



4: The Power of Emotional Intelligence

A Lesson on Self-Awareness, Empathy, and Using Emotions to Build a Competitive Advantage



Introduction for the Facilitator

In every college, training program, or workplace, **emotional intelligence** (EQ) is a vital skill. Emotional intelligence is not about suppressing emotion; it's about understanding, managing, and using emotions—your own and others'—to navigate life, learning, and leadership.

This lesson helps learners explore EQ as a **professional skill** that gives them a real-world advantage. Those with high emotional intelligence tend to collaborate better, lead more effectively, recover from setbacks faster, and make stronger personal and professional impressions. EQ is a foundational part of their **personal competitive advantage**, helping them reach their goals in a way that feels sustainable and authentic.

Emotional intelligence allows learners to thrive, not by avoiding hard emotions but by working with them strategically.

Adult learners in all educational and training environments will benefit from this lesson, which includes:

- A relatable Scenario introducing the idea of emotional intelligence
- 8 Guided Group Discussion Questions with follow-up questions
- 8 Journal Prompts to reflect on what emotional intelligence means
- 8 personal Skill-Building Strategies
- A printable Action Planner for reflection and application



Scenario: The Reactive Intern

Sami, 19, is in a medical assistant internship at a busy clinic. She's smart, skilled, and committed—but easily overwhelmed when things go wrong. When a patient raises their voice or a coworker gives feedback, she gets defensive or shuts down. *They have no idea how hard I'm working*, she thinks to herself.

After a difficult week, her supervisor says, "You've got what it takes—but you have to learn how to manage your reactions. The job will always have pressure. You can't let emotion control your effectiveness...and you have to understand that the people around you also have strong emotions that affect how they act."

Sami feels discouraged, but curious: *What emotions are driving the people around me? Can I really change how I respond?* She decides to learn how.



Guided Group Discussion Questions

- 1. What does emotional intelligence mean in your own words?**
Follow-up: Where have you seen it help (or hurt) someone in real life?
- 2. What happens when someone reacts emotionally vs. when they respond with self-awareness?**
Follow-up: How does that affect trust, teamwork, or respect?
- 3. Why is emotional intelligence important for leadership, even in entry-level roles or training?**
Follow-up: How do people with high EQ stand out?
- 4. What makes it hard to pay attention to other people's emotions in high-stress environments like school, job sites, or internships?**
Follow-up: What can help in those moments?
- 5. How do emotional intelligence and personal competitive advantage connect?**
Follow-up: How might strong EQ open doors in your career?
- 6. What's the difference between emotional control and emotional awareness?**
Follow-up: Which one do you think is more powerful?
- 7. What habits, routines, or beliefs help you stay calm and present under pressure?**
Follow-up: What would you like to improve?
- 8. What's one step you could take this week to build emotional intelligence in a real-life situation?**
Follow-up: How would it make a difference?



Journal Prompts

1. Think of a time you reacted emotionally and regretted it. What happened, and what could've helped?
2. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your current EQ? Why?
3. What emotion shows up for you most often at school, work, or training? How do you usually handle it?
4. What's your go-to strategy for calming down under pressure? Is it working for you?
5. Describe a person in your life with strong emotional intelligence. What do they model?
6. What emotions do you find hardest to manage, and why?
7. What's one situation where understanding where someone was coming from helped you improve a relationship or outcome?
8. How would growing your emotional intelligence support the lifestyle or future you want?



Skill-Building Strategies

1. **Name It to Tame It:** In tough moments, pause and name the emotion you're feeling. This reduces emotional hijack.
2. **3-Breath Reset:** Use a simple breathing pattern to reset before responding (e.g., inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 6).
3. **Check the Story:** Ask yourself: "What story am I telling myself right now—and is it 100% true?"
4. **Empathy Practice:** In conversation, try restating what someone feels before responding. ("It sounds like you're frustrated because...")
5. **Trigger Tracker:** Identify recurring triggers and build response plans for each (e.g., criticism, lateness, being ignored).
6. **Emotion Journal:** Log your strongest emotion each day, what triggered it, and how you responded.
7. **Anchor Word or Phrase:** Use a phrase like "Respond, don't react" or "Slow is smooth, smooth is fast" to guide you in the moment.
8. **Weekly EQ Reflection:** Once a week, ask: "Where did my emotions help or hinder me this week?" and adjust accordingly.



4: THE POWER OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Your Action Plan for Growth and Competitive Advantage

Action Planner

Reflect and Prepare

Name: _____

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage your own emotions and those of others. It helps you respond instead of react and is a key part of your personal competitive advantage.

Why This Matters to Me

Why does emotional intelligence matter to your goals, your relationships, or your success in life and work?

My Current Strengths & Struggles

What's going well? _____

What do I want to improve? _____

What emotion do I want to manage better? _____

Belief Shift

Circle or write a belief to support your growth:

"I can feel emotions without letting them take over."

"EQ is a skill, not a personality trait."

"Responding calmly builds my competitive advantage."

"Every emotion is data—I get to choose what I do with it."

Other: _____



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Action Planner

EQ Practice + Tracking

Name: _____

My 28-Day EQ Focus

What small, consistent action will you take to build your emotional intelligence?

When will you practice it? _____ Where or with whom? _____

How will you track it?

☐ Daily log ☐ App ☐ Partner check-in ☐ Weekly review

Restart Plan

When I fall into old habits (because I will), I will:

☐ Pause and breathe

☐ Use my anchor phrase: " _____ "

☐ Reflect on what triggered me

☐ Other: _____

Weekly Reflection Prompts

1. Where did I show strong emotional intelligence this week?

2. Where did I react and what can I learn from that?

3. What triggered strong emotions?

4. How did my EQ help (or hinder) my momentum or relationships?

28-Day EQ Tracker

EQ focus habit: _____

Week 1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 1 go? Circle one word:

☒ Calm ☒ Triggered ☒ Aware
☒ Disconnected ☒ Clear ☒ Proud

Week 3 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 3 go? Circle one word:

☒ Calm ☒ Triggered ☒ Aware
☒ Disconnected ☒ Clear ☒ Proud

Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 2 go? Circle one word:

☒ Calm ☒ Triggered ☒ Aware
☒ Disconnected ☒ Clear ☒ Proud

Week 4 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 4 go? Circle one word:

☒ Calm ☒ Triggered ☒ Aware
☒ Disconnected ☒ Clear ☒ Proud