

EQ CONNECTIONS

An Emotional Intelligence Newsletter by E.I. Assessments



**“YOU MAY DECEIVE ALL THE PEOPLE PART OF THE TIME,
AND PART OF THE PEOPLE ALL THE TIME,
BUT NOT ALL THE PEOPLE ALL THE TIME.”**

– Abraham Lincoln

EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION:

Being a Poker Player

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Have other people ever misinterpreted how you really felt about an issue? If you are a manager, have your direct reports ever responded with less urgency than you expected? When looking to resolve an issue, have you sensed that people were avoiding asking you for suggestions or input? If you answered yes to any of these questions then you may be among a group of professionals who score very high in *Emotional Self-Awareness* but low in *Emotional Expression*. Even though you may be very clear about them, your approach is not to openly share your feelings with other people, like a poker player.

Depending on the situation, I believe that each executive and manager should have several leadership styles to draw upon.

One of them is the poker player style since, in many business situations, it is best not to reveal how you feel. While poker players are cool, patient, smart and focused, their main objective is deception.

A leader who only relies solely on his or her poker player style may face challenges such as working with others and building trust.

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION?

Emotional Expression is your ability to constructively communicate your feelings, both positive and negative, in ways that other people understand.

WHAT DOES EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION LOOK LIKE?

People who score high in *Emotional Expression* on the EQ-i 2.0:

- Are physically comfortable using their hands, face and body to reveal and communicate how they are feeling
- Use a broad emotional vocabulary to describe the differences and nuances in their thoughts and moods
- Can honestly share their sentiments, opinions and viewpoints on business and professional issues and decisions

BALANCING EMOTIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS & EXPRESSION

I describe the people who have similar scores in *Emotional Expression* and *Emotional Self-Awareness* as emotionally honest. What *they* feel is what *you* feel. This balance between their emotional consciousness and *Emotional Expression* builds an honest alignment between what these people experience and what they communicate. As a result, this alignment often makes them poor liars.



Are women more honest about how they feel than men? Do women “wear their hearts on their sleeves” more than men? Do men hide their feelings better than women? Do women use their hands more than men when they communicate? Do men make better poker players? The answers are no, no, no, no and, I believe, no, for many reasons.

I reviewed the emotional intelligence data from **1,356** EQ-i debrief sessions with executives, business leaders and staff members and found strong similarity between how men and women experience and communicate their feelings. It appears **35%** of this group (**254** women and **200** men) are emotionally honest with a balance between their Emotional Expression and Emotional Self-Awareness. These people are, in general, very comfortable with self-reflection and sharing how they feel with others.

POKER PLAYERS & REVEALERS

For people who do not have a balance between their awareness and expression, it means their leadership tendency will be either to suppress their feelings or overly share them with others. Leaders who hide their emotions and make other people guess their true feelings, are seen as poker players. The leaders who overly share their feelings are “revealers” since they readily display their feelings, often without realizing it.

When it comes to utilizing a poker player leadership style, men and women can be equally misleading and deceptive about the feelings they hide or conceal. The EQ-i scores indicate that **43%** of this group of professionals, (**315** women and **266** men) have a strong understanding of their own emotions yet, for many reasons, choose not to share them with other people. For this group, it could mean their leadership style, under pressure, leans towards withholding their emotions and being poker players.

Then, there are those people, the “revealers”, who score high in *Emotional Expression* and lower in *Emotional Self-Awareness*. They represent **22%** of this professional group, (**153** women and **139** men). These are the people in your work environment who you can understand how they are feeling simply by looking at or listening to them. They are often verbally or physically very open about what they think and how they feel. In teams, they can easily share their thoughts and discuss the emotional pros and cons of business decisions.

EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION: WHAT IS TOO MUCH?

Revealers, or individuals with high emotional expression, often find it physically difficult containing or limiting their true feelings especially regarding an issue of deep, personal importance. Their feelings are real and they bubble with energy. I believe that finding ways to constructively display and demonstrate your emotions is very important to building effective business relationships. This belief is balanced with an understanding that there are often socially appropriate levels of emotional expression accepted within work culture.



Having worked for a conservative IBM in the 1980's and a more emotionally open *New York Times* in the 1990's, I can appreciate that business cultures have different levels of receptiveness to the expression of real feelings. Think about the level of expression that is acceptable where you currently work. One of the skills which professionals develop is the ability to read a room using their *Empathy* to understand the level of emotion required to connect with their audience.

If you are a revealer, embrace the fact that you are emotionally honest. If you want to reveal less, work with a coach and begin with a focus on increasing your *Emotional Self-Awareness* and your *Empathy*.

“WHATEVER YOU DO, YOU SHOULD DO IT WITH FEELING.”

– Yogi Berra

POKER PLAYER LEADERSHIP STYLES

By my estimation, over 40% of professionals have a poker player (“do not show your emotions”) style which is their approach to working with others. When these individuals are in leadership positions, generally two types of poker player styles begin to emerge. The first is the leader who has developed a poker player style based on prior business experiences and has learned to very selectively disclose his or her feelings. They have taught themselves to hide how they feel about certain matters since expressing their honest thoughts would have consequences. Women in executive positions have said to me, “Since I am usually in the minority, the last thing I want to do is show more emotion than the rest of the men in the room.”

Unlike the first, the second type of poker player leader actually struggles to acknowledge and accept how he or she really feels about a particular issue. Communicating emotionally is not easy. These leaders wrestle with converting feelings into the right words to communicate an emotional message to be heard, understood and accepted. This



second type of poker player leadership style can also be the result of cultural, social, religious and gender influences that restrict emotional expression.

I believe we move forward in our careers with a positive internal personal value and belief combined with external validation and support we receive from others. However, not everyone received positive support and encouragement at a young age. These people have grown not to trust their own feelings and avoid exploring their source and current impact. As a result, in many business and social situations their default behavior is often to express nothing.

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

While shifting to a poker player type persona is sometimes necessary, overuse of this leadership style can give others the impression of disengagement, indifference or aloofness. There is a line between being calm and cool and appearing bored and uninterested. The objective is alignment between the situation and the right level of expression. Leaders with strong poker player styles frequently report that their direct reports react with less urgency than they feel.

In order to increase urgency and focus on issues important to you, notice how you negotiate deadlines with other people. There is a big difference between asking someone to complete a task "as soon as possible" versus "within the next 10 minutes." Negotiating deadlines with

others will give them insight into how you really feel about issues that need attention versus those that can wait. Refreshing your negotiation skills is one way to articulate your feelings and clarify your needs.

An excellent *Harvard Business Review* article is "Emotion and the Art of Negotiation" by Alison Wood Brooks. Read the full article [here](#).

For situations requiring you to give feedback to a peer or direct report, consider working with a coach to design and sharpen your message. Once you are satisfied with what you want to say, practice delivering it over and over until you feel really comfortable and it flows naturally. Video recording your message and getting support and feedback from someone you trust will begin to build your emotional confidence. It is important that you hear your own voice.

NEXT ISSUE:

**Issue # 8 Interpersonal Relationship:
Depth of a Salesperson**