



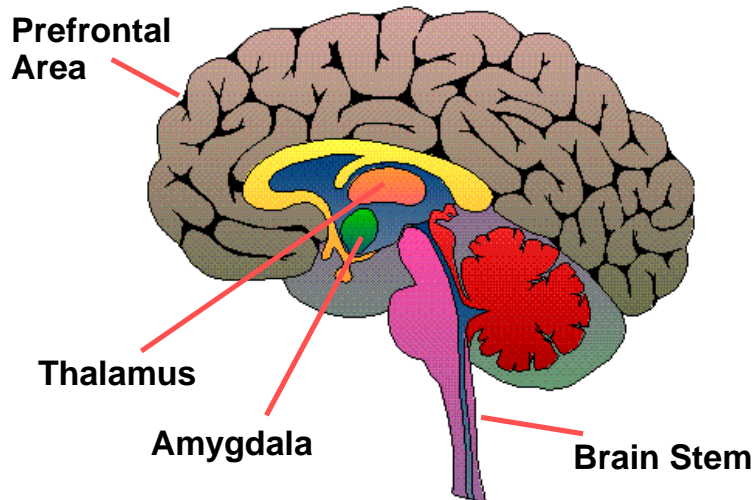
Emotional Intelligence (EI) Overview

- What it is
- How it works
- Why it matters
- EI competencies

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Psychologists, medical practitioners, psychotherapists, educators, and other professionals have known for a long time that thoughts and feelings influence each other. Both thoughts and feelings are involved in shaping a person's behavior. Brain research in the last three decades has established that thinking and feeling originate from separate centers of the brain. The centers have been termed the 'thinking mind' and the 'emotional mind' respectively. The thinking mind is located in the cortex part of the brain while the emotional mind is in the area of the brain known as the limbic system (see figure below). In particular the amygdala in the limbic system is the structure that stores emotional experiences associated with various events. That structure is, therefore, the emotional center.

One of its functions, from what research has shown, is to communicate information of an emotional nature to the cortex—particularly to the prefrontal lobe of the cortex, instructing it to go into action or behavior mode. The prefrontal lobe considers the instructions from the amygdala in the context of the actual situation. Directly following that, it then decides whether to ignore the instructions or carry them through to action. If a person's physiology is compromised—from drugs, alcohol, or moderate to high stress—the prefrontal lobe may fail to block the instructions from the amygdala, even when it would have in a more healthy state. ***In other words, we feel before we think.*** Emotions turn into action before the cognitive processes have a chance to interrupt the reaction.



For many years, intelligence tests scores, commonly known as IQ (Intelligence Quotient), based on thinking or logic have been considered the most important and critical factor in determining how well or successful an individual was likely to be in life or work. However, it has become apparent over the years that intelligence test scores only explain a some of the factors that account for a person's success in life or at work.

The work by Daniel Goleman (1995, 1998) has shown that the missing link in providing a much more accurate explanation of how an individual was likely to be successful in work or life is the role played by an individual's 'feelings' or emotions.

Research suggests that an individual who uses her/his feelings or emotions intelligently, that is one who has emotional intelligence, can be more successful in work and life in general than a person lacking awareness of the effects of his/her emotions. Unlike an intelligence test score, which is said to be fixed, emotional intelligence can be learned and improved on with age.

Emotional Intelligence is defined as:

- *The capacity for awareness of our own individual feelings and those of other people.*
- *Appropriate expression of one's own feelings.*
- *The ability to motivate ourselves, to manage our own feelings well, and to manage the emotions in our relationships.*
- *Creating a climate in which people can smoothly work together toward their common goal.*

The Components of Emotional Intelligence

Having a high emotional intelligence does not necessarily mean that a person knows how to apply the skills to the practicalities of work or life. Many factors during the course of growing up



play a part in shaping the development of appropriate or inappropriate use of emotional skills. Traditional schooling, in general, tends to place emphasis on the development of the qualities of the ‘thinking mind’ such as logic and rationality. Qualities of the ‘emotional mind’ have largely been neglected. It is therefore necessary to tune our emotional skills so that we can use them in an appropriate way and in the proper context.

“Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – this is not easy.”

Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics

Dan Goleman and colleagues (Goleman et al, 2002) identified four main dimensions or building blocks of the ‘emotional mind’ that are essential for learning of emotional intelligence. The first two come under the umbrella of personal skills and the last two are of a social skills nature. The dimensions include: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Managing Relationships. A person who masters the first three is in a better position to effectively manage relationships. Each of these four domains comprises a number of functional units or competencies. Developing competencies across these four main areas is essential for success in life and/or workplace. The domains are described as follows:

Self-Awareness: ability of an individual to be in tune with her/his own feelings and to recognize the impact that his/her feelings have on others. The emotional competencies that underpin this dimension include: emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence.

Self-Management: ability to keep negative emotions and impulsive behavior under control, stay calm and unflappable even under stressful situations, maintain a clear and focused mind directed on accomplishing a task. The required competencies for this dimension are: optimism, self-control, transparency, and adaptability.

Social Awareness: ability to read or sense other people’s emotions and how they impact on the situation of interest or concern. The competencies for this dimension include: empathy, organizational awareness, and service.

Relationship Management: ability to influence, guide and handle other people’s emotions. The competencies that underlay this dimension include: inspirational leadership; influence; developing others; change catalyst; conflict management; teamwork and collaboration.



Why Emotional Intelligence Matters

It is generally accepted that thoughts can induce feelings and feelings also generate thoughts. For instance, many people engage in self talk (an expression of thoughts) when upset (feeling) about something which, in turn, leads to intense feelings, and so on. Research during the last decade indicates that emotions are experienced well before thinking takes place suggesting that, in general, emotions come before thoughts. It appears, then, that emotions dictate our thinking, motivate and mobilize us into action or behavior. Consequently feelings:

- Direct us to what we want and/or need.
- Determine our behavior or actions toward what we want and/or need.
- Facilitate relationship forming.
- Create bonding in building a family, community, society, organizations, etc.