



The good news is that you can build both emotional and social intelligence, and as a result positively impact your well-being and relationships.

Regulating emotions

The points below relate to how you can avoid extreme emotional reactions, or 'amygdala hijacks'.

Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on past situations where you have had an emotional outburst. What were the signs that you were about to have an outburst? They can be unique to each of us. Here are some of the more common signs:

- Fast, shallow breathing
- Hot, flushed face
- Racing thoughts
- Heart rate increasing

Know what your unique combination of signs are that trigger your heightened emotional reactions and learn to recognise them in the moment.

Catch Yourself

Once you know how your mind and body reacts just before your emotions get the better of you, learn to recognise them occurring in the moment and have one thing ready to calm yourself down and prevent you from over-reacting. Some things that might help you are:

- Take four to five long deep breaths. Focus your thoughts on the rise and fall of your chest
- Go for a walk
- Remove yourself from the situation
- Think of three things you are grateful for

Mindfulness

Avoid future amygdala hijacks by practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness brings your thoughts to the moment you are in and if practiced enough, gives you the ability to be much more self-aware and have greater perspective in situations.

Next time you are sitting in traffic or you are fighting through the drones of people at the train station, and you feel your negative emotions increasing, catch yourself, take some deep breaths and regain your control.

Building social competence

- **Practice**

Find ways to interact with people, even if you feel nervous about it. If going to a party seems overwhelming, start small, for example start a conversation with a shop assistant. Over time making small talk will become easier.

- **Ask open-ended question**

These are questions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no, and can help to keep conversations going. For example, 'What do you think about the film?' or 'What are your plans for the weekend?'. Also, people like to talk about themselves, so ask them about their work, interests, or their families and listen attentively.

- **Compliment**

Think about how you can pay people compliments. For example, you could tell a colleague they did a good job of running a meeting at work.

- **Consider body-language**

Positive body language is an important aspect of social communication. This includes good eye contact, a smile, open gestures. A smile sends a positive message without even saying a word.