

## How Do We Become Emotionally Intelligent Teams?

After you complete this lesson, you will be able to recognize the role of emotional intelligence in building healthy team environments, recognize common problems teams experience that impact their effectiveness, discuss strategies for communicating and managing team conflict, practice emotional intelligence.

Communication and conflict resolution are essential skills to develop as an individual and they are especially important when working as a team. Luckily, there are strategies and tools we can use to help us develop these skills.

Emotional intelligence, or EI, helps teams succeed and involves the ability to recognize and manage our own and others' emotions, and to use feelings to guide our thinking and actions. By being aware of emotions we can communicate more effectively, resolve conflict, and manage relationships better, and ultimately work more productively together.

Emotional intelligence is commonly translated into five attributes:

The first is Self-awareness, which is the ability to recognize one's emotions and how it can impact your own and others' performance. Individuals that have emotional self-awareness reflect on their experiences, they engage in constructive communication, and can identify their strengths and weaknesses. Team members need to be aware of their emotions as it can impact team dynamics and ultimately team performance.

The next attribute is Self-regulation, which in this context is the ability to stay composed and regulate emotions. The ability to manage impulsive and/or distressing emotions during conflict, stress, and/or when under pressure greatly impacts the team's ability to succeed.

Motivation is the next attribute, which is the ability to motivate yourself and your team members to do their best work. Individuals that have this attribute will strive to learn and continuously improve but will also support and motivate their team members to do the same.

Empathy is another important and often invisible teamwork skill as it is the ability to interpret, understand and be sensitive towards other people's emotional cues and diverse personalities. Empathy is often thought of as the ability to step into another person's shoes, but it is more than just realizing how others are feeling, it also involves how one responds to these emotions.



And finally, social skills, which requires using effective tactics of persuasion. This attribute plays a key role in building rapport with your team members. A person with good social skills builds a positive and effective relationship with their teammates and is generally characterized as a good team player.

Therefore, to practice emotional intelligence, you should: Observe your emotions and reactions to others, for example, how did you react to your team member's idea? Did you make a judgement too fast and react?

Observe other's emotions and reactions, for example, how did your team react to your statement and how did you say it?

Be sensitive towards other people's emotions and respect their diverse perspectives.

Finally, actively listen to what others have to say, pay attention to their nonverbal communications, and practice and hone in your persuasion skills.

When we practice emotional intelligence, we become empowered to communicate more openly and thoughtfully, and therefore can resolve and even prevent conflicts from arising. For example, an emotionally intelligent team member who observes that their peers feel overwhelmed with too many tasks to complete will be more likely to initiate a conversation about this and find a solutions.

However, challenges arise on all teams. Some common problems that teams experience that impact effectiveness includes:

- Lack of trust, which can make it difficult to communicate and ask for help.
- Fear of conflict, which can lead to groupthink and make teams avoid conflict, and therefore not resolve conflict.
- Lack of commitment, for example, when team members do not follow through or complete work.
- Avoidance of accountability, for example, when a team member speaks out of line and upsets their peer but does not apologize.
- Inattention to results, or when team members focus on their own personal goals instead of project goals.

So, it's important that teams practice emotional intelligence, build team trust, support and respect each other, and focus on finding solutions.

