

Feeling Is Not Knowing

Why naming emotions precisely, not just noticing them, makes emotion a reliable guide

From emotional signals to better decisions in the workplace

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Assignment
Component 1: Individual Poster Presentation

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence involves monitoring emotions and using them to guide thinking and decision-making (Mayer and Salovey, 1997).

Emotions provide important information, but feeling is not knowing. An acknowledged emotion can still lead to poor judgement if it is misinterpreted or too broadly labelled (Barrett, 2017).

Using the Mayer-Salovey four-branch ability model, this poster explores how naming emotions precisely (emotional granularity) helps make clearer decisions in both my workplace and academic life.



However, some scholars argue that EI is not a distinct form of intelligence, but rather ordinary intelligence applied to emotion (Locke, 2005). This highlights the need for critical evaluation.

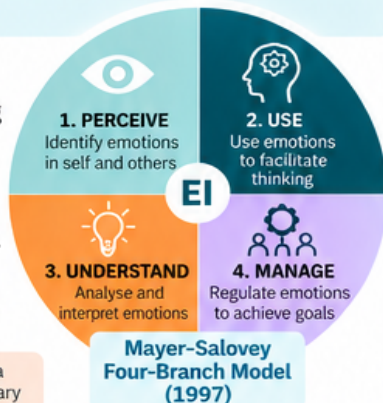


Fig. 1. The four-branch model of emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey, 1997).

METHOD



Literature review

UWTSO library and Google Scholar; peer-reviewed studies, meta-analyses and academic texts.



Thematic analysis

Identified key themes: emotional awareness, regulation, workplace decision-making, performance and mindfulness.



Workplace reflection

Applied theories to real experiences in my private office role and estate agency work, supported by a short four-week reflective log.



Limitations

Single-case reflection using self-report; the weakest stream of EI evidence (MacCann et al., 2020).

1 ANALYSE EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

To what extent do my emotions influence my thinking and decisions?

Emotions strongly influence thinking and decision-making, but they are not always helpful. Better heartbeat-sensing makes us more likely to rely on gut feelings, which helps when the signal is accurate (Dunn et al., 2010).

Naming a feeling reduces amygdala activity (Lieberman et al., 2007), and finer distinctions are linked to healthier regulation (Kashdan, Barrett and McKnight, 2015).

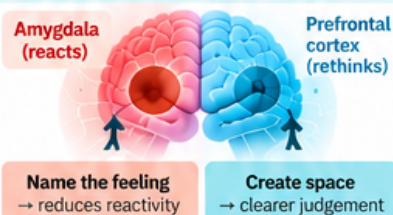
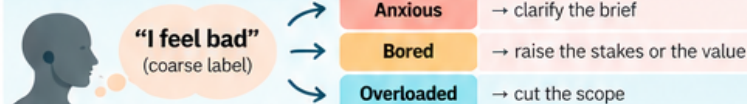


Fig. 2. How precise labelling changes the brain's response.

One label, different decisions (Fig. 3)



Workplace example

In a client negotiation, "pressure" could mean fear of losing the deal (invites a concession) or doubt about the numbers (invites a question). More precise labelling leads to a more constructive response.

2 EVALUATE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ACADEMIC AND WORKPLACE SUCCESS

Key emotional factors



Anxiety

High value with low control breeds anxiety (Pekrun, 2006).



Motivation

Linked to personal goals and purpose (Pekrun, 2006).



Enjoyment

High perceived control and high value fuel sustained effort (Pekrun, 2006).



Procrastination

Often short-term mood repair, not poor time management (Sirois and Pychyl, 2013).

Emotional intelligence and performance (meta-analysis)

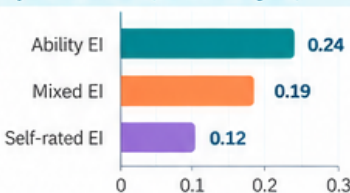


Fig. 4. Correlation between EI and academic performance (p) (MacCann et al., 2020).

Applying EI to common challenges



Anxiety

- Reappraise early rather than suppress (Gross, 1998).
- Pause and name the feeling before responding (Lieberman et al., 2007).



Low motivation

- Reconnect the task to a goal that matters (Pekrun, 2006).
- Break into a smaller first step.



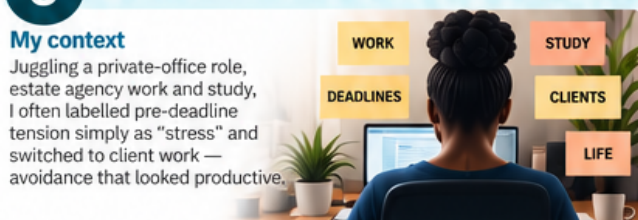
Procrastination

- Name the feeling first.
- Use reappraisal rather than suppression (Gross, 1998).

3 CRITICALLY REFLECT: CAN MINDFULNESS AND REGULATION IMPROVE MY LEARNING AND WORKING?

My context

Juggling a private-office role, estate agency work and study, I often labelled pre-deadline tension simply as "stress" and switched to client work — avoidance that looked productive.



What I tried (four-week reflection)

- Two-minute check-in before study or key work tasks: notice body signals and name the emotion in two precise words.
- Choose one strategy (reappraise, reframe, breathing, or break task down).
- Log the outcome and adjust the next time.

What I learned



- Mindfulness helped me notice emotions without immediately reacting.
- More precise labels (e.g. "uncertainty" rather than "stress") led to better decisions, such as asking for clarification instead of working extra hours.
- Mindfulness alone is not a complete solution; evidence for its benefits is mixed (Van Dam et al., 2018).



Verdict

Mindfulness and regulation improve my learning and workplace effectiveness to a moderate extent. They help me notice and manage emotions, but they do not remove external pressures. The most effective approach combines emotional awareness, precise labelling, practical strategies and realistic workload planning.



Limitations and future development

- Single-case reflection using self-report.
- Results may not generalise to other contexts.
- Future: collect more systematic evidence, including feedback from colleagues.

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