

Leading Group Projects with Emotional Intelligence

How understanding feelings, your own and your team members', helps the team to do a job well done

Module: Developing Emotional Intelligence Skills
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Introduction:

Emotional intelligence (EI) means noticing your own feelings, keeping them in check, and reading how other people feel too. In group work, some students stay calm and helpful under pressure while others get frustrated or go quiet; this usually comes down to EI, not effort or ability (Goleman, 1995).



EI in Teamwork

- **Self-awareness:** Be aware of one’s own actions before they impact the group.
- Self-regulation:** Continue at a regular pace despite slowing down within the group.
- Empathy:** Try to be empathetic towards your team members.

Example:

pausing before replying to blunt feedback in a group meeting, instead of reacting straight away.



Managing Your Own Emotions

- **Mindfulness:** Be aware of stress before it overtakes you.
- Reflection:** Reflect on what led to the stress afterwards.
- Pause first:** First pause before reacting.

Example:

a missed deadline can spark frustration; a brief pause turns that into a calm, useful response.



Understanding Others' Emotions

- **Active listening:** Focus on sincerely listening first before making plans on how to respond.
- Empathy check:** Make queries about your team members’ true feelings.
- Kind feedback:** Give thorough feedback on the task and not on the person.

Example:

asking "how are you finding this?" before assuming a quiet teammate isn't interested.



EI Across Generations

Positive: Mixed age teams have more points of view. Younger team members provide the fastest and informal feedback whereas older team members provide slow and steady self-control.

Watch out: A very plain or very strict style may seem rude and not caring respectively, even when it may not be the case.

Tip:

treat generational differences as a different style of EI, not a wrong one.

Conclusion:

Practice active listening and pause before reacting
Reflect regularly to build self-awareness under pressure
Use empathy to sustain motivation and team cohesion

From feeling to outcome: A simple flow

Emotion

A missed deadline shows up first as frustration.



Response

Pause, breathe, and reframe before you speak.



Outcome

A constructive, calm conversation with the team.

References:

Goleman, D. (1995) Emotional Intelligence.
Mayer, J.D. and Salovey, P. (1990) Emotional intelligence.