50 Activities for Developing Emotional Intelligence

Adele B. Lynn

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Emotional Intelligence (EQ) What is it?

The workplace need no longer linger in darkness regarding the factors leading to great performance. More than 25 years of research in the neurological field and specific study about the factors that contribute to success in the workplace have resulted in breakthrough perceptions about intelligence. Quantifiable data on performance in a myriad of industries and organizations has resulted in a body of study called *emotional intelligence*. These years of study have named and identified the "intangibles" that predict success in the workplace. Emotional intelligence explains why despite equal intellectual capacity, training, or experience, some people excel while others of the same caliber lag behind.

Repeatedly, we heard and told stories of people with intellectual brilliance often coupled with great experience and education that did not always produce the most capable leaders. Sometimes, even worse, these purveyors of knowledge and intellect created emotional disasters among their followers and plagued the halls of corporate America, dooming their followers to a work life of low creativity, minimal enthusiasm, low productivity, and even fear. And of course, the corporate answer was "send them to a training classe." Training classes almost always fell short because the training was not designed to get to the root of the matter and develop the core issue. Also, training was generically designed and was not targeted to the individual's own failure prescription.

Brilliant research by Daniel Goleman, Robert Cooper, Ayman Sawaf, and Robert Kelley has quantified the characteristics of emotional intelligence and allowed for measurement in a field that was before void of such measurement and definition. It is no longer an "accident" that certain competencies are found repeatedly in high performers. Many of these competencies are found in high performers at all levels, from customer service representatives to CEOs. No longer is the discussion about non-quantifiable "soft skills." Instead, we as trainers and coaches must find ways to build those talents that have been identified by these experts and labeled as emotional intelligence.

So, what exactly do the gifts of emotional intelligence comprise? For the answer to that question, I guide you back to the experts. Anyone who will be using this guide for coaching or training in the area of emotional intelligence must be completely familiar with the following works:

- Working with Emotional Intelligence, by Daniel Goleman
- Executive EQ, Emotional Intelligence in Leadership and Organizations, by Robert K. Cooper and Ayman Sawaf
- How to Be a Star at Work, by Robert E. Kelley

And for understanding the impact of emotional intelligence on workers and consistent language in this guide, I also refer you to my own work:

 In Search of Honor—Lessons from Workers on How to Build Trust, by Adele B. Lynn Although the language, models, and depth of this subject differ among the experts, the general thesis supported in these works is consistent. So, first and foremost, read the experts.

The information contained within these pages concentrates on developing some, not all, aspects of emotional intelligence. (It is impossible for any 50 activities to ever effectively address the whole of this subject.) The exercises contained within these pages are aimed mostly at developing the following set of talents:

- 1. Self-Awareness and Control: This talent comprises two separate skills. The self-awareness component demands intimate and accurate knowledge of one's self and one's emotions. It also demands understanding and predicting one's emotional reactions to situations. One who is emotionally competent at self-awareness is also fully aware of one's values and core beliefs and knows the impact and effect of compromising these core components. The self-control component requires full mastery of being in control of emotions. Both positive and negative emotions are channeled in the most productive manner when one controls the emotion versus the emotion controlling the person. The person with mastery and control of emotions can both anticipate and plan emotional reactions to maximize effectiveness.
- 2. **Empathy:** Empathy requires the ability to understand how others perceive situations. This perception includes knowing how others feel about a particular set of events or circumstances. Empathy requires knowing the perspective of others and being able to see things from the value and belief system of the other person. It is the ability to fully immerse oneself in another's viewpoint, yet be able to remain wholly apart. The understanding associated with empathy is both cognitive and emotional. It takes into consideration the reasons and logic behind another's feelings or point of view, while also allowing the empathic party to feel the spirit of a person or thing.
- 3. **Social Expertness:** Social expertness is the ability to build genuine relationships and bonds with others that are based on an assumption of human equality. Social expertness allows people to genuinely express feelings, even conflict, in a way that builds rather than destroys relationships. Social expertness also enables a person to choose appropriate actions based on his or her feelings of empathy. The talent of social expertness allows caring, support, and concern to show for fellow humans in all of life's situations. Social expertness also demands that one reads social situations for readiness, appropriateness, and spoken and unspoken norms. Resolving conflict without compromising core beliefs or values is an important component of social expertness. High social expertness also allows for strong networks on both a professional and personal level that can readily be enlisted when needed for aid.
- 4. Personal Influence: Personal influence is the ability to inspire others through example, words, and deeds. It is the ability to lead others by way of social expertness. Personal influence is the ability to read situations and exert influence and leadership in the desired direction. Personal influence is also the ability to confront the issues that are important or debilitating to relationships, goals, missions, or visions. Personal influence is also exhibiting motivation for one's visions, missions, core values, and beliefs.

5. Mastery of Vision: Mastery of vision requires that the individual has the ability to set direction and vision guided by a strong personal philosophy. The ability to communicate and articulate with passion regarding direction and vision are also essential to mastery of vision. This talent serves as the inner compass that guides and influences one's actions. This inner compass also provides resilience and strength to overcome obstacles. It is the inner motivator and the guardian angel of our purpose. It is because of mastery of vision that we know who we are and what we are compelled to do with our lives. When our actions and words are consistent with this personal philosophy, it is our sense of authenticity. When inconsistent, it is our sense of stress and discomfort.

A Coach's/Trainer's Guide to Helping Leaders Improve Emotional Intelligence

The coach's/trainer's role is critical in helping leaders develop emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence does not improve overnight. Developing one's emotional intelligence is truly a lifetime journey. However, with the help of a coach or trainer, a sixmonth to one-year time period will provide a good beginning for the leader. Therefore, any organization that commits to building its leaders' emotional intelligence must also commit to a long-term effort. It is the coach or trainer who can provide the consistent effort over this initial six-month to one-year time period for such growth to begin to occur. A long-term coach or trainer will also get to know the leader's strengths, weaknesses, and areas of emotional intelligence that need the most work. In addition, growth will be well seeded if the leader is given ample feedback, reinforcement, and reminders to practice new behaviors on the job. This is the coach's or trainer's most golden role.

- **Step 1:** Model emotional intelligence in all of your interactions with your participants.
- Step 2: Assist the leader in honest assessment. Assessment sources and methods can vary greatly. The coach/trainer must be able to ferret out the wheat from the chaff. Also, the coach/trainer must be familiar with the leader's situation to provide truth and honesty. The coach/trainer must also realize when the leader's self-awareness skills are not high enough to provide reliable data.
- **Step 3:** Help leaders reflect on their current philosophies/belief systems and behaviors. Help them identify which belief systems and behaviors are helping them and which may be interfering with their effectiveness.
- **Step 4:** Help the leader set realistic objectives about changing destructive belief systems and behaviors. Also, show the leader how to change.
- **Step 5:** Expose the leader to other ways of thinking. This could be through peers, books, mentors, or other masters.
- **Step 6:** Challenge the leader to create new belief systems and philosophies that will serve both the leader and his followers in a better way.
- **Step 7:** Help the leader convert his or her belief system or philosophies to productive behaviors. Encourage repetitive use of these new behaviors on the job.
- **Step 8:** Provide and find others to provide positive reinforcement for the leaders who are attempting to improve.

- **Step 9:** Measure the results through assessment or other methods. Be sure to share the results with the leader.
- **Step 10:** Mirror the behavioral results of changed belief systems and behaviors that improve followers' reactions. Celebrate and applaud the leader's efforts.

How to Use This Guide and How Not to Use This Guide

- Assessment is an important phase of development for leaders. However, all forms
 of assessment are not created equal. As a trainer or coach, you must determine
 accuracy of assessment information. In addition, these methods require continuous
 assessment and feedback between you and the participants.
- Hand-pick selected exercises in this guide depending on the person or group you are working with. In other words, select the exercises based on fit and appropriateness.
- The exercises in this guide are designed to be used as coaching tools. The
 coaching tools can be used in the classroom or in private coaching sessions. The
 tools are designed to help leaders reflect on their leadership methods, practices,
 and philosophies, and then to use these reflections to guide their leadership
 behaviors.
- As the trainer or coach, you should use this guide with care and judgment. All leaders are not at the same level in their readiness to reflect and develop themselves. Therefore, we've coded the exercises with a High, Medium, and Low risk/difficulty factor.
- Also, you'll need to use care and judgment when considering offering these
 exercises in group settings or in private. Some organizational cultures do not
 promote an open atmosphere, and therefore, the exercises may have more benefit
 if used privately with the learner.
- We have, for your convenience, grouped some exercises or activities that work well
 together and suggest some sample training modules for you to consider.
 Remember, however, that in group settings, all participants will not be at the same
 level. Therefore, it will be important for you to take this into consideration when
 planning the session.
- Do not use this guide as a substitute for all leadership development. Leaders still
 will need basic skills in decision making, problem-solving techniques, and methods
 related to strategic thinking, etc. However, the activities contained within these
 pages are essential for leaders to flourish beyond these basic skills.
- Do supplement these activities with other training activities that will contribute to the learning. This is not, nor can it be, the only avenue to developing emotional intelligence.

- Recognize that your role as the coach or trainer in emotional intelligence is to act as
 a mirror for the learner. Sometimes, self-assessment in a leader with low selfawareness can be flawed; therefore, your role is expanded. You must hand to your
 learner the observations and insights from within and outside of the classroom that
 facilitate his or her learning. Comments from employees, peers, and others must be
 part of the feedback that you give to assist the learner.
- As a coach or trainer in emotional intelligence, take care not to force people to participate if they aren't ready.
- Debriefing exercises are instrumental if progress is to be made in emotional intelligence. The questions at the end of each activity are designed to get participants to reflect on the learning. Please add questions that you believe will enhance the learning. Always ask the participant how the learning will result in changing his or her approach on the job.
- Remember basic information such as Myers Briggs type and learning style
 information. Some people are introverted and will find reflection easy. Others are
 extroverted and will prefer to process the information by talking it through. As the
 coach or trainer, adjust your methods accordingly. Any exercise designed for private
 reflection on the following pages can easily be adapted.
- Exercises and activities aimed at increasing emotional intelligence demand that the
 learner internalize the information and then broaden or change his or her leadership
 philosophies. (Philosophies will result in changed behavior.) This cannot occur
 overnight. It is the trainer's or coach's job to continuously keep this type of learning
 in front of the leader—to continuously challenge or affirm his or her philosophies
 that drive the leadership behavior.
- Don't expect Attila the Hun to transform into Gandhi. However, do expect progress.
 The key to progress in emotional intelligence is to continuously challenge the leader
 to rethink his or her philosophies that drive his or her leadership and then to support
 new behaviors related to this new thinking.
- Reinforcement of the new emotionally intelligent behavior is critical to acquiring the skill. The coach/trainer should reinforce these skills as often as possible. Ideally, the coach should also enlist the help of others within the organization, especially a superior of the participant, to reinforce the behavior.

A Guide to the 50 Emotional Intelligence Activities

	Emotional					IAL INTEI MPETENO		E
	Intelligence Activity	Page Number	Risk/Difficulty	Self-Awareness/ Control	Empathy	Social Expertness	Personal Influence	Mastery of Vision
1.	Champion or Chump	13	М	✓		✓		
2.	Importance Meter	19	L	✓	✓	✓		
3.	Adding Fuel to Importance Meter	25	L		✓	✓	✓	
4.	Rank Order Your Employees	31	Н	✓	✓	✓		
5.	Ask for Feedback	37	Н	✓	✓	✓		
6.	Picture Yourself	43	L			✓		✓
7.	Personality Contest	49	L	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8.	Music of Our Workplace	55	М		✓	✓	✓	✓
9.	Coming Through	61	Н	✓	✓			
10.	Open and Friendly vs. Friendship	67	М		✓	✓		✓
11.	Listening Habits	73	М	✓	✓	✓		
12.	Genuine Listening	79	L	✓	✓	✓		
13.	Tuning into Our Employees	83	М	✓	✓	✓		
14.	I Was Appreciated	89	L	✓		✓	✓	
15.	A Grateful Heart	95	L	✓		✓		
16.	Gifts	101	L			✓	✓	
17.	Yes, but	107	М					✓
18.	Common Mistakes with Gratitude	111	Н	✓	✓		✓	
19.	A Note of Thanks	117	Н	✓	✓	✓	✓	
20.	Dumped On	123	М		✓			✓
21.	Doing a Fair Share	129	Н		✓		✓	✓
22.	The Boss's Fair Share	135	Н	✓	✓		✓	
23.	Action/Reaction	141	М	✓	✓		✓	
24.	Take a Stand	147	Н				✓	✓
25.	I Value, We Value	153	М	✓			✓	✓

Emotional				EMOTION COI	AL INTEL		
Intelligence Activity	Page Number	Risk/Difficulty	Self-Awareness/ Control	Empathy	Social Expertness	Personal Influence	Mastery of Vision
26. Contribution Spirit Killers	159	Н	✓	✓		✓	
27. You Expect Me to What?	165	Н	✓	✓		✓	
28. Great Vision	171	L	✓			✓	✓
29. My Vision	177	М			✓	✓	✓
30. Inspiring Words	183	Н				✓	✓
31. Sharing Your Vision	189	М				✓	✓
32. Who Invents?	195	Н	✓			✓	
33. Visions Apply to People Too	201	Н	✓		✓	✓	
34. Vision Spirit Killers	207	Н	✓	✓		✓	
35. Advice From the Pros	213	L	✓				✓
36. Working Toward the Vision	217	М				✓	✓
37. Advice from Employees	223	Н	✓			✓	✓
38. Today's Actions Toward the Vision	229	М				✓	✓
39. Fuel the Vision	235	М	✓			✓	
40. Picture Yourself	241	М				✓	✓
41. Lessons from Low Points/High Points	247	Н	✓			1	
42. It's My Show	253	Н	1				✓
43. Interior Power	259	Н	✓			✓	✓
44. Control and Empowerment	265	Н	1	✓		✓	
45. Steps for Growth	271	Н	✓				✓
46. Spirit Killers That Stunt Your Growth	277	Н	1				✓
47. Your Most Inspired Self	283	Н	✓				✓
48. Your Leadership Coat of Arms	289	L	✓				✓
49. More Reflections	295	Н	✓				✓
50. The Power of Pictures	299	L	✓				✓

Suggested Training Formats

Suggested formats are simply designed to give you some idea of how to combine the exercises depending on your learning objectives. I would strongly suggest that you vary the formats depending on the makeup of the group. Also, supplement the formats with videos and other learning aids that support your objectives.

Format A—Leader's Introduction to EQ—½ day

Icebreaker Activity/Introductions	25 min.
EQ #1: Champion or Chump	25 min.
EQ #15: A Grateful Heart	35 min.
EQ #16: Gifts	20 min.
Break	15 min.
EQ #50: The Power of Pictures	50 + 10 min./person
Wrap Up Summary	15 min.

Format B—EQ Essentials for Leaders—1 day

Icebreaker Activity/Introductions				
EQ #1:	Champion or Chump	25 min.		
EQ #4:	Rank Order Your Employees	40 min.		
Break		15 min.		
EQ #3:	Adding Fuel to the Importance Meter	45 min.		
Lunch				
EQ #15:	A Grateful Heart	35 min.		
EQ #16:	Gifts	20 min.		
EQ #9:	Coming Through	75 min.		
Break		15 min.		
EQ #50:	The Power of Pictures	50 + 10 min./person		
Wrap Up	Summary	15 min.		

Format C—Advanced EQ for Leaders—2 days

Day 1

Lunch

	locbican	ci / totivity/introductions	20 111111.
	EQ #1:	Champion or Chump	25 min.
	EQ #2:	Importance Meter	55 min.
	EQ #3:	Adding Fuel to the Importance Meter	45 min.
	Lunch		
	EQ #15:	A grateful Heart	35 min.
	EQ #16:	Gifts	20 min.
	EQ #9:	Coming Through	75 min.
	Break		15 min.
	EQ #7:	Personality Contest	50 min.
	Wrap Up	Summary	15 min.
Da	y 2		
	EQ #28:	Great Vision	45 min.
	EQ #8:	Music of Our Workplace	60 min.
	Break		15 min.
	EQ #29:	My Vision*	30 min.
	EQ #30:	Inspiring Words*	40 min.

^{*}Focus participants on only one aspect of vision—their vision for the type of team and culture that they would like to create within their work units.

Advice from Employees

EQ #37

EQ Target

√	Self-Awareness and Control	
	Empathy	
	Social Expertness	
√	Personal Influence	
√	Mastery of Vision	

Objectives

- To help participants gain personal awareness of some of the vision killers that employees perceive in the workplace
- To help participants assess their personal strengths and weaknesses related to the vision
- To help participants determine actions that they would like to change related to the vision

Estimated Time

30 minutes

Materials

Emotional Intelligence Exercise 37

Uses

- Training workshops on leadership
- Private coaching sessions with all levels of leaders

Risk/Difficulty

High

Coaching Tips for Coach/Trainer

Employees have named ten behaviors that they believe kill a sense of vision in a work group. These actions are behaviors that the leader can influence.

The emotionally intelligent leader knows that his or her behaviors influence perceptions. These perceptions are critical to motivating employees toward the vision. However, most leaders don't think about vision in terms of behavior, so they

Coaching Tips for Coach/Trainer (continued)

might be unaware that certain behaviors can affect people's commitment toward the vision. The top ten vision killers identified by employees include the following:

- 1. Treating people badly, such as not showing people they care, forgetting to say thank you, not respecting people, not making people feel valued
- 2. Not setting good examples, living by the adage, "Do as I say, not as I do"
- 3. Focusing on too many things at once
- 4. Pushing too hard on the task and forgetting the people
- 5. Not giving clear direction
- 6. Giving inconsistent direction
- 7. Not taking responsibility for failure
- 8. Focusing on the detail and forgetting to tell the "whys" or the big picture
- 9. Showing little or no personal commitment to the vision
- 10. Allowing people who aren't performing the job to remain

In the eyes of employees, these 10 items ranked tops in reasons why people felt less committed and less connected to the leader's vision.

Trainer's/Coach's Notes

Approximate Time

1. Overview 5 minutes

Explain to the individual or group that the leader's behavior has much to do with how committed employees are toward the vision. Explain that the emotionally intelligent leader knows that certain behaviors impact employee commitment. List the top ten reasons that people feel less committed to a vision. Explain that often we believe that the employee needs to get with it, but that our behavior may be signaling something else.

2. Purpose 1 minute

"The purpose of this exercise is to help you assess your own behavior to determine if something in your behavior might be sending mixed signals about your vision to your employees. Employees who were surveyed listed the top ten reasons why they feel less committed or aligned to a vision. These reasons reflect behaviors that are within the leader's power to change. In this exercise, we ask you to level with yourself to determine if something you may be doing may be working counter to your goals.

Trainer's/Coach's Notes (continued)

3. Directions 10 minutes

- A. Give participant(s) Exercise 37.
- B. Instruct each participant to complete the worksheet by reflecting on each of the items and placing a checkmark on the continuum to indicate how often or seldom the leader engages in this behavior.
- C. Ask the participants to reflect on their three lowest scores.

4. Debrief the Exercise

15 minutes

Use the following questions to debrief the exercise:

- What impact can the leader's behavior have on the employee's willingness to commit?
- What impact do the items listed have on your behavior when you are a follower?
- Would some of your employees be impacted negatively by your behaviors?
- What can you do to change the situation?



Emotional Intelligence Exercise 37

Based on our research, we've listed the top ten vision killers. For each vision killer, place a checkmark on the continuum below to indicate how often or seldom you engage in this activity. Leaders kill a vision by:

_	Very Seldom	-	Often
1.	Treating people badly, such as not showing people they care, forgetting	to s	ay
	thank you, not respecting people, not making people feel valued		
			I
	Very Seldom	Very	Often
2.	Not setting good examples, living by the adage "Do as I say, not as I do	"	
	Very Seldom	Verv] Often
3.	Focusing on too many things at once		C 11011
<i>J</i> .	1 oddsing on too many timigs at onec		
]
	Very Seldom	Very	Often
4.	Pushing too hard on the task and forgetting the people		
			I
	Very Seldom	Very	Often
5.	Not giving clear direction		
			ı
	Very Seldom	Verv] Often
3 .	Giving inconsistent direction	•	
	Varia California		<u></u>
7	Very Seldom	very	Often
7.	Not taking responsibility for failure		
]
	Very Seldom	Very	Often
3.	Focusing on the detail and forgetting to tell the "whys" or the big picture		
	1		ı
	Very Seldom	Very] Often
9.	Showing little or no personal commitment to the vision		
			_
	Very Seldom	Vory] Often
10	Allowing people who aren't performing the job to remain	v ei y	JILEII
	, morning poople title dietit periorining the job to ferium		

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Today's Actions Toward the Vision

EQ #38

EQ Target

	Self-Awareness and Control
	Empathy
	Social Expertness
√	Personal Influence
√	Mastery of Vision

Objectives

- To help participants determine if they are taking daily actions toward the vision
- To help participants assess which actions seem to be working to engage people toward the vision

Estimated Time

35 minutes

Materials

Emotional Intelligence Exercise 38

Uses

- Training workshops on leadership
- Private coaching sessions with all levels of leaders

Risk/Difficulty

Medium

Coaching Tips for Coach/Trainer

It's easy for leaders to think that once they state the vision, their job is finished. Now, they may believe it is up to the employees to carry on in the direction of the vision. Not so. Every day, every leader must re-communicate, realign, or otherwise remind people about the direction. A constant, encouraging clamoring by the leader restating the vision in a variety of different words helps people to connect to the vision.

Coaching Tips for Coach/Trainer (continued)

Restating the vision is especially necessary when people are not 100 percent aligned or when the leader is expanding or changing the vision. Of course, the best results will occur when the leader is demonstrating all other components of emotional intelligence such as building bonds and encouraging high trust. Fundamentally, the leader's job is to inspire people toward a goal. Unless that goal is firmly communicated and planted in the team, the leader will not achieve success.

Trainer's/Coach's Notes

Approximate Time

1 minute 1. Overview

Explain to the individual or group that many leaders think that visioning is something that can be crossed off the things-to-do list. Instead, visioning is something that the leader has to do in small and different ways every day. Most leaders get lost in what they consider to be "work" and forget that instilling the vision is probably one of the most important aspects of the leader's work.

2. **Purpose** 1 minute

"The purpose of this exercise is to help you assess the amount of work you do toward your vision each day. If all members of your team are perfectly aligned with the vision, then you probably have little work to do here. However, most of us have team members who need to be reminded, encouraged, and prodded toward the vision. Also, change is a constant factor in most of our environments and change brings a need to reiterate the vision. Reinforcing the vision also strengthens everyone's belief that the leader is committed to the vision."

3. **Directions**

- A. Give participant(s) Exercise 38.
- B. Instruct each participant to complete the worksheet over a twoweek period.
- C. Ask the participants to list things they have done over the last two-week period that supports their vision. It could be talking with employees in a meeting, talking one-to-one with employees, reinforcing actions, or otherwise supporting the vision. Ask participants to be specific and to tell specific actions that they have taken with employees to advance their vision.

5 minutes*

*Denotes classroom time

Trainer's/Coach's Notes (continued)

D. Analyze the logs at the end of the two-week period to determine if there are time gaps when we ignore the vision. Also, ask participants to put a star next to the items that they think had the largest impact on reinforcing or communicating their vision.

4. Debrief the Exercise

30 minutes

Use the following questions to debrief the exercise:

- What actions proved strongest to moving the vision forward?
- How do you know that these actions impacted the vision?
- Where do you need to pay more attention to the vision?



Emotional Intelligence Exercise 38

Keep the following log for a two-week period. Note at least one visible action you have taken each day that communicates your passion for the vision.

Day	Action
Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

Analyze your log and determine if you have any gaps. Put a star next to those items that had the most impact.

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