

People who are attuned to their own feelings and the feelings of others can use their understanding to enhance the performance of themselves and others.

Read the following description of five components of emotional intelligence and think about what you might do to develop those areas.

Self-awareness: This component provides the basis for all the other components of emotional intelligence. Self-awareness means being aware of what you are feeling, being conscious of the emotions within yourself. People who are in touch with their emotions are better able to guide their own lives. We need to be in touch with their emotions in order to interact effectively and appreciate emotions in others. People with high levels of self-awareness learn to trust their “gut feelings” and realize that these feelings can provide useful information about difficult decisions.

Managing emotions: The second key component of emotional intelligence is managing emotions. This means you are able to balance your moods so that worry, anxiety, fear, or anger do not get in the way of what needs to be done. People who manage their emotions perform better because they are able to think clearly. Managing emotions does not mean suppressing or denying them but understanding them and using that understanding to deal with situations productively. People should first recognize a mood or feeling, think about what it means and how it affects them, and then choose how to act.

Motivating oneself: This ability to be hopeful and optimistic despite obstacles, setbacks, or even outright failure is crucial for pursuing long-term goals in life or in business. A classic example of self-motivation occurred when the MetLife insurance company hired a special group of job applicants who tested high on optimism but failed the normal sales aptitude test. Compared to salespeople who passed the regular aptitude test but scored high on pessimism, the “optimistic” group made 21 percent more sales in their first year and 57 percent more in the second.

Empathy: The fourth component is empathy, which means being able to put yourself in someone else’s shoes—to recognize what others are feeling without them needing to tell you. Most of the time people don’t tell us what they feel in words but rather in tone of voice, body language and facial expression. Empathy is built from self-awareness; being attuned to one’s own emotions makes it easier to read and understand the feelings of others.

Social skill: The ability to connect to others, build positive relationships, respond to the emotions of others and influence others is the final component of emotional intelligence. We need social skills to understand interpersonal relationships, handle disagreements, resolve conflicts and pull people together for a common purpose.

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