

Why New Lawyers Must Learn Emotional Intelligence

Andres Perez-Molina

Dec 19, 2023 ⌚ 4 min read



Self-Management

Interpersonal Skills & Self Advocacy

Professional Development

Summary

- Emotional intelligence is critical for legal career success.
- Strategies for increasing EQ include recognizing emotions, using positive language, staying motivated, practicing empathy, refining social skills, and celebrating achievements.

Remember that it is not the lawyer who knows the most law, but the one who best prepares his case, who wins.

—Napoleon Hill

As a life coach, one of the key lessons I impart to clients is that the law of attraction governs our professional and personal lives. The formula is simple: Positive thoughts lead to positive actions; positive actions lead to positive relationships, and positive relationships lead to success.

How does this fit with emotional intelligence (EQ)? By having a high EQ, you “prepare your case” for manifesting success. EQ comprises five elements first identified by psychologist [Daniel Goleman](#): self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. As a young lawyer, you can

have all of the intellectual ability or legal acumen in the world, but you need EQ to harness those skills and turn your desire for career success into a reality.

Evaluating Your EQ

The first step in developing your IQ is to assess your strength in the different areas of EQ. Below, we define the elements and questions that gauge your strength in each area. (You can also use [online tools](#) to help with this.).

1. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is about recognizing and understanding emotions and how those emotions impact yourself and others. It's the foundation of intuition and decision-making. You can gauge your self-awareness by asking yourself the following: What is something you are proud of in each area of life: professional, personal, self, and why? What are your personality strengths and weaknesses?

2. Self-Regulation

A natural counterpart to self-awareness is [managing negative emotions](#) . There's a thin but important distinction between reacting vs. constructively responding to situations. Ask yourself: What makes you angry? How do you deal with a bad day? What is a time when your mood altered your performance (positively or negatively)?

3. Motivation

Motivation is the drive to improve character while achieving goals. Staying optimistic when things go awry is life's way of asking, "How bad do you really want it?" Ask yourself: If you started a company or law firm, what would its top values be? Who inspires you, and why?

4. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to see a situation from another's perspective and to acknowledge that the journey to success requires others' assistance. Ask yourself: Do you ask for help whenever you need it? How often do you avoid asking? Did you ever need to alter your behavior at work, and if so, why?

5. Social Skills

Social skills involve interacting with others by being a trustworthy team player and confident communicator who is present, [listens to others](#) , and stays curious instead of being judgmental. Ask yourself: How do you handle being around people different from you? How do you show appreciation in social settings?

Increasing Your EQ

Now that we have evaluated your EQ, how can we increase it? EQ is like IQ: It takes practice, discipline, and commitment.

I will give you two personal examples. These struggles compromised my EQ, making every other aspect of life more difficult. Ultimately, evaluating and taking charge of improving my EQ helped me navigate these challenges.

First, at 17, I lost my father to cancer. It was difficult to continue without the man who was my best friend and idol. I became self-aware of the pain and used it to motivate me to become a man who would make my father proud. I self-regulated my negative emotions by turning to fitness and using my experience to empathize with others.

More recently, I sustained a cervical spinal cord contusion that left me paralyzed from the neck down. Doctors told me there were three possible outcomes: permanent quadriplegia, death, or the unknown. Focusing on the former two led to fear and mental blocks. Once I was self-aware of that, I could focus on what I *could* control. I self-regulated my mental health by responding to my circumstances and motivated myself with hope of the unknown. Ultimately, I was able to make a full recovery.

This experience also enhanced my empathy. I understood those who went through uncontrollable challenges. It enhanced my confidence and social skills, as I learned that if I could overcome this, I could do anything! The hospital asked me to share my process and inspire others to find hope in the unknown. That was my calling to life coaching.

Transforming Negatives into Positives and Increasing Your EQ Strength

Self-Awareness

Recognize whenever you feel a strong emotion and take notes about what caused it. This approach will help you process and communicate feelings in a way that promotes healthy results.

Self-Regulation

Positive words have power. Being positive in a stressful situation can help others around you remain calm. This attitude also encourages problem-solving and teamwork. Be someone who can hear feedback, including critical recommendations. Viewing feedback as a catalyst for development will allow you to take responsibility for your actions and improve communication with others.

Motivation

Approach stressful situations calmly and optimistically by remembering the underlying reason for completing the task and your personal connection to it. Tensions easily escalate when facing a to'



problem, especially when working under deadlines, as lawyers often do. Steady yourself by focusing on solutions rather than succumbing to circumstances.

Empathy

Considering how others feel helps you respond in a respectful and comforting manner. Knowing how to adjust your message based on how it may be received will increase its effectiveness.

Social Skills

Practice active listening by asking questions, summarizing the other party's message, and using gestures to demonstrate understanding. Remember, word choice, timing, and tonality are *all* part of your delivery.

Rewarding Yourself

Celebrate EQ achievements just as you would other successes in life. By doing so, you will continue to increase your EQ and boost your long-term professional and personal accomplishments.

Related Content