People with a high degree of emotional intelligence understand their own strengths and weaknesses and can relate to the emotional needs of others.

Emotional intelligence (EI) involves understanding and being aware of your own emotions, what triggers them, and how to handle them appropriately. It also means being sensitive to others’ feelings and having the ability and willingness to see things from another person’s perspective. In general terms, emotional intelligence is having good “people skills” and keeping your own emotions under control.

Rutgers psychologist Daniel Goleman, whose 1995 best-selling book “Emotional Intelligence” spread the concepts of EI worldwide, makes the case that EI is perhaps the most critical skill a person can have in the workplace, more important than high IQ or technical skills. Having a high degree of emotional intelligence can be learned and practiced, and these skills and abilities are beneficial in nearly every situation.

Practice the following to improve your emotional intelligence:

- **Self-observation.** When something or someone triggers your emotions, take a mental step back and observe your own feelings and behavior. Are you in control of your emotions, or do you let your emotions control you? Do you react without thinking? Slow down and consider all sides of a situation before you make judgments or jump to conclusions.

- **Good listening skills.** Listening carefully and attentively is hard. Many times we’re too focused on what we want to say next to really listen to someone else’s point of view. Try to put yourself in the other person’s shoes and don’t interrupt.

- **Responsibility for your words and actions.** If you’ve made a mistake, don’t try to deny or hide it. Think before you act, and consider the consequences of your actions on other people.

- **Humility.** Be quick to acknowledge others and their contributions; be slow to seek praise and attention for yourself.

- **Bad habits may be difficult to change.** At times you might experience a setback, but don’t give up. The more you persist with healthier habits, the more ingrained they’ll become.

With increased EI, you’ll likely find you’re able to get along better with others, at home and at work.