

## Emotional Intelligence for Sports Officials

### What is Emotional Intelligence?

The term “emotional intelligence” was coined by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990. It was then greatly popularised by Daniel Goleman in his bestseller, *Emotional Intelligence*.

Peter Salovey and John Mayer defined emotional intelligence in terms of being able to monitor and regulate one’s own and others’ feelings, and to use feelings to guide thought and action. According to Goleman, emotional intelligence refers to “the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.”

Simply put, emotional intelligence is the ability to handle emotions in a way that enhances your productivity, personal power and quality of life around you. It involves *making your emotions work for you*. As a sports official you are dealing with a wide variety of emotions as players strive to compete – how you handle their emotions and your own can have significant impact on your effectiveness and the enjoyment of others involved.

### Importance of Emotional Intelligence

Latest research findings show that IQ takes second position to emotional intelligence in determining outstanding job performance. The highest estimate of how much difference IQ accounts for success at the workplace is about 25%. A more accurate figure may be no higher than 10%, and perhaps as low as 4%. Daniel Goleman sums up the importance of emotional intelligence as follows: “For star performance in all jobs, in every field, emotional competence is twice as important as purely cognitive abilities.” Examples of emotional competencies are self-confidence, self-motivation, persistence, adaptability, empathy and initiative.

At the workplace, there is increasing evidence that IQ gets people hired, but EQ gets them promoted. More careers have been damaged due to poor interpersonal relationships rather than a lack of technical know-how. EQ also directly affects teamwork and productivity.

Research shows that the careers of many managers were derailed due to poor interpersonal relationships, failure to build and lead a team, and inability to change and adapt during a transition. They were generally perceived as being poor communicators, abusive, manipulative, overly critical and poor team players.

### Major Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence consists essentially of five major domains:

#### **Self-awareness**

This is the cornerstone of emotional intelligence. It involves observing oneself and recognising a feeling as it happens; seeing the links between thoughts, feeling and reactions; seeing the consequences of alternative choices; recognising one’s strengths and weaknesses; and seeing oneself in a positive but realistic light. Analysing your own performance after a game and asking for feedback is a big step in the right direction.

## **Managing emotions**

This comprises handling emotions appropriately. It involves keeping one's anger in check, adapting oneself to change, and taking responsibility for personal performance. See the resource titled "Conflict and your brain" to get some simple tips for keeping your emotions in check if dealing with a player or spectator who is unable to control theirs.

## **Self-motivation**

This is primarily channelling emotions in the service of a goal, delaying gratification, and stifling impulses. It includes achievement drive, initiative, commitment and perseverance.

## **Empathy**

This is essentially being sensitive to other people's feelings and concerns besides respecting differences in how people feel about things. It encompasses understanding others, assisting others in their personal development, and anticipating and meeting player's expectations of you as an official.

## **Handling relationships**

This encompasses managing emotions in others and social competence. This domain is critical for developing effective leadership and interpersonal relationships. It includes being a good listener; being assertive rather than angry or passive; managing conflict constructively; and learning the art of cooperation.

## **Tips for Enhancement**

### **Promoting Self-Awareness**

1. Take responsibility for your emotions and behaviour.
2. Identify your true feelings that greatly influence your behaviour and interactions with other people.
3. Recognise your strengths and weaknesses.
4. Identify events and behaviour, which normally trigger your emotions. For example, identify what kind of situations or events can trigger your anger and what are its early signs.
5. Tune in to your senses to pick up information about yourself, other people and different situations.
6. Monitor your general behaviour and assess its impact on other people.

### **Managing Your Emotions Productively**

1. Avoid being swept away by your emotions. Remember that you are primarily responsible for your emotions and thoughts.
2. Use "I" messages to express your emotions. Examples are: "I don't appreciate being talked to in that way" and "I can understand that you're happy you won the tournament but could you not throw that bucket of water over me?"
3. Pick an appropriate time for expressing your emotions.
4. State your calls clearly, calmly and courteously. Avoid generalising, be specific.
5. Take deep breaths to stay on top of your behavioural actions.

### **Motivating Yourself**

1. Maintain a positive attitude of "I can do it". Think success, not failure. Establish specific, realistic and time-bounded goals.
2. Wake up happy. Start the day with positive thoughts.
3. Practise positive self-talk. Talk about your winners.
4. Don't worry about things beyond your control. Have faith in yourself and hope for the best.
5. Never belittle yourself. Accept compliments with a "thank you" and a smile.
6. View any sub-performances as lessons learnt.

7. Maintain perseverance in the face of setbacks. Try out new approaches instead of getting demoralised.
8. Maintain the company of positive people. Avoid negativists and “toxic” people.
9. Visualise yourself undertaking your officiating successfully.

### **Empathising With Others and Enhancing Social Competence**

1. Treat everyone with respect and dignity. Make them feel important. Remember and use other people’s names.
2. Be empathetic. Always try to see the other person’s point of view. Try to understand why others feel the way they do.
3. Listen attentively with the purpose of understanding what is being said. Maintain eye contact and resist distractions.
4. Assist others in their growth and development. Share ideas, skills, experiences and pertinent information with other officials at workshops or conferences, pass your wisdom onto others.
5. Learn to make specific complaints by focusing on the undesirable behaviour of an individual.
6. Admit your mistakes. Apologise sincerely and take the necessary steps to correct your behaviour.
7. Seek out the good in others and accept them as they are.
8. Ignore minor irritations and trivial issues.
9. Create “win-win” relationships. Seek mutual benefit in all human interactions.