

Self-reflecting on Emotional Intelligence

All EI skills

Exercise

n/a

Client

No

Individuals who score high on emotional intelligence may be better able to handle the stress of everyday life, to foster a greater number of meaningful close relationships, and to be more socially competent in general (see Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009, for a review). Consequently, individuals who are high in emotional intelligence may also be more likely to experience higher levels of well-being, or “optimal psychological functioning and experience” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 142).

According to Davies and colleague’s (1998; see also George, 2000; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2000) emotional intelligence can be understood as a four-dimensional construct, comprising of one’s ability to (1) understand one’s own emotions, (2) understand others’ emotions, (3) regulate one’s emotions, and (4) use one’s emotions to improve oneself.

In this exercise, clients are invited to self-reflect on these four different components. By considering each “component” individually, clients can see how important it is to remind oneself of and to build these emotional skills.

Goal

The goal of this exercise is for clients to take a closer look at their own emotional skills and to systematically assess these skills through an emotionally intelligent lens.

Advice

- A commonly used model of emotional intelligence is leveraged for this exercise. It should be noted that the precise nature of emotional intelligence remains unclear, as demonstrated by the different definitions, models and supposed dimensions of the construct (for a critical review of the construct, see Murphy, 2014). In other words, the currently adopted viewpoint on emotional intelligence is just one way of looking at the construct.
- Emotional intelligence is a complex construct. The questions in this exercise can be used to enhance an understanding of its definition and therefore may be valuable in a teaching context as well. The questions in this exercise make the construct more concrete and may generate interesting discussion or follow-up questions.
- This self-reflective exercise may be used as a first step for clients to increase their emotional intelligence. The practitioner may assist the client in exploring ways for promoting emotionally intelligent thoughts and action.
- Clients may keep an emotional intelligence personal journal for several weeks. During each week, a client is asked to self-reflect on a specific component of emotional intelligence.



Suggested Readings

Davies, M., Stankov, L., & Roberts, R. D. (1998). Emotional intelligence: In search of an elusive construct. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 989–1015.

George, J. M. (2000). Emotions and leadership: The role of emotional intelligence. *Human Relations*, 53, 1027–1055.

Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2000b). Selecting a measure of emotional intelligence: The case for ability testing. In R. Bar-On & J. D. A. Parker (Eds.), *Handbook of emotional intelligence* (pp. 320–342). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications* (pp. 3–34). New York: Basic Books.

Murphy, K. R. (2014). *A critique of emotional intelligence: what are the problems and how can they be fixed?* Psychology Press.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). To be happy or to be self-fulfilled: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. In S. Fiske (Ed.), *Annual Review of Psychology* (Vol. 52; 141–166). Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews/ Inc.

Zeidner, M., Roberts, R. D., & Matthews, G. (2002). Can emotional intelligence be schooled? A critical review. *Educational psychologist*, 37, 215–231.

Tool Description

Instructions

In this exercise, you will be asked to reflect on some questions about your emotions and the way you deal with these emotions. Emotional intelligence is defined as the degree to which we are able to understand our own and other people's emotions and are able to control and use them to improve yourself. The following questions all refer to one specific aspect of emotional intelligence. First, each aspect is introduced. Next, you will find some questions that can be used to reflect on each part. You may choose one or more questions to reflect upon and then write down responses. Do not worry about grammar or writing style, just write down what comes to mind.

Aspect 1: Appraisal and expression of emotions in oneself

This relates to your ability to understand your emotions and to be able to express them naturally. People who are highly skilled in this area sense and acknowledge their emotions better than most people.

Questions to ponder:

- How good am I at identifying how I am feeling?
- How well do I know whether I am happy or not?
- How well am I able to notice when I am angry, sad, bored etc.?
- How good am I at identifying emotional swings in myself?
- How well do I know why I have certain feelings?
- How good am I at finding the right word(s) to use to express my feelings?
- In which ways do I express my emotions (e.g. writing, talking, painting, etc.)?

Write down your current appraisal of yourself regarding the abilities in this first aspect of emotional intelligence:

What do you think you might try to do to strengthen your skills here?

Aspect 2: Appraisal and recognition of emotion in others

This relates to your ability to perceive and understand the emotions of the people around you. People who rate highly in this skill are very sensitive to the emotions of others. Moreover, they are able to predict others' emotional responses.

- How good am I at identifying how others are or might be feeling?
- How well do I know whether others are happy or not?
- How good am I at identifying emotional swings in others?
- How sensitive am I to the feelings and emotions of others?
- How well am I able to notice when others are angry, sad, bored etc.?
- How well do I understand the emotions of the people around me?

Write down your current appraisal of yourself with regards to the skills in this second aspect of emotional intelligence:

What do you think you might try to do to increase your skills here?

Aspect 3: Regulation of emotion in oneself

This relates to your ability to regulate our emotions, assisting you in recovering from psychological distress. A person who is highly skilled in this area is able to return quickly to "feeling normal" again after being upset. Such a person has better control over his or her emotions and is less likely to lose his or her temper.

- How well am I able to prevent my emotions from taking over?
- How well am I able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally?
- How well am I able to control my own emotions?
- How well am I able to calm down quickly when I am very angry or upset?
- How good am I at responding to an unexpected event when I am "caught off-guard?"
- How well am I able to self-regulate my behaviour even under very difficult circumstances?
- In what situations do I respond differently than I would like to respond?

Write down your current appraisal of yourself with regards to the skills in this third aspect of emotional intelligence:

What do you think you might try to do to increase your abilities here?

Aspect 4: Use of emotion to facilitate performance

This relates to your ability to make use of your emotions by directing them toward constructive activities and personal performance. A person who is highly capable in this aspect is able to encourage him- or herself to continuously do better. He or she is able to direct his or her emotions in positive and productive directions.

- How do emotions influence my performance?
- How often do I try to do creative and interesting projects when I am in a highly positive and motivated state?
- How often do negative emotions after a setback cause me to stop trying?
- Am I able to use positive emotions to deal with setbacks?
- How often do positive emotions encourage me to keep doing what I am doing?
- How often do I use my emotions to influence others?

Write down your current appraisal of yourself with regards to the skills in this fourth aspect of emotional intelligence:

What do you think you might try to do to increase your abilities here?