

The 10 Commandments of Emotional Intelligence

These 10 rules will help you make emotions work for you,
instead of against you.

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[Emotional intelligence](#) is the ability to identify emotions (in both yourself and others), to recognize the powerful effects of those emotions, and to use that information to inform and guide behavior.

It begins with [learning how emotions work](#), but it goes much further. Specifically, how do you start putting that knowledge into practice?

That's the topic of my forthcoming book, [EQ, Applied: The Real World Guide to Emotional Intelligence](#). If you'd like a sneak peak, consider how heeding the following "10 commandments" can [make emotions work for you, instead of against you](#).



I. Thou shalt ponder thy feelings.

Emotional Intelligence begins by [learning to ask the right questions](#), like "What is my current mood, and how might that influence my decisions today?" or "What are my strengths and weaknesses?" This is one way to begin building self-awareness, which will yield valuable insights that can be used to your advantage.

II. Thou shalt learn from other perspectives.

When listening to others, don't focus on right or wrong; rather, work to understand how perceptions differ, and the reasons behind this.

That includes [learning to take negative feedback](#), which can expose blind spots and lead to self-improvement.

III. Thou shalt learn to "pause."

["The pause"](#) is as simple as taking a moment to stop and think before you act or speak. (But beware: While easy in theory, it's difficult to practice.)

Don't expect perfection. But practice consistently, and [the pause will prevent you embarrassment](#) and could save countless relationships.

IV. Thou shalt practice empathy.

Instead of judging or labeling others, work hard to see things through their eyes. Ask questions like, "Why does this person feel this way?" and "What's going on behind the scenes?" Do this, and you'll enjoy a clearer understanding of the world around you, and build deeper, more connected relationships.

V. Thou shalt praise others.

By focusing on the good in others, and then [specifically telling them what you appreciate](#), you inspire others to be the best version of themselves.

VI. Thou shalt apologize.

"I'm sorry" can be the two most difficult words to say. But they can also be the most powerful. Acknowledge your mistakes and apologize when appropriate, and you'll develop qualities like humility and authenticity, naturally drawing others to you.

VII. Thou shalt forgive.

Refusing to forgive is like leaving a knife in a wound--you never give yourself the chance to heal. Instead of hanging on to resentment while the offending party moves on with his or her life, forgiving gives you the chance to move on, too.

VIII. Thou shalt not freeze others in time.

Refuse the temptation to judge others too quickly, without considering context and extenuating circumstances. Remember that [everyone has a bad day](#) (or even a bad year). Instead, make it a practice to consistently and honestly re-evaluate your relationships, and you'll be sure to get more out of them.

IX. Thou shalt control thy thoughts.

When you experience a negative situation, you may not have much control over your feelings. But by [focusing on your thoughts](#), you can control your *reaction* to those feelings.

As the saying goes: "You can't stop a bird from landing on your head. But you can keep it from building a nest." When you focus on your thinking, you resist becoming a slave to your emotions. Instead, you acknowledge those feelings and can then move forward in a way that's in harmony with your goals and values.

X. Thou shalt not stop learning.

Emotional intelligence isn't about achieving perfection, or reaching [a certain level of "EQ."](#) It's about [continuous learning and growth](#).

Yes, it's often when you feel you've "mastered" one of these 10 commandments that you will make your greatest mistakes. But it is how you handle those mistakes that will determine just how [emotionally intelligent](#) you truly are.

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