

Emotional intelligence

TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA's education team have developed a range of tips to help support you during difficult times. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

It has been almost 30 years since the term Emotional Intelligence (EI) was coined by Psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer. They described EI as a type of social intelligence that enables a person to be aware of their various feelings, the feelings of others and how to use this information to help guide thinking and action.

In 1995 Daniel Goleman published his book Emotional Intelligence, which became a best seller and seminal piece of work in understanding what makes leaders effective. Coleman suggests there are five key areas to EI - Self Awareness, Self-Regulation, Motivation, Empathy and Social Skills.

The good news is that emotional intelligence skills can be practised. If you are looking to improve your interpersonal skills or relationships, these tips can help get you started on the road to improving your IE.

Here are some suggestions to help you develop your emotional intelligence.

1. Become more attuned to your feelings in the moment

What are you feeling now for example? What were you feeling an hour ago? Feelings can be complex, so it may take some practice to determine exactly what you're feeling. For example, it can be hard to tell if you feel apprehensive, agitated or impatient - you may even feel all three.

2. Learn to name feelings

You can improve your EI by increasing your vocabulary around emotions. For example, if you feel 'upset' what does that really mean? You can improve your self-awareness by thinking more about the feelings you are experiencing when you are 'upset'. Perhaps you are 'upset' because you feel rejected, irritated, guilty, hurt, fearful or something else. If you can start to describe your feelings in a more specific language, this will help you understand your needs and to communicate your issues to others if you need to.

3. Pause when difficult feelings become strong

Learning to manage your emotions takes practice - first, you need to notice them and then practice acting in ways that will be helpful rather than reactive in the moment. To help manage reactivity, we can learn strategies such as mindfulness to help us stay calm and think about what would be best to do or say.

4. Try to notice the feelings of other people and practice empathy

This will help you connect better with other people and strengthen your relationships. The practice of empathy includes genuinely caring, as well as noticing and understanding the emotions someone else is experiencing. Empathy also involves seeing the problem from the other person's perspective rather than your own and communicating your understanding back to the person. Good listening can help you develop these skills. Simple things such as putting down your phone, paying attention and really hearing what someone is saying helps you develop your empathic skills.

5. Stay open-minded and curious about other people, their motivation and their behaviours

Too often we are quick to judge, and this can get in the way of effective, clear communication and resolution of differences or problems. No one enjoys being judged, so try to manage your emotional reactions first, then approach challenging situations with respectful communication. Having a mindset of reaching an accurate understanding, as well as achieving the best possible outcome, will help you navigate challenging moments in relationships.

As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.

Our Education team are continuing to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face and online.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on **Emotional Intelligence** or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsqa.org.au or call 6164 0200.