SKILL TREE™

# 4: *The Power of Emotional Intelligence*

7–12

*A 7–12 Lesson on Understanding Emotions, Navigating Relationships, and Leading with Insight*

## Introduction for the Facilitator

This lesson explores e**motional intelligence (EQ)**, which is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions, both our own and those of others. It's a powerful life and leadership skill that helps students navigate relationships, build trust, and lead with empathy.

In middle and high school, students experience a wide range of emotional highs and lows. Emotional intelligence gives them tools to **pause, reflect, respond, and stay grounded** in moments of stress, pressure, or misunderstanding. It's about learning to understand ourselves better.

This skill is a cornerstone of a student's **personal competitive advantage**. Those who develop emotional intelligence become better teammates, communicators, and decision-makers, which are all essential to creating the **lifestyle** they imagine for themselves.

**This lesson includes:**

- **A Real-World Scenario that illustrates emotional intelligence**
- **8 Group Discussion Questions with follow-ups**
- **8 Journal Prompts (draw or write)**
- **10 engaging Activities to explore emotional intelligence**
- **A printable Worksheet for EQ self-awareness and strategy-building**

CAREER TREE®

AUTHORED BY markcperna

The Education with Purpose® Career Tree® and Skill Tree™ name, image, philosophy, and strategies are the intellectual property of Mark C. Perna.
Any use of these materials, in whole or in part, without an active Career Tree license is strictly prohibited by law.



©Mark C. Perna® - All Rights Reserved V1 

## Real-Life Scenario

**You're in class. A group you're part of just shut down your idea without really listening. You feel embarrassed and angry—but you say nothing**.

At lunch, your best friend seems distant. You assume they're mad at you, and now you're upset again.

Later, they say, "Sorry, I had a rough morning. I wasn't ignoring you."

You realize: your emotions weren't wrong...but they weren't the full story, either.

Emotional intelligence means understanding how your feelings shape your actions and learning to pause, reflect, and respond with insight.

It's not about *hiding* emotions. It's about **understanding and managing** them, so they don't manage you.



## Group Discussion Questions

1. **What does emotional intelligence mean to you?**
   *Follow-up: How is it different from just "staying calm"?*
2. **Why is it important to understand our emotions before we react?**
   *Follow-up: What happens when we skip that step?*
3. **How can emotional intelligence help in friendships or group work?**
   *Follow-up: Can you think of a time when EQ could've helped?*
4. **What are some signs that someone is emotionally intelligent?**
   *Follow-up: What actions or words show emotional awareness?*
5. **What's one emotion that's hard for you to recognize in the moment?**
   *Follow-up: How do you usually respond when you feel it?*
6. **Why is it hard to manage emotions sometimes, even when we know better?**
   *Follow-up: What helps bring you back to balance?*
7. **How does emotional intelligence grow your personal competitive advantage?**
   *Follow-up: How can it help in leadership, relationships, or careers?*
8. **What kind of lifestyle do you want to live?**
   *Follow-up: How can emotional intelligence help protect or grow that lifestyle?*


©Mark C. Perna® - All Rights Reserved V1 I **markcperna.com**

## Journal Prompts

*(Students can write or draw their responses based on learning style or preference.)*

1. **Write or draw about a time you misunderstood someone's feelings or they misunderstood yours. What happened?**
2. **Describe a moment when your emotions took over. What would you do differently now?**
3. **List or sketch 3 emotions you feel often and what usually triggers them.**
4. **What helps you recognize what you're feeling before you act on it?**
5. **Draw your "EQ shield." What tools or strategies help you manage your emotional energy?**
6. **What's a moment when you handled an emotional situation really well?**
7. **How do you usually react when someone is upset around you?**
8. **How can emotional intelligence help grow your personal competitive advantage?**

## Activities

1. **Emotion Sort Cards**
   Provide cards with different emotions. In small groups, sort them into categories: easy to recognize, hard to manage, helpful when understood, etc.
2. **EQ in Action Scenarios**
   Read short situations where emotions could flare. Students decide: pause or react? Reflect and rewrite how they'd handle it with EQ.
3. **Feelings Journal Tracker**
   Track emotions over 3–5 days. Reflect on triggers, patterns, and what helped manage them.
4. **EQ Roleplay Challenge**
   In pairs, roleplay tense social situations. One student practices pausing, naming the emotion, and responding with EQ.
5. **Pause + Breathe Cards**
   Create personalized breathing, stretching, or calming technique cards for emotional reset moments.
6. **EQ Superpower Posters**
   Students design a poster showing emotional intelligence as a strength, not weakness. Include tools, quotes, and real-life value.
7. **Check-In Circle**
   Students anonymously share (via slips or sticky notes) how they're feeling today. Use it to build emotional awareness as a group.
8. **"Above the Line" Thinking**
   Introduce the concept of above-the-line (responsive) vs. below-the-line (reactive) behavior. Give examples and self-check exercises.
9. **Emotion Mapping**
   Draw the outline of a body and label where and how certain emotions show up physically (e.g., tight shoulders = stress, stomach = anxiety).
10. **EQ and Leadership Connection**
    Have students explore quotes from leaders about empathy, emotional control, and communication. Reflect on how EQ shapes influence.


©Mark C. Perna® - All Rights Reserved V1 I markcperna.com

## My EQ Growth Plan

Name:

**Helpful Words:**

- **Emotional Intelligence (EQ)** = the ability to understand, manage, and express my emotions in healthy ways
- **Lifestyle Goal** = the kind of life I want to live
- **Personal Competitive Advantage** = the internal skills and habits that help me lead, connect, and succeed

**Directions:**
Use **words or drawings** to answer honestly and reflectively.

Use the back of this sheet if you need more space.

1. **One emotion I want to understand better is:**

2. **When I feel overwhelmed, I can pause and try:**

3. **Here's a tool or strategy that helps me reset emotionally:**

4. **A moment I used emotional intelligence was:**

5. **My EQ Superpower helps me do these things:**

6. **Emotional intelligence helps me grow my personal competitive advantage by:**

7. **This is how EQ supports the lifestyle I want to live:**

©Mark C. Perna® - All Rights Reserved V1 I **markcperna.com**