

Quiz Yourself: Do You Lead with Emotional Intelligence?

By Annie McKee

Great leaders *move* us—they inspire, motivate, and energize us. How? They do it through emotional intelligence. Dan Goleman woke us all up when he published his groundbreaking book on the topic (in 1995). Since then we’ve learned a lot about EI competencies, such as self-awareness and empathy, and about what people can do to develop them.

To gain a deeper understanding of your own emotional intelligence, respond to the statements below as honestly as possible, checking one of the columns from “Always” to “Never.”

To calculate your score, as you finish each section count the checkmarks in each column and record the number in the “Total per column” line. Multiply your total score for each column by the number in the row below it, and record it in the row below that. Add this row together to get your total score for how you perceive yourself along each of the dimensions of EI.

Reflecting on your strengths and where you can improve is important, but don’t stop there. Other people’s perspectives matter too. After reviewing your scores, ask one or two trusted friends to evaluate you using the same statements, to learn whether your own insights match what others see in you.

How Would You Describe Yourself?

		ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	FREQUENTLY	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS							
1	I can describe my emotions in the moment I experience them.						
2	I can describe my feelings in detail, beyond just “happy,” “sad,” “angry,” and so on.						
3	I understand the reasons for my feelings.						
4	I understand how stress affects my mood and behavior.						
5	I understand my leadership strengths and weaknesses.						
Total per column							
<i>Points per answer</i>		x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
<i>Multiply the two rows above</i>							
TOTAL SELF-AWARENESS SCORE (sum of the row above)							
POSITIVE OUTLOOK							
6	I’m optimistic in the face of challenging circumstances.						
7	I focus on opportunities rather than obstacles.						
8	I see people as good and well-intentioned.						
9	I look forward to the future.						
10	I feel hopeful.						
Total per column							
<i>Points per answer</i>		x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
<i>Multiply the two rows above</i>							
TOTAL POSITIVE OUTLOOK SCORE (sum of the row above)							
EMOTIONAL SELF-CONTROL							
11	I manage stress well.						
12	I’m calm in the face of pressure or emotional turmoil.						
13	I control my impulses.						
14	I use strong emotions, such as anger, fear, and joy, appropriately and for the good of others.						
15	I’m patient.						
Total per column							
<i>Points per answer</i>		x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
<i>Multiply the two rows above</i>							
TOTAL EMOTIONAL SELF-CONTROL SCORE (sum of the row above)							

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

	ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	FREQUENTLY	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
ADAPTABILITY						
16 I'm flexible when situations change unexpectedly.						
17 I'm adept at managing multiple, conflicting demands.						
18 I can easily adjust goals when circumstances change.						
19 I can shift my priorities quickly.						
20 I adapt easily when a situation is uncertain or ever-changing.						
Total per column						
<i>Points per answer</i>	x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
<i>Multiply the two rows above</i>						
TOTAL ADAPTABILITY SCORE (sum of the row above)						
EMPATHY						
21 I strive to understand people's underlying feelings.						
22 My curiosity about others drives me to listen attentively to them.						
23 I try to understand why people behave the way they do.						
24 I readily understand others' viewpoints even when they are different from my own.						
25 I understand how other people's experiences affect their feelings, thoughts, and behavior.						
Total per column						
<i>Points per answer</i>	x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
<i>Multiply the two rows above</i>						
TOTAL EMPATHY SCORE (sum of the row above)						

Get a Different Perspective

Now that you've reflected on your emotional intelligence, it's time to check your self-perception against someone else's perspective.

HERE'S HOW THIS EXERCISE WORKS:

1. Pick a friend or colleague with whom you can have an honest and caring conversation about your EI. Choose someone who is “safe” and has your best interests in mind—someone who would not use this exercise against you or otherwise do you harm.
2. Explain that you are working on your EI skills and that you would value their opinion and help in checking your assumptions. Send them a copy of this document but ask them to fill out the quiz based on *your* behaviors and personality. Offer to reciprocate—your colleague can take this quiz and you can score them.
3. Set up a time to discuss their responses and how they align—or don't—with yours. It's important to do this in person, over the phone, or by video—not by email. There's too much room for misunderstanding if your friend simply sends you scores and writes a few comments.

In the conversation, listen deeply. Remember that candid feedback is a gift—something to be grateful for. Gratitude, like other positive emotions, helps you stay centered and open to new information. Make an effort to see things from your friend's perspective. Ask what you can do to leverage your EI skills. The focus for improvement should be on your strengths, not your deficiencies. Resist the urge to focus on your problem areas. That will help you keep defensiveness at bay. If you have also scored your friend, you might consider having a joint conversation about EI.

An important note: If you are coaching one another, each of you should have a turn to share and a turn to listen. Although you want to be warm and encouraging, this is not the time for cheerleading or for giving unwanted advice.

By exchanging perceptions like this, both of you can learn to read how others are responding to you. The more you build that awareness, the more effective you'll be in your daily work and life.

What to Do Now

Of course, everyone has both strengths and areas to improve when it comes to emotional intelligence. If you're like most high achievers, right now you're zeroing in on the areas where you scored lowest. But concentrating on our shortcomings can be exhausting and depressing, so we often give up on changing ourselves before we even start.

Instead, focus first on your strengths. Doing so will generate positive emotions, such as hope and a sense of self-worth, which give you the strength to deal with problem areas. Choose one or two competencies that seem well developed (look at your highest scores) and think about how you can exercise them even more fully.

To improve your emotional self-awareness:

- Reflect on the impact your “emotional style” has on others.
- **Meditate and write down** your key plans and priorities.
- Take a few **psychometric tests**.

To work on having a more positive outlook:

- **Train your brain** to be positive by developing new habits.
- Make an effort to have **positive conversations**.
- **Believe you will succeed** (but don't assume the road will be easy).

To exercise greater emotional self-control:

- **Take care of your mind and body** to increase your capacity for self-control.
- Learn to **resist the immediate gratification of technology** and other interruptions.
- Invest in your capacity to **focus**.
- **Be mindful** of your thoughts and feelings, not trapped in them.
- Perform better under stress by **talking to yourself in the third person**.

To improve your adaptability:

- Understand why **change is hard**—for you and for others.
- Get out of **your comfort zone**.
- Strengthen **your resilience**.

To become more empathic:

- Improve **your ability to listen**—start by making it a priority.
- Slow down, take the time to **hear and learn from others**, and ask brilliant questions.
- Put yourself in **your colleagues' shoes**.

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Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on June 5, 2015.

Questions adapted from the [Hay Group's Emotional and Social Competency Inventory](#) and Richard Boyatzis's article "[Competencies in the 21st Century](#)" (*Journal of Management Development*, 2008, 27:1, 5–12).