

EQ: What Emotional Intelligence Is and How to Develop It

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IQ is a popular term, but what about EQ? EQ, also known as Emotional Intelligence, is defined as the "intelligence [involving] 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 actions". In other words, EQ is being able to understand one's own emotions and those of others and is the ability to use this information in relationship.

Identifying emotions happens in many different ways, some of which include reading body language, facial expressions, using reasonable intuition, and even asking oneself or another how they are feeling.

Reasoning with emotions is when we are able to convert the emotion we have identified (in ourselves or others) into information that helps us make healthy personal and relational decisions.

Understanding emotions happens when a person is able to identify an emotion and then discern the reason for it. An example here is a boss who is on edge at work due to a divorce at home.

Managing emotions is the ability to use all the information we have gathered to regulate our own emotions and respond appropriately to ourselves and others. For example, this could mean recognizing that our anger in the moment is coming from fatigue and not what we are angry about.

Some people are predisposed to EQ and while others are not, but EQ can be developed. One way to start is by becoming aware of one's own feelings by learning to identify them. Many, if not most people, struggle with this because of messages they received in childhood and through significant life experiences. These messages may include: "You should be embarrassed for getting sad over that" or "Don't you get angry at me". In these two scenarios the initial emotions are sadness and anger but they have been covered by a secondary emotion, shame. Shame is the idea that "My feelings are wrong, therefore I was created wrong." and is a major factor in keeping people from identifying their own emotions and those of others.

Beginning here, emotional intelligence can begin and grow. As we learn to recognize our own emotions and to allow ourselves to feel we can extend the same permission to others and, in turn, become more emotionally intelligent, healthy, relational people.

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