

# TROJANTODAY

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## Feel Feelings Make Good Decisions

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I am writing this article as another bombing trial is wrapping up. My hometown baseball team is struggling with behaviors that resulted in suspensions for some of our best players. Another city is shut down because of legal and appropriate protests that have turned into violent acts of destruction by a few. For the first time in the history of major league baseball, a game is being played without a single fan present, for fear of further violence. On a more personal level, I know several families where communication has been suspended because of hurt feelings that occurred years ago. There are workplaces where people can barely tolerate coming to work because other employees have offended them.

What is going on? Why are some people unable to navigate the waters of their lives without offending and hurting others? Why do people allow their feelings to result in behaviors that hurt others and themselves? Why do we all sometimes "loose it" and say or do something we later regret?

Feelings can become so strong they result in behaving without thinking. A person yells a threatening word and gesture and, before reflection can take place, someone yells or acts back.

It's helpful to distinguish the difference between *responding* and *reacting*. When we are able to respond by thinking through possible alternatives, the results are often much better than reacting without reflection.

"Emotional Intelligence" is extremely important for personal and professional success. If a person can understand and operate

effectively in the five areas of emotional intelligence, he or she can be more successful in living a life of integrity. To be emotionally literate is to be able to handle emotions in a way that improves your personal power. As a human being, you are more effective if you understand your own emotions and are able to connect with others in appropriate and powerful ways.

Personal and professional success and navigating the lives we live are influenced about 20% from intellectual capability (IQ) and 80% by emotional intelligence (EQ). It is imperative for men and women of integrity to learn about, and put into practice, the following practices of emotional intelligence.

### **1. Self-Awareness:** Knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions.

Feelings are for feeling. Feelings are often not the best guides for behavior. In fact feelings of anger, hurt, fear, envy, and suspicion can result in very harmful behavior. Even feelings of lust, attraction, desire, and passion, if not felt and reflected on, can result in behaviors that later may be recognized as inappropriate. Feelings are not always accurate. I sometimes feel stupid, but I am not stupid. Sometimes whole communities feel unsafe, but in reality are quite safe. Feelings are for feeling. Feel them, discharge as needed. Talk about them in a safe space and then move to step two. Only act on a feeling if that action will move you in the direction of your desired outcomes.

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**2. Self-Regulation:** Managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources.

Identify desired outcomes and act to enhance the possibility you can achieve them. If you want justice, join groups working for justice. If you feel afraid, connect with others to feel safer. If you attack back, the possibility of justice or positive outcomes is diminished. When a person speaks ill of you and you are feeling misunderstood, seek a better understanding rather than perpetuating a negative communication cycle. The human brain is a wonderful organ. It is capable of weighing pros and cons, of seeking alternative responses, and of creating behaviors that are far more likely to result in powerful and satisfying outcomes.

**3. Motivation:** Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals.

Set goals and action plans to meet those goals. Rather than allowing life to push and pull at you, decide what you want and how best to achieve it. Work with others to build more respectful teams in the workplace. Identify allies who will collaborate with you to work together to address racism, sexism, classism, and other prejudices that can hurt human society. Rather than becoming a victim, step up and take charge, build plans, and face the future in a life-enhancing manner.

**4. Empathy:** Awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns.

Empathy means to feel with another. It is not sympathy. Empathy means to remain present to your friends and family during difficult times. Empathy allows us to see pain and fear in another person and to communicate in a way that increases their confidence to face an unknown future. When friends are grieving or suffering, it is good to let them know you care. Empathy can be expressed and demonstrated in a diverse reality of ways — from "thinking of you" cards, to visits, to offering a listening ear.

**5. Social Skills:** Adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others.

Appreciate others and inspire them to greatness. During some of the rugged events of life, it is good to have friends and allies. You can be a friend and ally when you partner to shape a better future. Your appreciation can result in someone feeling strong again to face a crisis with greater confidence. Emotionally intelligent people often believe in others more than they believe in themselves and this results in the other person standing taller and facing the difficult waters of life with greater courage and hope.

In observing others and in my own life, I have found these keys to emotional intelligence help me feel my feelings while charting smart ways to respond to difficult situations with respect for others.