

5 traits all emotionally intelligent leaders share

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- **In order to be a successful leader, it is important that you are aware of your own and others' emotions.**
- **A result of this emotional intelligence is the cultivation of a meaningful working relationship with those around you.**
- **Empathy, self-awareness and authenticity are just some of the traits that make certain leaders stand out.**

Some of the most revered leaders in business today share common traits that attract great staff and inspire the best work. These people are often described as warm, personable,

approachable and just plain real.

What do they have in common? The qualities can best be described as emotional intelligence — the ability to be aware of their own and others' emotions, giving them the capacity to better handle interpersonal work relationships.

If you aspire to be a better leader, you would do well to work on your emotional intelligence quotient. While these traits may seem natural and inborn, they can also be learned, fostered, developed and honed. If you're looking to better connect with others, draw the best resources and keep your team happy and focused, read on to learn about identifying and developing these qualities.

1. Empathetic

Empathy is the ability to understand how another person is feeling. Great leaders are able to look at issues from many different perspectives and to consider the effects from other points of view. The ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes when viewing a problem can be invaluable to finding a solution and gaining consensus. With a bit of effort, there may even be a solution where everyone ends up happy.

How to practice: Make a concerted effort to visualize yourself in the other person's position. What would the problem look like? What would your attitude be? How would it differ from yours? This helps validate and understand their perspective. Even if the answer to a problem is not the best outcome from any given viewpoint, acknowledging the positions and feelings of others can go a long way to creating acceptance and understanding.

2. Self-aware

Do you know the situations that bring out the best in you? What about the worst? Have you considered your biases, preferences and general dislikes? Self-awareness is having an understanding of your own feelings and an active knowledge of the history you bring to the table. When you're self-aware, you can add your own ideas but also be aware of how your past experiences and current emotions play into the situation. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses and when you can and can't trust your own instincts can make you an even better leader.

How to practice: When faced with a problem or situation, examine how you feel in the moment, and try to determine why. If you can identify the emotions that are at play in your attitude and your assessment of the issue, you can determine whether they need to be tempered or modified by other factors.

3. Positive

Can you call yourself an optimist? The art of being truly optimistic lies not only in the ability to keep a positive attitude in adverse situations, but also in being able to offer sincere, realistic leadership that gets the team through the hardship in one piece. No one is looking to have sunny platitudes hashed out or unrealistic predictions made. Great leaders can be positive in the face of difficulty and still be very much in touch with the situation.

How to practice: When a problem arises, you're frustrated or the situation is difficult, take a moment to consider the positive aspects of the issue — whether you're building a stronger team, providing a learning opportunity for someone, or uncovering and fixing a deeper problem, there's always something to be gleaned. When conveying optimism to the team, be sincere: The situation might not be great right now, but you have confidence that you'll all find a solution and, in the end, it's all going to be OK. Be authentic and positive, and people will want to help you make it right.

4. Considerate

Caring and consideration can go a long way to creating a cohesive, high-functioning team. Taking the time to acknowledge others, noting their contributions and making sure they're heard can be invaluable in drawing people to you and bringing out their best work. Great leaders know that getting to know their team members — professionally and personally — and caring about them and their careers will mean that everyone works better together in the long run.

How to practice: Take the time to check in with others, even when (especially when) the pressure is off and there's time to talk. Concentrate on giving others your full attention when discussing them and their careers, and follow up to help them meet their goals. In meetings, make sure everyone at the table has had a chance to talk. Seek out the opinions of anyone you may have missed. If your memory isn't great, be sure to take notes that you can refer to later, and give credit where it's due.

5. Authentic

No leader can apply any of the tenants of emotional intelligence without being sincere. Authenticity is critical in leadership – be an open book with your intentions and your agenda. No amount of other leadership behaviors will make up for a lack of truthfulness in what you say in do.

How to practice: Your integrity is paramount to your reputation as a leader, so only say what you mean and don't make promises you can't keep. Be trustworthy and follow through with your statements. It may seem counterintuitive, but when you make a mistake, admit it honestly, and follow through with the actions needed to make amends. It is a lot easier to recover from a misstep than from a loss of trust.

Take every opportunity to practice your emotional intelligence skills. Beyond work, think of ways to apply yourself at home, in social and community situations. Every chance to work on your skills will make you a better leader, no matter the location.

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