

## Emotional and spiritual intelligence

### Emotional intelligence



“The more open we are to our own emotions, the more skilled we will be in reading feelings”

- Daniel Goleman

Emotional intelligence refers to the mental **abilities and skills related to feeling, understanding, controlling and changing our own emotions and those of others.**

An emotionally intelligent person is someone who is able to manage emotions successfully **to achieve positive results in their relationships with others.**

There are two basic forms of emotional intelligence:

- **Interpersonal intelligence:** Feeling and understanding the emotions of others and being able to react according to other people’s mood.
- **Intrapersonal intelligence:** Feeling and understanding our own emotions, taking them into account when making decisions and being able to control our emotions according to the situation.

Emotional intelligence plays a **key role in the success or failure of all types of human relationships**, from romantic and family relationships to work relationships.

It is also a **determining factor in how organizations function**, since empathy, emotional self-control and people’s motivations can have an impact on **teamwork**, making it more or less efficient and satisfactory.

These skills are also important for **people’s ability to convince**, manipulate and/or guide others. Leaders tend to be emotionally intelligent people.



The term “emotional intelligence” was coined by psychologist Daniel Goleman.

According to Goleman, this intelligence has 5 components:

1. **Self-awareness**, defined as an awareness of our own emotions and feelings and of how they influence us.
2. **Self-regulation**, i.e., the ability to control ourselves and to prevent emotions from overwhelming and controlling us completely.
3. **Motivation**, understood as the ability to guide our emotions to achieve our goals. Being proactive.
4. **Empathy**, or “putting ourselves in another person’s shoes”, is the ability to recognize the emotions of others.
5. **Social skills**. Humans are social beings and, as such, need to maintain rich and satisfactory interpersonal relationships in order to feel fulfilled.

In short, training our emotional intelligence will allow us to have a better understanding of our own emotions and of how to manage them, identify them better in others, prevent the harmful effects of intense negative emotions and develop skills to generate positive emotions. All of this will translate into a sense of well-being that will support personal success throughout our life.

At this point, we need to define the concept of **emotion**.

An **emotion** is understood as a state of excitement or disturbance of the organism that predisposes us to an organized response. This state serves as a signal for us that something is happening in the external or internal world. Therefore, emotions fulfill different functions:

- They serve as signals.
- They may tell us that something is wrong.
- They prepare us for action.
- They tell us about the state of our relationships.
- They serve as signals to others.

**What are the basic emotions?** Fear, Anger, Sadness, Joy, Surprise, Disgust

Some characteristics of emotions:

- **They are innate**: The part of the cerebral cortex that houses emotions is one of the first to develop, which is why children are so expressive and are often overwhelmed by their own emotions, as they have not yet developed the “more rational” part of their brain and sometimes find it impossible to be “in balance”.



- **They are universal:** Emotions are present in all human beings regardless of age, sex, race or socioeconomic status.
- **They are expressed in a characteristic way:** When we are happy we smile, when we are surprised we raise our eyebrows and open our mouth, and when we feel disgust we wrinkle our nose and raise our upper lip.
- **They fulfill an adaptive function:** They have allowed us to survive as a species. For example, thanks to fear we avoid places such as cliffs where we might have an accident, and thanks to disgust we do not eat spoiled food that might poison us.

Furthermore, contrary to common belief, **emotions in themselves are neither good nor bad**. In fact, they all have a positive dimension, since they all give us important information, although there are certainly emotions that are pleasant to feel and others that are rather unpleasant. However, it is important that we feel and express each one of them.

A question that arises is the following one: is emotion the same as **feeling**? The answer is *no*.

**Feelings** are more complex, and are also called secondary emotions. Here are some characteristics of feelings:

- **They arise from basic emotions:** For example, when surprise and fear are mixed, the feeling of shock appears.
- **They are more complex:** We must have developed our values and thoughts in order to have feelings, and they are therefore much more subjective and personal.
- **What we feel is linked to** what we think and do, usually mixing several emotions.
- **Feelings vary a lot** depending on where we are born and how we are brought up.

### Questions to discuss in your groups:

1. Do you think having emotional intelligence will be helpful when interacting with your fellow service members?
2. Do you think you have emotional intelligence? What skills make you think you do?
3. Do you think it is necessary to have emotional intelligence in order to be a leader? If so, why?
4. Are you able to express your emotions or are you someone who tends to hide them?



## Spiritual intelligence



Keep your feet on the ground,  
but let your heart soar as high  
as it can.

**Spiritual intelligence** is found in our hearts.

**Spiritual or transcendent intelligence** is what allows us to understand the world, others and ourselves from a deeper and more meaningful perspective, as it helps us to transcend suffering and to see beyond the material world, entering into a wide and interconnected spiritual dimension far away from the material world in which we live every day. For this reason, many authors consider it the highest type of intelligence of all.

Spiritual intelligence aims to integrate the inner life of the mind and spirit with the outer life. Spiritual intelligence is needed in order to gauge which spiritual decisions will contribute to mental well-being, inner peace, happiness and physical health.

People with spiritual intelligence have certain abilities such as:

- The **ability** to seek transcendence.
- The **ability** to find a sense of sacredness in daily activities.
- The **ability** to use spiritual resources to solve practical problems in life.
- The **ability** to commit to leading a virtuous life expressed in the practice of humility, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness and wisdom.
- The **ability** to face and transcend pain and suffering.
- The **ability** to see things in a holistic way, meaning to see them as a whole.
- The **ability** to always ask “Why?” and/or “What for?” in situations they face, and to look for fundamental answers to these questions.
- The **ability** to be creative.
- The **ability** to refrain from doing harm and to avoid unnecessary criticism.
- The **ability** to prioritize values and to consistently live according to them.
- The **ability** to know themselves and to be self-aware at all times.

### Questions to discuss in your groups:

1. Is it the purpose of your life to reach perfection and to do God's Will in all things?
2. Does daily prayer, understood as dialogue with a benevolent God, help you to grow spiritually?

### Conclusions

Now that we have examined these three training reflections, we can see that all of their topics are related to one another. Understanding them and putting this knowledge into practice will make us:

- Thank God every day, hour and minute of our lives for the love with which He has created us and for the ability He has given us to work towards becoming like Him.
- Be sure that knowing ourselves, appreciating ourselves and being aware of the enormous potential we have will help us to strive to overcome our flaws and to develop our qualities to put them at the service of those who need us most: people in material and/or spiritual poverty.
- Be well, confident and grateful, which will make our relationships with others harmonious and enriching.
- Realize that the secret to changing and/or improving is to channel all our energies *not* into fighting the old, but into building the new.

Let us finish with a few words from St Vincent de Paul:

In his important lecture on the purpose of the Congregation of the Mission, on December 6, 1658, he expressed, once again, his rejection of people who shut themselves away, like snails into their shells:

“People who have only a narrow outlook, confining their perspective and plans to a certain circumference within which they shut themselves away, so to speak, in one sport; they don't want to leave it, and if they're shown something outside it and go near to have a look, they immediately go back to their center, like snails into their shells” (CCD, XII, p.81).



**Bibliography for developing these topics further:**

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