware of how she behaves when she is tired, she is also able to exercise self-control. She is able to manage her impulses and disruptive emotions, she remains composed and positive. She takes a deep breath, thinks before she speaks and does not allow herself to behave badly. She does not need to go back to the coffee house and apologize because she was able to self-regulate.

Self-awareness and self-regulation are the foundation upon which you build and strengthen your emotional intelligence. Think about it, in order to regulate your behavior you must become aware of your behavior and what causes or triggers that behavior. When you become aware, you can begin to manage yourself and to stop yourself from snapping at coffee house baristas (or your co-workers or your friends or family).

To develop self-awareness you need to learn to objectively observe yourself. This means you are keeping an eye out for situations where you felt negative emotions. This is a good start. An even better start is to recognize those negative emotions and then the behaviors that you exhibit when you are experiencing these emotions. A very helpful tool to support you in this process is journaling. Consider keeping a journal that helps you track when you act in a way that you later regret and what you were feeling at the time. This journal is your first line of defense to building your self-awareness and your self-regulation.

Remember that EQ can be developed and developing your EQ is a journey. By reading this article and becoming familiar with the concept of EQ, you have just taken the first step.