

Who Inspires You?

When you think of someone who’s an excellent communicator, who comes to mind? Think of people you know personally and also people you don’t know but admire. List a few of these people below.

How do they capture your attention or draw in their audience with inspiration, awe, or wonder? How do they motivate people and promote change and action? How do they listen and ensure others feel heard? Write down what you appreciate about their communication style.

In all of these examples from your life, notice that this person leaves you feeling something positive, even in the face of a difficult topic or during a time of stagnation or conflict. As you reflect on the skills these excellent communicators display, how do *you* want to be seen? Describe that here.

Your Emotional Intelligence Motivators

When first learning a new approach, it can be worthwhile to reflect on what you'd like to achieve and uncover some of your motivations for embarking on change. What's the main emotional experience you want people to have after a difficult conversation with you?

What do you hope being more emotionally intelligent will do for you? What do you want to gain from developing this skill? For example, you may hope to understand your kids better, get a promotion, or learn how to set boundaries.

How do you expect emotional intelligence skills will positively affect your relationships? For example, you may expect to create closeness with your partner, reduce miscommunications at work, or help people get to know you more easily.

What Is Your EI Baseline?

The items in this scale are different ways of dealing with emotions and conflict with others. Do your best to rate each item in terms of how often you’ve used the strategy or experienced the difficulty over the past three months. Be sure to choose the most accurate answer for you, rather than thinking about how you want to be perceived.

Rate how often the following statements are true for you, where 0 means almost never and 4 means you use this strategy or have this experience very often.

0

1

2

3

4

Almost Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Very Often

#	Item	0	1	2	3	4
1	It takes a while for me to recover after having strong negative emotions.					
2	I lose control over my emotions with others and lash out or “blow up.”					
3	When I find myself in an argument, I am quiet and/or try to get out of it quickly.					
4	I put in a lot of effort to avoid feeling strong emotions.					
5	Disagreeing with others makes me uncomfortable and anxious, so I avoid it.					
6	I often act on my emotions without thinking; I tend to do what they push me to do.					
7	In an argument, I state my case and focus on winning and not losing ground.					
8	If I feel strong negative emotions, I can feel driven to drink, use drugs, and/or cut or hurt myself in some way.					
9	I have to bring up issues with others immediately even if my emotions are still strong.					
10	I avoid asking for what I want or need from others.					
11	I use nicotine, drugs, or alcohol to help change or numb my emotions or distress.					
12	When I’m upset, my behavior gets out of control.					
13	I ignore my own needs to avoid conflict or being seen in a negative way.					
14	My emotions drive my behavior, even if it means I regret it afterward.					
15	I push to get my position across and focus on convincing others to adopt it.					
16	I avoid feeling uncomfortable emotions as much as possible.					

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17	If I feel strong emotions (such as shame or anger), I act in ways that hurt me or get me in trouble.					
18	I explore issues in a disagreement and focus on hearing all sides.					
19	I can communicate effectively despite having strong emotions.					
20	I try to give each person, including myself, time to share their concerns.					
21	I adjust my tone of voice and body language to connect with others.					
22	I avoid creating useless tension and focus on what really matters with people.					
23	I think things through before bringing up an issue with someone.					
24	I'm not afraid of having strong emotions and trust that I can recover from them.					
25	I'm aware of my emotions as I experience them and accept them as they are.					
26	I can experience strong emotions and am skilled in managing them.					
27	I know how to adjust what I'm asking for based on who I'm speaking to.					
28	I notice when my tone of voice or body language changes.					
29	I use cues from others to adjust my communication approach.					
30	I know how to develop rapport quickly with someone I'm not familiar with.					
31	I still carry out my responsibilities even if I'm experiencing strong emotions.					
32	I negotiate with others when there is a disagreement and compromise to try to meet each person's needs, including my own.					

Scoring instructions: Reverse score items 1 to 17 such that 4 becomes 0, 3 becomes 1, 2 stays 2, 1 becomes 3, and 0 becomes 4. Score items 18 to 32 as written. Then, add the total points for each column separately. Next, add the totals for each column together to get the total score. Where does your score fall in the ranges below?

0–40: Your emotions often get the better of you and make communication challenging. Keep reading along. You're in the right place at the right time—the skills in this book will help.

41–82: You have moderate EI skills and sometimes have difficulty with strong emotions, emotion avoidance, and/or communicating effectively in the face of uncomfortable emotions. This book can teach you some new skills to add to your repertoire.

83–128: You have moderately high to high EI skills. There's always room to improve or discover new ways to express EI. Keep reading to learn new strategies and road-test them.

Sticky Thoughts About Emotions

Take a few minutes to check in and ask yourself the following questions. The answers are just for you and will help you notice what might show up unannounced as you change your relationship to your emotions.

Growing up, I learned that emotions are: _____

In general, I'd describe my relationship with uncomfortable emotions as (e.g., aversive, distressing, I don't like them and try to avoid them, I work hard to make them go away as quickly as possible):

What do I think it means about me when I have strong and uncomfortable emotions?

I judge myself for what I'm feeling by (e.g., more self-criticism, self-punishment, or self-harm):

Noticing Emotional Hijacking Cues

Bring to mind a vivid memory of a time that you “lost it,” blew up at someone, said something in anger or frustration, shut down, withdrew, or abruptly removed yourself from a situation. What happened? Write a brief summary, focusing on observable behaviors (what you could see and hear yourself doing).

Notice and name the emotions this experience evoked at the time. You can reference the List of Emotions above to help.

Being careful not to judge yourself, rate how intense that emotion was on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being no intensity and 10 being the most intense feeling. _____

What physical sensations do you remember having at that time? Sometimes these can be hard to notice. If that’s the case, close your eyes, put yourself back in this emotionally intense memory, and then scan your body from head to toe and note anything you notice in your body now.

What thoughts did you have during this emotional hijacking? As best you can, write them down verbatim.

What urges or impulses did you have during this emotional hijacking? If you acted on them, how did that go?

Looking back on it now, what are some other perspectives or reasonable factors at play that you couldn't see at the time? (Examples: It was a miscommunication, I was vulnerable to a blowup because I accidentally skipped lunch, I wasn't expecting to have this difficult conversation.)

Daily Emotion Log

Emotion(s)	Physical Sensations	Thoughts	Urges	Intensity (0-10)

Emotion Awareness Worksheet

Song or Movie: _____

Describe your emotion:
Describe sensations in your body (connected to the emotion):
Describe your thoughts (connected to the emotion):
Describe your action urges (connected to the emotion):

Reflecting on Your Commitment to Your Values

Describe a challenging situation when your values conflicted with someone else's. Identify your values in the situation; be as specific as possible (e.g., integrity, compassion, fairness, honesty). You can review the Common Values list in a later section of this chapter if needed (see page 50).

How did you honor your values during this values conflict? Identify the values-based actions you took (e.g., I stayed calm while saying I disagreed, I listened without interrupting).

What emotions did you experience during this interaction? Review the List of Emotions in chapter 2 if needed (see page 19).

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Life Domain Values

Friends and social life	Rating:
Values:	
Family of origin	Rating:
Values:	
Parenting/co-parenting	Rating:
Values:	
Physical/emotional health	Rating:
Values:	
Self-growth	Rating:
Values:	

Education/learning	Rating:
Values:	
Career/work	Rating:
Values:	
Recreation, hobbies, and fun	Rating:
Values:	
Community	Rating:
Values:	
Spirituality or religion	Rating:
Values:	

Common Values

Review this list and notice those that resonate with you most. Circle your top ten values, then from those ten, star the five that you care about most deeply.

Accountability	Competency	Elegance
Accuracy	Competitiveness	Empathy
Achievement	Consistency	Enjoyment
Adventure	Contentment	Enthusiasm
Altruism	Continuous improvement	Equality
Ambition	Contribution	Excellence
Assertiveness	Control	Excitement
Authenticity	Cooperation	Expertise
Authority	Correctness	Exploration
Balance	Courtesy	Fairness
Beauty	Creativity	Faith
Belonging	Curiosity	Family
Boldness	Decisiveness	Fitness
Calmness	Dependability	Fluency
Carefulness	Determination	Focus
Challenge	Devoutness	Freedom
Cheerfulness	Diligence	Friendship
Citizenship	Discipline	Fun
Clear-mindedness	Discretion	Generosity
Collaboration	Diversity	Grace
Commitment	Economy	Gratitude
Community	Effectiveness	Growth
Compassion	Efficiency	Hard work

Health	Originality	Simplicity
Helping	Patriotism	Spirituality
Holiness	Peace	Spontaneity
Honesty	Piety	Stability
Honor	Poise	Stewardship
Humility	Positivity	Strength
Independence	Practicality	Structure
Influence	Preparedness	Success
Ingenuity	Professionalism	Support
Inquisitiveness	Prudence	Teamwork
Insightfulness	Quality	Temperance
Intelligence	Recognition	Thoroughness
Intuition	Reliability	Thoughtfulness
Joy	Resourcefulness	Timeliness
Justice	Respectfulness	Tolerance
Kindness	Responsibility	Tradition
Knowledge	Restraint	Trustworthiness
Leadership	Results-oriented	Truth-seeking
Learning	Rigor	Understanding
Legacy	Security	Uniqueness
Love	Self-actualization	Unity
Loyalty	Self-control	Usefulness
Mastery	Self-reliance	Vision
Merit	Self-respect	Vitality
Obedience	Selflessness	Wisdom
Openness	Sensitivity	Worldliness
Optimism	Serenity	
Order	Service	

Daily Values Reflection

At the end of the day, reflect on a value you honored and notice how important that value is to you, rating it on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being not important at all and 10 being extremely important.

What specific actions did you take to honor that value, and what emotions did you have to accept to do so?

What urges did you have to notice but disobey to honor that value?

Daily Values-Based Actions Log

Value: _____ Values-based action: _____ Taken Y/N: _____

Barriers if not taken and how to navigate them in the future: _____

Value: _____ Values-based action: _____ Taken Y/N: _____

Barriers if not taken and how to navigate them in the future: _____

Value: _____ Values-based action: _____ Taken Y/N: _____

Barriers if not taken and how to navigate them in the future: _____

Value: _____ Values-based action: _____ Taken Y/N: _____

Barriers if not taken and how to navigate them in the future: _____

Value: _____ Values-based action: _____ Taken Y/N: _____

Barriers if not taken and how to navigate them in the future: _____

Value: _____ Values-based action: _____ Taken Y/N: _____

Barriers if not taken and how to navigate them in the future: _____

Value: _____ Values-based action: _____ Taken Y/N: _____

Barriers if not taken and how to navigate them in the future: _____

Relaxation Practice Log

Put a check mark for each technique practiced on a given day. Put two check marks if a technique is practiced twice in a day.

Technique	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Diaphragmatic Breathing							
Body Awareness and Release							
Cue-Controlled Breathing							
Safe Place Visualization							

My Coping Thoughts

In the space below, write each coping thought you marked as well as new ones you created.

Coping Thoughts Worksheet

Distressing Situation	New Coping Thought

My Relationship to Conflict

In the face of difficult conversations or conflict, I tend to experience the following:

Emotions: _____

Physical sensations: _____

Thoughts: _____

Urges: _____

What expectations do you have about others during conflict or disagreements based on your past experiences? Be specific (e.g., I expect people to yell at me, dismiss my feelings, refuse to take accountability, steamroll me, or shut down or withdraw).

How confident are you in your ability to resolve conflict so that each party feels heard and respected and a resolution or compromise is achieved? Rate it on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being no confidence and 10 being the most confident. _____

Reconnecting with your values, what makes resolving conflict or arriving at a compromise important to you? Feel free to return to chapter 4 for a refresher on your values.

Assertiveness Values

Consider why being assertive matters to you. How will being assertive help you live a more values-based life? Returning to the values you identified in chapter 4, look at how assertiveness might help you bring those values to life.

Bring to mind an area of tension in a current relationship that your values would tell you to address. To use assertive communication with this person, what would you have to say and what nonverbal skills would you need to use?

Assertiveness Exposure Hierarchy

Assertiveness Exposure	Distress Level (0-10)	Distress Level During Assertiveness Exposure	What I've Learned I Am Capable of Despite My Discomfort

Assertiveness Exposure	Distress Level (0-10)	Distress Level During Assertiveness Exposure	What I've Learned I Am Capable of Despite My Discomfort

Reflect on a relationship in which you are currently having difficulty asserting yourself. Who is this person in your life and what makes this relationship important to you? Sometimes this answer isn't immediately obvious. For example, let's say you find a coworker difficult to work with. He's often dominating in meetings and isn't open to new ideas to collaborate, even when the projects you're both working on aren't going well. Although he gets on your nerves, if you value your work and career, he's still an important relationship to you at a minimum because improving your working relationship would help you both succeed more at work. Or it may be a meaningful relationship because your values are to be respectful, advocate for your team, and help others, all of which can support you in asserting yourself.

[illegible]

What are one or two goals you have for how you can improve this relationship with assertive communication? Be specific so you know what you’re working on and can measure your progress (for example, set a clear boundary of when I’m not available to work in the evenings or tell my teenage son we’ll have to strike a compromise on his birthday gift because of our budget constraints).

With your assertiveness goal(s) in mind, what values would you be honoring in this relationship while you work toward those goals? As a quick review, goals can be checked off once and done, whereas values are ongoing things you deeply care about (see chapter 4 for more details).

Combining your values in this relationship and your assertiveness goal(s), write one or two assertive statements you’ll need to say to both honor your values and help you meet your goal(s) (for example, “I know you’d like the latest iPhone for your birthday, but unfortunately our budget doesn’t allow for that. What else have you been eyeing lately?”).

Attunement Versus Misalignment

How do you already practice attunement? Review the previous list to help you identify attunement actions you already take.

How do you know when you're attuned? What do you notice in your facial expressions, body language, physical sensations, and tone of voice? If needed, think back to the last time you felt a close connection during an interaction.

With whom are you best at being attuned?

With whom or in what situations is it most difficult to be attuned?

What is different about your interactions when you're attuned versus when you're distracted, scattered, or emotionally hijacked?

Empathy Role Model

How does this person use nonverbal communication to engage with you? For example, do they have a quietly curious facial expression when listening to you or do they use touch to emphasize empathy or validation?

What does their nonverbal communication look like when you feel most cared for or connected with this person? For example, do they lean in when talking or smile with a higher inflection in their tone of voice when excited?

Your answers can give you guidance on how you may also want to express empathy. Looking at how positively you experienced this person or animal’s empathy, what approaches of theirs do you want to commit to practicing with others?

Empathy Reflection

In doing the visualization exercise, what new things did you learn about the other person’s perspective and their experience of the interaction? What did you discover about what they may have found difficult or dissatisfying in the interaction?

What do you think the other person’s unmet needs were? Be as specific as possible.

During the initial interaction, did any of your values feel threatened or at risk? If so, which ones?

When you observe this interaction now more objectively, does it still seem as if those values were threatened or at stake? (It's okay if the answer is yes.)

If you had a time machine and could return to this interaction, how would you honor your values in that moment? (Be careful to notice and let go of any self-judgment.)

Willingness to Feel Discomfort

Who are you planning to have this conversation with? _____

Focusing only on the most important things you need to communicate, set one or two goals for the conversation. Make sure your goals are specific, clear, and realistic to achieve in one conversation.

To have this conversation, what discomfort will you need to be willing to experience?

Emotions: _____

Physical sensations: _____

Thoughts: _____

Urges (to avoid or act on): _____

To make space for those experiences and have this conversation, what emotion coping skills will you use before and during the conversation?

A Values-Based Conversation

Who is this person in your life you plan to have a difficult conversation with? Write their name and your relationship to them here (e.g., spouse, mother, boss):

What's important to you about this person in your life?

What's important to you about the topic of conversation or issue you'd like to discuss?

What are the big values having this conversation will honor? (For example: connecting, getting support from others, asserting my needs, helping others, taking accountability.)

Expressing Attunement and Empathy

Emotions can be loud and distracting. What can you do to give the other person your undivided attention during the conversation?

Keeping in mind what you know about this person (things they care about, find interesting, or value), what are some ways you can foster connection with them during this conversation you plan to have?

How will you show the other person that you see and hear them with nonverbal communication (tone of voice, body language, facial expressions)? Be specific.

Take a couple of minutes to imagine what it might be like for them to be in this conversation with you. Take a mental note of the emotions they might experience. Notice and ride out any emotions this evokes in you. Now, bringing yourself back to the conversation you'd like to have with this person, what can you say and do to convey attunement and empathy?

Emotionally Intelligent Assertiveness

This formula provides a step-by-step sequence. When you follow it in this order, you can facilitate openness and connection from the very start of the conversation and clearly express what you want or need.

- 1. **Express gratitude** for this person in whatever ways are genuine to you. What do they mean to you? What do you appreciate about them? It may simply be that you're grateful they took the time to talk to you. Write one or two sentences that express your gratitude, written as if you were saying them aloud to this person.

- 2. **Describe your concern objectively**, focusing on just the facts. State clearly and succinctly what your concern is, without judgment, conjecture, hyperbole, or blaming. If it helps, imagine you're standing in front of a judge and presenting the facts. What would you say? If it would help, revisit chapter 7 for a refresher on assertiveness.

- 3. **Be clear** in how you make your ask. Are you asking for the opportunity to have your perspective heard? Are you asking for a compromise after a disagreement? Is there a boundary you want to enact? Write your ask concisely, ensuring it is stated assertively and aligns with your values and primary goals for having this conversation.

- 4. **Reflect with openness**, considering the other person's perspective and what feedback or requests they may make of you during this conversation. With that in mind, how can you verbally respond in a way that aligns with your values? For example, if they express feeling hurt or frustrated with you, use your empathy and attunement skills. If they want you to negotiate or compromise with them, consider how you can respond to their offer. If you're unsure how you feel about a request, you can say something like, "Thanks for sharing that. I want to give this the thought and time it deserves. I'll get back to you."

Your Emotional Intelligence Action Plan

For each step below, fill in your answers as you see them now. When you get to step 5, write out verbatim what you can say to the other person. This will help you further rehearse it and notice how it sounds and feels, which may help you fine-tune it.

Step 1: My primary goals for this conversation are: _____

Step 2: The values I'm honoring by having this conversation and doing so skillfully: _____

Step 3: If needed, I can reduce emotional intensity that might occur by using these skills: _____

Step 4: I'll attune to who I'm speaking to by using these verbal and nonverbal skills: _____

Step 5: I'll start the conversation with gratitude by saying: _____

Step 6: I'll describe and be clear in what I'm asking for by saying: _____

Step 7: I'll express empathy by: _____

Step 8: If I'm not sure how to respond to feedback or requests, I will give myself time to reflect by saying: _____

Reflecting on the Coping Ahead Visualization

What do you think you did well? Be specific and give yourself credit for the skills you used.

When, if at all, did you notice you had difficulty saying aloud what you planned? How, if at all, did that affect your delivery?

What did you do well in expressing attunement and empathy?

What are some ways you can improve your attunement and empathy expression during this conversation?

How, if applicable, could you be clearer in what you're asking for or otherwise improve your verbal communication?

Reflect on Your Recording

- 1. Review your final take of the video/audio twice, even if you notice urges to avoid this. Reflect on what you did well and where you need to improve.
- 2. For each item below, mark it if you did well in that area. If it's an area for improvement, leave it blank so you can return to it later.

- ☐ Was your tone of voice warm and open?
- ☐ Did you look up or make eye contact while asking something or asserting yourself?
- ☐ Was the volume of your voice easy to hear throughout the conversation?
- ☐ Did you stay focused on the top one or two goals for the conversation?
- ☐ Were you clear in describing your experience?
- ☐ Did you make your ask concisely, clearly, and assertively (without “beating around the bush”)?
- ☐ Did you use validating or empathic statements?
- ☐ Did you use attunement skills?
- ☐ Did you use reflective listening?
- ☐ Was the pace of your speech easy to follow? Was it too fast or too slow?
- ☐ Did you honor your values in your verbal and nonverbal communication?

- 3. List areas for improvement and let go of any self-criticism or judgment that arises. Be specific so you know what to work on.

- 4. Rate your highest distress level during the conversation, from 0 to 10:

- 5. Rate your most common distress level during the conversation, from 0 to 10:

Emotionally Intelligent Conversation Debrief

1. What are you most proud of by having this conversation? Be sure to give yourself credit where credit is due (e.g., I shared my physical intimacy interests for the first time, I asked for a raise assertively, I didn't give in when Dad scoffed at the boundary I asserted).

2. Reflect back on the challenging conversation and how you approached it. What did you do well? Use the checklist below to identify your skills.

- ☐ Was your tone of voice warm and open?
- ☐ Did you look up or make eye contact while asking something or asserting yourself?
- ☐ Was the volume of your voice easy to hear throughout the conversation?
- ☐ Did you stay focused on the top one or two goals for the conversation?
- ☐ Were you clear in describing your experience?
- ☐ Did you make your ask concisely, clearly, and assertively (without “beating around the bush”)?
- ☐ Did you use validating or empathic statements?
- ☐ Did you use attunement skills?
- ☐ Did you use reflective listening?
- ☐ Was the pace of your speech easy to follow? Was it too fast or too slow?
- ☐ Did you honor your values in your verbal and nonverbal communication?

3. What skills did you use to manage uncomfortable emotions? Take note of what helped you cope during this challenging interaction.

4. Identify any areas for improvement you noticed. Be specific so you know what skills to continue practicing.

5. Rate your highest emotional distress level during this conversation, from 0 to 10: _____

6. Rate your most common emotional distress level during the conversation, from 0 to 10: _____

Emotional Intelligence Assessment

The items in this scale are different ways of dealing with emotions and conflict with others. Do your best to rate each item in terms of how often you’ve used the strategy or experienced the difficulty over the past three months. Be sure to choose the most accurate answer for you, rather than thinking about how you want to be perceived.

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4	I put in a lot of effort to avoid feeling strong emotions.					
5	Disagreeing with others makes me uncomfortable and anxious, so I avoid it.					
6	I often act on my emotions without thinking; I tend to do what they push me to do.					
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0–40: Your emotions often get the better of you and make communication challenging. It's not unusual to need a review of the skills in this workbook. EI takes time and practice in the wild to hone. Consider going through this workbook from start to finish again and maintaining a dedicated regular practice. You're still right where you need to be, doing the work in this book to help you foster the interactions and relationships you want.

41–82: You have moderate EI skills and sometimes have difficulty with strong emotions, emotion avoidance, and/or communicating effectively in the face of uncomfortable emotions. Reviewing this workbook a second time, or selectively revisiting chapters that reflect where you struggle most, can further support you. Revisiting specific chapters or completing this book twice is normal—there isn't much in life that changes overnight, and using EI in the moment takes time to master.

83–128: You have moderately high to high EI skills. Continue to implement your EI skills in your daily life to further enhance them and ensure they're accessible to you when you're most distressed. EI is a lifestyle after all.

Emotion-driven behaviors subscale reprinted with permission from the Comprehensive Coping Inventory–55 (CCI–55) (Zurita Ona 2007; Pool 2021).