

"If you are tuned out of your own emotions, you will be poor at reading them in other people." — Daniel Goleman

INTRODUCTION

In simple terms, emotional intelligence (EI) refers to how well a person can recognise what they are feeling, make sense of those feelings, and handle them in a healthy way. It also involves being able to pick up on how others are feeling and respond appropriately (Goleman, 1995).

As a university student, I have experienced first-hand how stressful academic life can be — from tight deadlines and group assignments to exam pressure and adjusting to living independently. This poster looks at how **mindfulness** and **stress management techniques** can help students like myself strengthen emotional intelligence, stay in control of emotions, and cope better with the demands of studying.

METHOD

To put this poster together, I reviewed several academic sources on emotional intelligence and mindfulness. The main framework I used was Goleman's (1995) model, which breaks EI down into five key areas. I also drew on Kabat-Zinn's (2003) work on mindfulness-based stress reduction, which looks at how being present in the moment can reduce anxiety and improve wellbeing.

Alongside the literature, I reflected on my own experiences as a student to connect the theory to real-life situations I face on a daily basis.

Q1: DEVELOPING EI & MINDFULNESS

How can someone develop emotional intelligence?

Goleman (1995) suggests that EI is built on five main skills: knowing your own emotions (**self-awareness**), managing them (**self-regulation**), staying driven (**motivation**), understanding what others feel (**empathy**), and handling relationships well (**social skills**). None of these come naturally to everyone — they need to be practised regularly.

How Mindfulness Helps Build EI

Kabat-Zinn (2003) describes mindfulness as the act of deliberately focusing your attention on what is happening right now, without judging it as good or bad. Practising this regularly can strengthen EI in several ways:

- **Better self-awareness** — When you meditate regularly, you start to notice patterns in how you react emotionally. Over time, this means you can catch yourself before overreacting to a situation.
- **Stronger self-regulation** — Techniques like controlled breathing and body scanning give you a moment to pause before responding. Instead of snapping at someone or shutting down, you can choose a calmer response.
- **Greater empathy** — Certain mindfulness exercises, such as compassion-focused meditation, train you to be more understanding of other people's emotions and viewpoints.

Simple Techniques to Try:

1. **Morning breathing (5 mins)** — A short session to start the day with a clear head.
2. **Body scan** — Notice where you hold tension; this often reflects emotional stress.
3. **Daily journaling** — Write down what you felt and why — patterns become clear over time.
4. **Listening without planning a reply** — Focus entirely on the other person when they speak.

Q2: CONTROLLING EMOTIONS AS A STUDENT

How can you control your own emotions and develop mindfulness as a student?

From my own experience, university can be emotionally overwhelming. Whether it is worrying about an upcoming exam, feeling frustrated during group projects, or struggling with motivation, these emotions can easily take over if you do not have ways to manage them.

Strategies That Help Manage Stress:

- **The STOP Method** — This is a quick technique I find useful: **S**top what you are doing, **T**ake a deep breath, **O**bserve what you are thinking and feeling, then **P**roceed mindfully. It breaks the cycle of reacting on autopilot.
- **Structured study with breaks** — Planning study blocks with proper rest in between prevents burnout. Working non-stop leads to emotional exhaustion, which makes everything feel worse.
- **Naming your emotions** — Research by Lieberman et al. (2007) found that simply putting a label on what you feel — for example, saying to yourself 'I am anxious about this deadline' — actually helps the brain calm down and think more clearly.
- **Getting moving** — Even a short walk outside helps lower stress hormones and clears your head, making it easier to approach problems rationally.

Building Mindfulness into Student Life:

1. Take 2 minutes of deep breathing before a lecture begins.
2. Each evening, think of 3 things that went well that day.
3. Try guided meditation apps like Headspace or Calm.
4. After group work, reflect on how you handled any disagreements.

Q3: FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

What factors help students succeed, and how can EI challenges be addressed?

- **Self-discipline** — Being able to resist distractions and stick to a study plan is one of the most important skills for doing well at university.
- **Resilience** — Setbacks are inevitable, but students who view failure as a learning opportunity rather than a personal defeat tend to recover more quickly.
- **Having a support network** — Good relationships with classmates and tutors provide both emotional support and practical help when things get difficult.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence is not something you either have or you do not — it is a set of skills that can be developed with practice. By making mindfulness a regular habit and using simple stress management techniques, students can become more self-aware, handle their emotions more effectively, and build stronger relationships. These abilities are valuable not just at university, but throughout life and in future careers.

REFERENCES

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