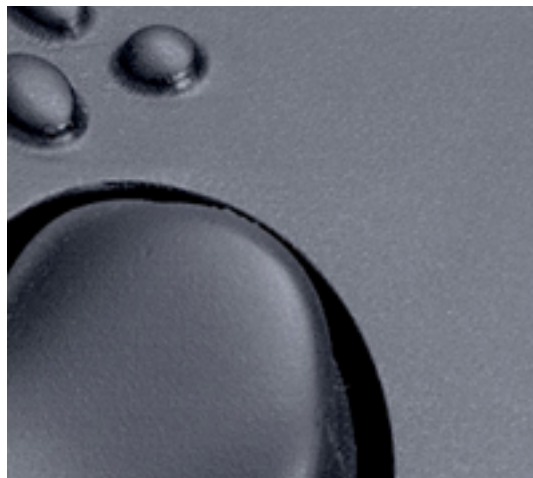


4 Steps to Develop Your Emotional Intelligence at Work

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What makes Emotional Intelligence (EQ) so exciting is that, contrary to IQ, you can develop your own EQ significantly and see the changes happening in your life as you work on it. Therefore, developing your EQ can be very rewarding, but it is not that easy. There might be a number of obstacles in the way. In this article, I am going to present 4 common obstacles as well as steps to overcome them.

1- FIRST STEP: ASSESSING YOUR OWN EQ

To develop your EQ, you have to know where you stand now, what is your starting point.

The question is: how can you assess yourself accurately?

In the past 10 years, a good number of assessment tools were developed. Many of them are what we call "self-assessment tools". It means that you answer a questionnaire about yourself, usually online, and you get a report about your own EQ.

The problem is that a EQ self-assessment may not be very reliable because the way we see ourselves is actually not very objective. Many studies have shown that we usually rate our own EQ higher than other people rate us.

We know this thanks to a second kind of assessments: the 360 degrees assessments. With this kind of assessments, your EQ is assessed by people who know you well: family, peers, bosses, team members, sometimes even business partners such as vendors, clients, etc...

The results you get from a 360 degrees assessment of your EQ, just as other forms of 360 degrees assessments, may come as shock to you. This is because your EQ as seen by people who know you is usually much lower than your EQ as you see it.

But at least you know now what your starting point is. You know what you have to work on. Taking a 360 degrees EQ assessment has a cost (usually around 100-200 USD per person) but it is very valuable.

2- SECOND STEP: LIMITING YOURSELF TO ONE OR TWO BEHAVIORS TO WORK ON

Looking at the results of your EQ assessment, you may have to face a second obstacle: having too many behaviors to work on at the same time.

Assessments are usually divided into four aspects of EQ, following Daniel Goleman's model (one of the pioneers in EQ research):

- Self Awareness – Your ability to accurately perceive your emotions and stay aware of them as they happen.
- Self Management – Your ability to use awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and to positively direct your behavior. This means managing your emotional reactions to all situations and people.
- Social Awareness - Your ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and get what is really going on. This often means understanding what other people are thinking and feeling, even if you don't feel the same way.
- Relationship Management - Your ability to use awareness of your emotions and the emotions of others to manage interactions successfully. This means letting emotional awareness guide clear communication and the effective handling of conflict.

The key here is to identify a specific behavior. The more specific it is, the more chances of success you have.

Actually, I have never seen anyone so far improving their EQ just by deciding to improve their EQ! It is exactly like going fishing with a very wide net: most fishes can go through. You won't get any fish in the end.

It is really critical to choose only one or two behaviors that you would like to work on. No more, or you would be at risk of achieving very little.

For example, you may decide to work on your tendency to lose your temper too quickly.

Or let's assume that every time you are involved in a conflict, things just go from bad to worse: you just don't know how to handle it and you end up losing face and not achieving your desired outcome. You can then choose to focus on your ability to manage conflicts.

3- THIRD STEP: FINDING ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIORS

Once you have identified one or two behaviors to work on, one more obstacle might be the "force of habit." These behaviors are likely to be the way that you have always behaved, perhaps since you were a kid.

So it may be pretty hard to believe that you can change them. Let's take again the same examples: losing temper quickly and losing face in conflicts.

One of the most exciting contributions of Neuro-Linguistic-Programming (NLP) is the concept of “strategy.” A strategy is a series of sequential steps that underline our behavior. Every time we follow a specific strategy, we end up taking the same kind of action or experiencing the same feeling.

These strategies are often unconscious, but they nonetheless exist. We have strategies to be cheerful, to be assertive, but also to get angry, to lose face or even to be depressed!

Let’s take the example of losing face in a conflict.

What could be a successful strategy to lose face in a conflict?

First, think of a time when you lost face in a conflict and seeing yourself at that time. Then say to yourself that you will probably lose face again this time. Then say a few words that totally fail to express your feelings, and keep your feelings for yourself. Then imagine the person you are in conflict with getting furious. Then quit the conversation without any positive result for yourself. Something like that. This seems to be a pretty effective strategy to lose face in a conflict.

Now, the beauty of strategies is that, by changing just a few steps, you can change the outcome.

The challenge here is to come up with an alternative strategy for what is not working in the behaviors you have identified in Step 2.

The key question here is: what could you do differently the next time you get into a conflict?

4- FOURTH STEP: PLAY YOUR SCALES

Do you find it shocking that, in order to become a good pianist, you have to play the same scores for hundreds and hundreds of times, and make thousands of mistakes in the process?

You probably don't. And if you are passionate about playing the piano, you won't even find it annoying. Because it is part of the game. You know it upfront.

I invite you to see developing your EQ in the same way. You have to play your scales.

There is a bit of bad news here: if you are presently poor at handling conflicts, there are some good chances that you will keep failing for some time. Or if you are quick to lose your temper, you're going to lose it too quickly a good number of times even after choosing to change it.

Why do you have to play your scales? Isn't there any shortcut? Based on our present knowledge of the human mind, we see consistently that it takes a good number of times before we manage to change habits. This is how humans work!

As a conclusion, by following these 4 steps, you will raise your EQ by changing one or two behaviors that don't serve you. What's next?

Keeping the analogy of playing the piano, you will have managed to play well one or two pieces that you like. You may decide that you are happy with playing these pieces well.

Or you may be excited about starting to play some other pieces. Back to your EQ assessment, you can then choose some more behaviors to work on and go on your journey towards high EQ. I wish you a nice journey!



Sebastien Henry is Progress-U's expert for Emotional Intelligence. Developing his Emotional Intelligence in his previous corporate career was a real priority (regional position in Asia at a multinational company). Now he focuses on helping business leaders to become more inspiring leaders, motivate their people and retain the best by developing their EQ.

Sebastien firmly believes in action, and the tools he is using and sharing are derived from 4 areas of his life:

- His business experience as a corporate executive
- Intensive mountaineering and rock climbing (7a onsight and more than 50 alpine routes)
- Teaching and coaching prisoners
- Daily meditations for more than 5 years