



# The art of handling emotions

There is a very old joke that many may have heard already: “What do you call a child who was a nerd when he becomes an adult?”, and the answer is: Boss. To this day, many believe that it is really that way; that the intellectual quotient (IQ) is the only determiner to succeed in professional life.

**T**hat answer never satisfied Howard Gardner, a Harvard psychologist who, just when he was beginning his career in the 60s, and after several investigations, came across a study that showed that the IQ predicted only 20% of how people do in life. Gardner wanted to understand what this other 80% of success was based on, and he was the first to suggest the idea of multiple intelligences, emotional intelligence among them.

While the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) has existed for several decades, it was Daniel Goleman, one of the most influential thinkers in the

business field and the author of the bestsellers *Emotional Intelligence* and *Focus*, who delved into the subject, made it popular and reaffirmed Gardner’s belief: “New research shows that being smart with our emotions is what helps us to be successful in life, in personal relationships, in our careers, and in business. When we make a decision, there are two parts of the brain that are involved.

One part is the thinking one. The other is the one that contains our experience and wisdom of life, which is connected with the emotional centres. We make decisions based on our experience, which has much more

connection with the gut instinct of each person and not so much with the rational thoughts”.

Currently, many specialists consider emotional intelligence to be more important than rational intelligence. Because as Goleman explains: “technical skills are needed, for example, to be an accountant. But once you get the job, all the other accountants in the office are as smart as you are. Academic skills disappear as an indicator of outstanding performance. The IQ does not predict how well you will perform as part of a team, or how well you can persuade people to do this or that. Those are Emotional Intelligence



skills. “

The discovery of “emotional intelligence” has produced significant advances in the workplace. By studying it, we get to the conclusion that being emotionally intelligent directly connects us with happiness, since we learn to control emotions and are better able to solve problems.

Of course, then, we cannot only rely on our intellectual part to manage ourselves in the best way, but many other variables come into play. Most of us find them difficult to understand and control.

### **Long-life Learning**

Communicating, persuading, listening, getting to dialogue, inspiring, motivating... everyday actions that we perform almost automatically, are all emotional intelligence skills. It is worth asking then, how can emotional intelligence help us to be better in our work and in our lives? Are we aware of how we behave and how we handle our relationships with others? And, finally, how can we harness the power of self-knowledge and use it as the basis for professional development?

Daniel Goleman is clear when he says that EI is something that everyone can work on: “the good news is that,

unlike the Intellectual Quotient (IQ), which does not change from birth, every emotional intelligence skill can be learned”. We start to understand it from a young age, “when you’re a kid and your mother or father picks you up when you cry and help you calm down, that’s a lesson in emotional intelligence. We learn it throughout our lives,” explains Goleman. It is essential to develop it, because the human brain is “wired” in such a way that emotions are the main engine of behaviour. In other words, we react emotionally to events before being able to think rationally about them.

Travis Bradberry, co-author of Emo-

tional Intelligence 2.0 and president of Talent Smart, details that "human beings have 27 emotional experiences every hour they spend awake. That adds up to around 400 emotional experiences per day. This emotional experience occurs before the signals travel to the rational area of the brain. There is an emotional reaction to events before having a rational reaction. Emotional intelligence combines both. It is the ability to respond through reasoning to these emotional reactions that the body experiences."

Centuries ago, in the presence of an animal threat, for example, reacting emotionally was positive, because it allowed the person to run for shelter. But that type of reaction today, in a working environment, changes. "If a colleague says something you do not like in a meeting, and you have a quick emotional response, it can hurt you. Emotional intelligence is the command of both, the flow of information between these two areas of the brain," concludes Bradberry.

### The Starting Point: Genuine Interest

In order to master emotions and reasoning, there must be a genuine interest in wanting to improve. According to Goleman, if a leader has a weakness, either regarding empathy or handling his or her emotions, that person can be helped, but first he or she must care, and also understand how others perceive him or her. This way you will know where your strengths are and what you could improve. Finally, you need to make an agreement with yourself, "that once you choose what you want to work on - such as becoming a person who knows how to listen - whenever you have the opportunity to do so, you need to practice that skill," he adds. In that way, you can stop with what you are doing and focus on the other person, listening well. Practicing this for three or four months, explains

## Improving the quality of life

In addition to being necessary for those who interact with peers in a work context, Emotional Intelligence is essential to have a balanced life in all aspects.

**Physical Health** - The ability to take care of the body and to manage stress, which impacts on health, are closely linked to each other's emotional intelligence. The mere fact of being aware of the emotional status in which we find ourselves and the reactions it generates is the first step to be able to manage stress and maintain health.

**Mental Health** - EI affects our attitude towards life. It also helps relieve anxiety and sudden mood swings. A high level of EI is directly related to a positive attitude and a more cheerful vision of life.

**Personal Relationships** - By having more understanding and better handling of emotions, we are better able to communicate what we feel in a constructive way. Understanding the needs and feelings of the people around us gives us the possibility to develop stronger and fuller relationships.

**Conflict Resolution** - When there is empathy and insight of other people's feelings, conflicts are easier to solve and can even be avoided. We become better negotiators because of that ability to understand the needs and desires of the other.

**Success** - More EI contributes to more motivation that reduces procrastination, builds trust and improves the ability to focus on a goal. It also allows creating better containment networks, overcoming obstacles and persevering with a more resilient vision. The ability to delay immediate gratification and be able to see in the long term directly affects the ability to be successful.

**Leadership** - The best leaders are those who understand what motivates others, relating in a positive way, and building strong bonds with their peers. An effective leader can recognize the needs of its employees and manages to satisfy them, thus generating better performance and satisfaction in the workplace. An emotionally intelligent leader is able to build solid work teams through a strategic use of the diversity of people and their emotions, benefiting the team as a whole.

(Source: <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/emotional-intelligence-why-important.html>)

Goleman, will make it flow effortlessly, because the brain will have changed, making stronger connections with this new way of doing things, and that will remain for the rest of your life.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is acquired through introspective and reflexive work to understand emotions, both their own and those of others. For Travis Bradberry, it all starts with self-awareness. "It is not the fact of recognizing the emotions at the moment, although that is certainly important. Self-awareness is also about understanding trends and preferences. Knowing the situations that will allow us to succeed, the people who have an effect on us, being able to avoid the situations that cause problems. Self-awareness is a continuous journey. It is not possible to build any other emotional intelligence skill without that fundamental foundation."

There are many leaders who want to learn about emotional intelligence and leadership. Not only to improve but because they recognize that this work can collectively impact on the entire organization and make the business grow. For Bradberry, it is a strategic decision: "first of all, they need to understand that the first responsibility of any leader is to lead themselves. You need to know how to handle distressing emotions so that they do not prevent you from doing the job. In addition, it is necessary to know how to put positive emotions in order, how to focus on the objective and stay focused, even when the situation becomes difficult."

#### The Gift of Flowing

"If you honestly ask people how they feel about their work, a large number of them will reply that they are not committed. They consider it just a job and do just enough to maintain it," says Goleman. Bearing this in mind and that, as Bradberry describes, emotional intelligence explains about 60% of the performance of people at work, it is necessary to reinforce the development of EI in every member

of a company. And it is essential to have the right leaders to generate this change.

For Goleman, "the art of leadership is to help people obtain and maintain an optimum state for performance. From a neurological point of view, this means helping people to establish and maintain the best internal state, this optimum condition is known as flow." No matter the profession, the optimum internal state is the same for everyone and is characterized by undisturbed attention, a 200% focus, adaptability and flexibility, and a good feeling in the face of challenges." You feel a kind of ecstasy or bliss. You feel joy to be in a flowing state. That's

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**Daniel Goleman**

where people are doing their best and feeling their best," explains Goleman. According to him, an intelligent leader, an affectionate and emotionally intelligent leader can help people obtain and maintain that status. Jenn Lim is the CEO of Delivering Happiness, an organization that, based on the science of happiness, seeks to inspire passion and purpose in work and in everyday life. With the support of several studies, Lim ensures that if the happiness of the employees is promoted, the profitability of the company will increase by 22%, creativity and innovation up to 300%, and engagement by 30%. Today there are a lot of companies that apply practices related to emotional intelligence. The American Society for Training and Development found that 80% of large corporations

incorporate some aspect of EI in their recruitment, promotion, and training processes. Southwest Airlines has been very successful in applying this model. As well as Whole Foods, whose business model with emotionally intelligent employees charms customers, who always come back. For better business, we should encourage and hire thinking about EI.

#### Intelligent Leadership

According to Annie McKee, author and advisor of emotional intelligence in leadership, emotional intelligence is a set of skills that can be learned and make a difference. It is about three fundamental skills. First, self-management: the ability to control impulsive

reactions and handle emotions in a healthy way.

Then, social awareness: when one understands the emotions, needs and concerns of other people. And finally, relationship management: knowing how to develop and maintain healthy relationships, communicating clearly, inspiring and influencing others, work well in teams and handle conflict. All these skills, coupled with self-awareness, are the attributes of an emotionally intelligent leader who come to knock down two myths that McKee believes were obsolete. "The first myth is that being smart is enough. IQ opens the door for you, EI makes you different. It is the most important thing you can do if you want to improve at work, whether you work on a team or leaders. If you move the dial of your ability to understand yourself and un-



derstand how you connect with other people, how you empathize with other people and knowing what motivates them, not only will you be more effective, but they will be more effective, too," says the author.

The second myth highlights the belief of having to put feelings aside, leaving them at the door before entering the office. McKee explains that regardless of whether or not we agree, that is impossible because we are human beings who feel. "When we feel good - and that's why I insist on working on happiness - when we are excited, enthusiastic and committed to contributing to something bigger than ourselves, our brains work better. So it really matters, we should pay attention to how we feel in the workplace, because it's an important part of what we do," McKee concludes.

Having an intelligent leadership applies not only regarding others, but also regarding oneself. Arianna Huffington, co-founder of The Huffington Post, experienced it in her own flesh,

when a stressful lifestyle and 18-hour work days led her to a breakdown. Since then, her work focuses on the importance of well-being, wisdom, the ability of being surprised and giving to others." Just as our world is constantly filled with flashing signals that drive us to earn more money and climb to the top in the workplace," says Huffington, "we receive virtually no messages that remind us of the importance of being connected to the essence of who we are, taking care of ourselves, to connect to others and helping them, to take a minute to pause and being surprised with what surrounds us, to connect with that place where everything can be possible. For her, it is fundamental to seek full well-being, which allows us to become aware of our lives as we live them. ▸

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