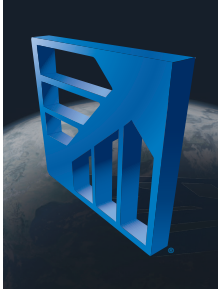


# Managing Emotions for Successful Problem Solving: Seven Easy Tips

High Performing Systems, Inc.



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Difficulty controlling one’s emotions and recognizing emotions in others leads to significant impairment in the workplace, especially when there are problems to solve and decisions to make. Whether working alone or interacting with bosses, peers or direct reports, the inability of an individual or leader to recognize and mitigate the impact of emotions on the problem-solving and decision-making process inevitably leads to misunderstandings, mistakes and poor business results.

From a coaching perspective, a proven way to help clients become better problem solvers and decision makers is to help them more effectively manage emotions using their Emotional Intelligence (EI). Since research on EI began, results overwhelmingly show that—with all other things being equal—people with high EI outperform those with lower EI. Studies further conclude that people with high EI are able to solve problems better, even when strong emotions are involved.

## EI and Problem Solving

Dr. Dick Thompson, President and CEO of High Performing Systems, Inc., defines Emotional Intelligence as a person’s innate ability to perceive and manage his/her own emotions in a manner that results in successful interactions with the environment and, if others are present, to also perceive and manage their emotions in a manner that results in successful interpersonal interactions.

In the context of Emotional Intelligence and the EQ-i 2.0 assessment, Problem Solving is the ability to find solutions when emotions are involved. It is a critical Subscale of the Decision Making Composite Scale (see Model). By becoming more effective at problem

solving, a leader’s overall decision-making skills will also be enhanced.

Problem Solving is not just the ability to find solutions when emotions are involved, but it also includes the capacity of a leader to understand how emotions are impacting the task at hand. Whether it’s personal agendas, personal biases or just that you and your team are having a bad day, unmanaged emotions have a detrimental effect on the EI skills needed to solve problems successfully and make sound decisions. That’s why coaching around emotional management can greatly benefit leaders, teams and organizations.

If managing emotions when finding solutions is a challenge area in your organization, a good place to start improving proficiency is by implementing simple strategies centered on building



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### EQ-i 2.0 Model

*The EQ-i 2.0—the most scientifically-validated EI assessment available—measures the interaction between a person and his or her environment. The power of the instrument is in how the 15 Subscales pinpoint a person’s behaviors and the motivations behind those behaviors. Certified feedback professionals use EQ-i results to help clients understand EI strengths and to provide coaching in areas that require focused attention.*

*“Remember, emotions should energize—not detract—from your process if you want to identify better solutions.”*

High Performing Systems, Inc., is nationally recognized for commitment and professional impact in cultivating teams, organizations and leaders to improve performance. HPS has provided leader development, assessments, consulting and professional development training since 1984.

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emotional awareness. Coaches train clients that while solving problems, it is important that individuals be aware and in tune with their own emotions and personal biases. Remaining objective, being open to others' points of view and being able to assess the impact emotions are having when seeking solutions are the hallmarks of a successful problem solver.

*“The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem.”*

~Theodore Rubin

Here are a few easy coaching tips that build emotional awareness and reduce the anxiety, frustration and pressure that strong emotions can cause when problems need to be solved.

### Seven Tips to Manage Emotions, Improve Problem Solving

**Be Rested.** Before tackling difficult problems—whether alone or with others—make sure you are well-rested. Emotions often feel more overwhelming/exaggerated when you are tired. Being well-rested makes managing emotions easier and helps keep pesky negativity from taking hold of your problem-solving efforts.

**Control Hunger.** Never problem solve on an empty stomach or after a heavy meal. Being hungry or too full can make it difficult to be aware of your emotions and to remain focused on the issues at hand.

**Balance Mood.** Before attempting to problem solve alone or in a group, take time to become aware of your mood. If you are in a “bad” mood or experiencing negative emotions, delay your problem solving to focus on restoring

your balance. When your mood is in proper balance, problem solving is enhanced. Using the EI skill of Emotional Self-Awareness is helpful here.

**Maintain Emotional Awareness.** Remain aware of your own and others' emotions throughout the problem-solving process. If “hot buttons” are unexpectedly pushed or a topic turns sensitive or sour, take time to acknowledge these emotions and to reframe the discussion to get emotions back in neutral territory. Remember, emotions should energize—not detract—from your process if you want to identify better solutions.

**Don't Rush to Judgment.** If it appears that you (and/or your colleagues) are rushing toward a short-term solution, stop and evaluate the group's emotions. Negative emotions tend to cause people to rush to judgment. Manage your emotions to allow yourself to see various perspectives on the problem.

**Use a Facilitator.** If you know emotions might get in the way of producing a high-quality solution, seek an outside facilitator to lead the discussion. A neutral party will add equilibrium to problem solving, especially when strong emotions are involved.

**Get Training.** Work on developing and using the EI skills of [Reality Testing](#), [Emotional Self-Awareness](#), [Impulse Control](#) and [Flexibility](#). These skills will boost your ability to manage emotions when problem solving—whether alone or with a group. Work with a coach to develop and practice these skills. Being confident in your ability to manage strong emotions will make you a more confident, more successful problem solver and, ultimately, a better decision maker.

**Contact HPS to Learn More About the EQ-i 2.0 and Certification Training**  
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