

EQ CONNECTIONS

An Emotional Intelligence Newsletter by E.I. Assessments



“ YOU WILL NEVER DO ANYTHING IN THIS WORLD WITHOUT COURAGE.”

– Aristotle

INDEPENDENCE:

I Can Decide

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When you look around, do you work with a lot of people who need constant reassurance even when they make a simple decision? If you are a manager, do you have direct reports who do not accept responsibility for their decisions and tend to blame others? Do you have people who are incapable of working on their own? If you answered YES to these questions, then you are recognizing behaviors that are associated with people who score low in *Independence*.

Based on the responsibilities provided in your job description, you are probably required to make decisions either individually or collectively with other people, such as direct reports and peers. Careers are developed and built on individuals making decisions, accepting responsibility

and working with others to discover the best solutions. The emotional intelligence skills of *Independence* and *Social Responsibility* reflect a person's preferred decision-making style. As you might expect, effective leaders score high in both of these skills.

WHAT IS THE SKILL OF INDEPENDENCE?

Independence reflects your ability to effectively work on your own, manage your feelings and make autonomous decisions.

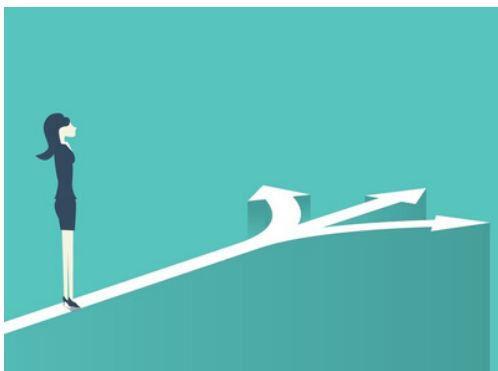
WHAT DOES INDEPENDENCE LOOK LIKE?

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

- Often have a high level of confidence in their knowledge and experience
- Know how to connect with the right people to get their advice, feedback and suggestions, which they then process to make a decision
- Take responsibility for the individual choices they make and accept the results

INDEPENDENCE & SELF-REGARD

I am convinced that the Independence score on the EQ-i reflects the level of authority that an organization has given a person to make an individual decision. Think about your own job for a moment. What percentage of time do you spend each day on your own making individual decisions? This amount of time might increase as your experience and confidence in a job further develops. This confidence level is reflected in a person's *Self-Regard* score, (see *EQ Connections* issue 3).



Most of the professionals I have worked with score high in both *Independence* and *Self-Regard*. This would indicate they are currently working in situations where they have a strong level of confidence making individual decisions on a regular basis. Of the **1,356** EQ-i reports I have debriefed, **45%** of the individuals in this large professional group have this balance between their *Independence* and *Self-Regard* scores.

Then there are those professionals who have a high level of *Independence*, which means they are required to make specific decisions, yet they have much lower *Self-Regard*. This gap between their *Independence* and *Self-Regard* often means that once they have made an individual decision, they tend to worry a lot about it. This gap can show up for many reasons. I have seen it when a person is in a new job or has just gotten promoted with new responsibilities requiring different decisions. Overall, **28%** of this group of **1,356** professionals (**238** women and **149** men), are capable of making independent decisions, with varying levels of worry and anxiety.

There is a consequence to an individual's leadership style if his or her Independence score is too high. The result could be a leader who is not perceived as a team player who is open to working with others.

DECISIONS MAKING FRUSTRATIONS

Having a high level of confidence based on experience and knowledge is the foundation for solid individual decision making. Most of the executive clients whom I have worked with often score high in *Independence* since, in many cases, they were hired into their positions to make individual decisions. When a leader has the organizational authority, making individual decisions can be quick and efficient.

What happens if you have the confidence and experience to make an independent decision but the company has not given you the authority? This can feel frustrating.

Returning to the **1,365** professionals who took the EQ-i, it appears that **27%** of this group (**192** men and **177** women) have a level of *Self-Regard* much higher than their *Independence* scores. This might indicate that they can take on more responsibility. For many of these individuals, this gap can often reflect frustration with not having enough authority to make a decision. This irritation only increases when experienced professionals must manage the non-value-added requirements of overly bureaucratic work cultures.



“ YOU HAVE BRAINS IN YOUR HEAD. YOU HAVE FEET IN YOUR SHOES. YOU CAN STEER YOURSELF ANY DIRECTION YOU CHOOSE. YOU’RE ON YOUR OWN. AND YOU KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW. AND YOU ARE THE ONE WHO’LL DECIDE WHERE TO GO...”

– Dr. Seuss, Oh, the Places You’ll Go!

DEVELOPING YOUR INDEPENDENCE

Since *Independence* is about making decisions, what is your specialty or expertise? What knowledge do you have and what skills have you developed which continue to bring value to your role in the company? If you do not have any specialty, then what kind of expertise do you want to develop in the future in order to remain valued?

Independence is reflected in your ability to choose your own career direction.

If you are a staff member who has a high level of job confidence and really wants more decision-making authority, talk to your manager. Managers are often willing to delegate their responsibilities to staff members who can deliver results. This is an opportunity to exercise your *Assertiveness* by working with a coach or trusted peer to practice the discussion. Practice builds confidence.



If you are a manager, would your people say you effectively collaborate and work with them or would they describe you as a "blamer"? Depending on their other scores, leaders who score very low in *Independence* often keep a distance from their people and do not accept responsibility for poor work results. They will deflect or redirect any accountability while blaming others for their own lack of the emotional courage. As a manager, you need to decide what you want your reputation to be.

NEXT ISSUE:

**Issue # 10 Social Responsibility:
High-Performance Teams**