

## Don't Let Doubt Call the Shots

Everyone doubts themselves from time to time, but we don't have to let it control our decision making.

"Self-doubt is part and parcel of the human experience," [writes](#) Margie Warrell, CEO and author, for *Forbes*. "Yet left unchecked, the fear that fuels our doubt can drive us to be overly cautious and keep us from taking the very actions that would help us and serve others."

Here are ways you can let success encompass your self-doubt:

**Understand the origin.** Doubt isn't always a bad thing. The first step in using it to your benefit is to accept that doubt exists for a reason: self-preservation, writes Warrell. Give it only the amount of time and attention you allow, and then move on.

"Embracing self-doubt as an intrinsic part of the human experience is crucial to reclaiming the power it has held over you... until now," explains Warrell. "You are human. You will make mistakes."

**Give fear a name.** Just because you think something doesn't mean it's true. When that critical voice inside your head tries to keep you from dreaming big, call it out and challenge it. Warrell suggests giving it a name to help you separate your everyday thoughts from damaging self-doubt, such as calling it "Doubting Deborah." Challenge those negative thoughts, and self-correct them, explains Warrell. Identifying this harsh inner critic as a sub-personality helps you realize it is not your true self.

**Determine if the reward outweighs the risk.** It's important to remember the reasons why you're challenging your doubts. Taking a risk is much more intimidating than playing it safe, so you must start out strong and determine why the return on investment is worth taking a chance, explains Warrell.

"Only when you are clear about your big 'why' can you find the courage needed to step through your doubts and risk failing," writes Warrell. "You need to be able to find a clear and compelling answer to the question, '[Why] am I willing to be brave?'"

**Surround yourself with strength.** A strong circle of friends and family bolsters your self-confidence in a way few things can. Warrell recommends surrounding yourself with people who motivate you and support you through any self-doubt you may encounter, and staying away from people who don't. Confidence and happiness are contagious.

# Here are 10 Ways to Enhance Your Emotional Intelligence:

- 1. *Don't interrupt or change the subject.*** If feelings are uncomfortable, we may want to avoid them by interrupting or distracting ourselves. Sit down at least twice a day and ask, "How am I feeling?" It may take a little time for the feelings to arise. Allow yourself that small space of time, uninterrupted.
- 2. *Don't judge or edit your feelings too quickly.*** Try not to dismiss your feelings before you have a chance to think them through. Healthy emotions often rise and fall in a wave, rising, peaking, and fading naturally. Your aim should be not to cut off the wave before it peaks.
- 3. *See if you can find connections between your feelings and other times you have felt the same way.*** When a difficult feeling arises, ask yourself, "When have I felt this feeling before?" Doing this may help you to realize if your current emotional state is reflective of the current situation, or of another time in your past.
- 4. *Connect your feelings with your thoughts.*** When you feel something that strikes you as out of the ordinary, it is always useful to ask, "What do I think about that?" Often times, one of our feelings will contradict others. That's normal. Listening to your feelings is like listening to all the witnesses in a court case. Only by admitting all the evidence will you be able to reach the best verdict.
- 5. *Listen to your body.*** A knot in your stomach while driving to work may be a clue that your job is a source of stress. A flutter of the heart when you pick up a girl you have just started to date may be a clue that this could be "the real thing." Listening to these sensations and the underlying feelings that they signal will allow you to process with your powers of reason.
- 6. *If you don't know how you're feeling, ask someone else.*** People seldom realize that others are able to judge how they are feeling. Ask someone who knows you (and whom you trust) how you are coming across. You may find the answer both surprising and illuminating.
- 7. *Tune in to your unconscious feelings.*** How can you become more aware of your unconscious feelings? Try free association. While in a relaxed state, allow your thoughts to roam freely and watch where they go. Analyze your dreams. Keep a notebook and pen at the side of your bed and jot down your dreams as soon as you wake up. Pay special attention to dreams that repeat or are charged with powerful emotion.
- 8. *Ask yourself: How do I feel today?*** Start by rating your overall sense of well-being on a scale of 0 and 100 and write the scores down in a daily log book. If your feelings seem extreme one day, take a minute or two to think about any ideas or associations that seem to be connected with the feeling.
- 9. *Write thoughts and feelings down.*** Research has shown that writing down your thoughts and feelings can help profoundly. A simple exercise like this could take only a few hours per week.
- 10. *Know when enough is enough.*** There comes a time to stop looking inward; learn when its time to shift your focus outward. Studies have shown that encouraging people to dwell upon negative feelings can amplify these feelings. Emotional intelligence involves not only the ability to look within, but also to be present in the world around you.

## Is Your Work Stress Real?

A recent study shows that workplace stress is becoming more and more common, and that employees blame their tension on too much work or too little time in the day. However, one workplace expert believes there is a different reason why employees feel stressed at work.

"Work stress is real, but it's real for different reasons than we think it is," writes Ted Bauer for [The Context of Things](#). "At base level, most people want to do well at their jobs...The ultimate root of work stress: you're a social animal and you don't want to let down other people."

Because humans are social and care about their roles at work, they also have to manage emotions, he writes. We want to simultaneously keep our bosses from adding more work to our plate while also feeling relevant and important in the workplace, Bauer adds.

To curb this, Bauer advises leaders of organizations to determine work priorities for staff. Instead of treating every task of equal importance, identify the tasks that need to be given undivided attention, whether under a deadline or heightened importance.

While this seems simple, just letting employees know that they can put some of their responsibilities aside will alleviate their stress and allow them to focus on what's important.

"Priorities are crucial in an organization because everyone has to know what they are supposed to be working on. Most managers assign everything a "sense of urgency," which ironically means absolutely nothing is really urgent," writes Bauer.

## Lead With Heart

The best leaders aren't afraid to be genuine and vulnerable.

"When we put on masks we become fake leaders," CEO Quentin Schultze [writes](#) in a guest post for *Skip Prichard*. "And others will sense our fakeness. Sooner or later, they will not be inclined to believe and follow us."

Schultze recommends finding the right balance between the head and the heart. Though intelligence is key in the workplace, leading with heart separates good from great. Bosses who prioritize their superiority over the needs of the office lack the emotional intelligence to lead effectively.

"They turn every leadership situation into an argument to be won, not a relationship to be nurtured," writes Schultze. "They think they know a lot—and in some ways they do. But their hearts are not in their work, let alone in their everyday leadership."

Try revealing the person behind the facade, Schultze suggests. Connecting with employees on a personal level can be intimidating but can result in more trusting relationships. Authentic communication brings out a leader worth following, Schultze explains.

Schultze also emphasizes the importance of acknowledging insecurities because it shows leaders are willing and able to overcome those doubts and find success. Keeping up appearances and portraying an air of perfectionism not only sets you up for failure but makes it hard for others to relate to you.

"True leaders admit such doubts to themselves and others. They don't pretend to know everything about leading. They communicate the most powerful message of all: 'We're in this together.'"

## Lead With Trust

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Are you looking to improve your leadership skills? Focus on relationships, says one business expert.

Morela Hernandez, a University of Virginia professor and business leadership expert, identifies "relational leadership" as an ability to create positive, genuine relationships with employees in the office.

"The relationship-focused mindset is a very important piece," Hernandez [writes](#) for Fortune. "It's the conduit or lens through which all other actions will be interpreted."

Why is relational leadership so important? According to Hernandez, relationships are the foundation of team productivity and morale. The better a leader's interpersonal skills are, the more likely it is that employees will trust that person and their decision-making.

"Followers may well base most of their trust in a leader on relational interactions," she explains. "They quickly arrive at a rough assessment of the quality of their relationship with the leader."

Hernandez points out that relational leadership does not equate with friendliness - it's a deeper connection than just exchanging pleasantries in passing. It involves investing time and energy in each employee to help them thrive under your guidance.

"Relational leadership is about understanding the strengths and weaknesses of those you lead and being able to create the foundation to giving critical, developmental feedback," Hernandez writes.

Here are a few of Hernandez's tips on how to implement relational leadership with your team:

- Actively listen to colleagues to understand what they're saying and how they're feeling about what they are saying.
- Solicit team input on important decisions and keep the team informed.
- Seek out and show respect and consideration for dissenting views.
- Give objective and specific behaviorally focused feedback, both positive and negative.
- Understand team members' career priorities, capabilities and place within the organization.

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This article is from the [Advancement Weekly, December 4, 2017](#) issue of Advancement Weekly

## Managers: Know What Your Employees Want

If your leadership seems to be bringing success to your organization but there is low productivity and high turnover, your leadership may not be as effective as you think. If you don't know what your employees want, your leadership is suffering, writes one nonprofit leadership expert.

"When you have a staff member, you have an obligation to define and monitor success *with* them," writes Joan Garry in a blog post on [joangarry.com](http://joangarry.com). "The corporate word [for that] is *accountability*, which can feel a bit harsh."

Garry details what employees want and why.

- **Employees want to be successful.** This may be obvious, writes Garry, but it's not as simple as it sounds. In order for your employees to be successful, they have to know what success is.

"Employees want to know that they are adding value. It makes *them* feel valued. But this isn't simply 'a pat on the back,'" Garry writes. To outline success, Garry recommends creating a job description that is a real activity, not just an employment formality.

You can also build a 90-day plan that details what you would like for them to accomplish in 90 days. Garry also recommends making a New Year's Eve list: a list that, at the start of every fiscal year, an employee can review to revisit their accomplishments in that year.

- **Employees want to be treated like a human beings.** When it comes to what motivates employees at work, there are three components: autonomy, mastery and purpose, Garry writes. But she suggests adding a fourth item: humanity. Showing interest in your employees' personal lives is just as important as knowing their work habits and roles in an organization.

"It matters because sometimes managers look at the phrase 'human resources' and focus too much on the 'resources' and not enough on the 'human,'" she writes.

## The 1 Habit of Successful Teams

A few years ago, researchers at Google were presented with a challenge: trying to determine what makes great teams work.

In 2012, senior leadership at the tech behemoth launched an investigation into teamwork code-named Project Aristotle, writes author and reporter Charles Duhigg in a recent [The New York Times Magazine](#) piece. Duhigg, author of *The Power of Habit*, explores teamwork in his forthcoming book, *Smarter Faster Better: The Secrets of Productivity in Life and Business*.

"We looked at 180 teams from all over the company," Abeer Dubey, a Google manager who was one of the project's leaders, told Duhigg. "We had lots of data, but there was nothing showing that a mix of specific personality types or skills or backgrounds made any difference. The 'who' part of the equation didn't seem to matter."

Researchers observed that some teams at Google were comprised of friends who socialized outside of work; others did not. Some had strong managers while others were less hierarchal. The successful teams shared few commonalities. So, the researchers turned to what are called "group norms." These, writes Duhigg, are "traditions, behavioral standards and unwritten rules that govern how we function when we gather." For instance, some groups start their meetings with informal chatter; others get right to business. The researchers concluded that understanding these norms is key—but, they wondered, which norms matter the most?

It turns out that the most important norm in a successful team is a sense of psychological safety, writes Duhigg. He describes teams with psychological safety as having interpersonal trust, empathy and conversational turn-taking.

"What Project Aristotle has taught people within Google is that no one wants to put on a 'work face' when they get to the office," writes Duhigg. "But to be fully present at work, to feel 'psychologically safe,' we must know that we can be free enough, sometimes, to share the things that scare us... [or are] messy or sad."

In our era of workplace optimization and efficiency, it's easy to forget that success is built on experiences (emotional interactions, complicated conversations) that can't really be optimized, he points out. Google's number-crunching "led it to the same conclusions that good managers have always known. In the best teams, members listen to one another and show sensitivity to feelings and needs," he writes.

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This article is from the [Advancement Weekly, March 7, 2016](#) issue of Advancement Weekly.

## Things Successful People Do with Their Lunch Break

If you spend your lunch break eating at your desk, glued to your phone, or even skip lunch altogether, you may be missing out on a critical part of your workday, according to one workplace expert.

"Experts say your lunch hour is critical for keeping your productivity and energy levels up," writes Jacquelyn Smith for [Business Insider](#). "Working or rushing through it can be detrimental to your success."

The lunch hour is an opportunity to get refocused and reenergized for the rest of the day, Smith writes. And according to Dale Kurow, a New York-based executive coach, the most successful people don't spend their lunch hour at their desk.

Instead, Smith lists things people do with their lunch hours that lead to success:

- **They get out.** Even if you have a busy day, you should always get away from your desk, even for a few minutes, Smith writes. Even working in a different location will offer a change of pace and perspective. Turning off your phone and stepping away from your computer allows you to recharge and feel refreshed.
- **They get organized.** After you eat your lunch, take time to make a to-do list and get organized for the afternoon and beyond. This way, you can reassess your goals and shift priorities as needed, and you'll feel more motivated, Smith adds.
- **They do something they enjoy.** Whether it's meeting a friend for lunch, getting in a quick workout or eating a healthy meal, doing something you enjoy while on your lunch break can offer a much-needed mental break from work, writes Smith.



## Leadership Based on Serving Others

To many, the ideas of servanthood and leadership are generally reciprocal. But according to one leadership expert combining the two could revolutionize your organization.

Dan Rockwell, writing on his [Leadership Freak](#) blog, explains "servant-leadership" this way: "Seek the best interest of others so they are free to serve the best interest of others."

Sound a little confusing? Rockwell gives 12 examples of how leaders can serve others. Here are a few:

- Make it safe to serve. Watch other people's backs so they feel safe to give themselves in service to others.
- Make life better for others. Don't think about yourself first; take other people's perspectives before making a decision.
- Look out for others, not just yourself. Let people know they are protected. Express interest in the potential and future of everyone on your team.
- Expect your team's full commitment to your organization. "Servant-leadership isn't doormat-leadership," writes Rockwell.

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## Tips on Controlling Emotions During Tense Moments

Being able to control one's emotions—anger, embarrassment, anxiety, fear—can be a powerful tool personally or professionally.

"The ability to recognize, own, and shape your own emotions is the master skill for deepening intimacy with loved ones, magnifying influence in the workplace, and amplifying our ability to turn ideas into results," writes Joseph Grenny for the [Harvard Business Review](#).

Grenny gives four tips for strengthening the "core muscle of your emotional anatomy."

**Own the emotion.** Before you can control an emotion, you have to take responsibility for it. Do you get angry when criticized? You might have felt curious or surprised. "Because an external event always precedes [an] experience of an emotion, it's easy to assume that the event caused it. But as long as I believe [the emotion] was externally caused I am doomed to be a victim of my emotions," writes Grenny.

**Name the story.** You've been criticized, and now you're angry. How did that happen? "One of the powerful practices that helps me detach and take control of my emotions is to name the stories I tell," writes Grenny. Is your story about being a victim? Does your story make someone else into a villain? Is your story about being helpless ("There's no point in speaking up; nothing will ever change.")? Take an objective look at your stories. They are the ways you make sense of what's happening.

**Challenge the story.** Once you understand your story, you can challenge it and change it. "Take control by asking... questions that provoke you out of your victim, villain and helpless stories," writes Grenny. The right questions can move you from victim to actor or from helpless to able, and can transform others from villains to humans.

**Find your primal story.** You are telling yourself these stories for some reason. "Early life experiences that we perceived at the time to be threats to our safety and worth become encoded in our potent memories," writes Grenny. He advises that taking the time to understand the deep roots of the primal stories will lead you to peace and calm in moments of high emotion.

This article is from the [Advancement Weekly, January 30, 2017](#) issue of Advancement Weekly.

## Why Disagreements Can Be Productive

Office conflicts can be a powerful problem-solving tool, according to one workplace expert.

"When people can disagree with each other and lobby for different ideas, your organization is healthier, writes Susan Heathfield for [thebalance.com](https://thebalance.com). "Disagreements often result in a more thorough study of options and better decisions and direction."

Heathfield offers tips on how to participate in and encourage healthy conflicts around the office.

Foster a culture of diverse opinions. Use common goals to keep workplace conflict in good spirit, writes Heathfield. When moving toward the same goal, different opinions can only help. Place an importance on how you can achieve goals through different plans, she adds.

**Set expectations.** "Create a group norm that conflict around ideas and directions is expected and that personal attacks are not tolerated," writes Heathfield. When members of a team agree to these guidelines, members will be able to speak honestly and understand that all opinions are equal.

**Provide conflict training.** Some employees will feel naturally inclined to stand up for their beliefs and others will not, because of this, every office needs conflict training, Heathfield writes. "Your staff will benefit from education and training in interpersonal communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and particularly, non-defensive communication," she adds.

**Make sure conflicts don't get out of hand.** "Exercise your best observation skills and notice whether tension is becoming unhealthy," writes Heathfield. Leaders should listen to criticism of fellow staff members or take note of an increasing amount of "secret meetings." "If you observe that tension and conflict are endangering your workplace harmony, hold a conflict resolution meeting with the combatants immediately," writes Heathfield.

**Hire people who will add value to your company.** "Only mature employees with compassion for one another and their viewpoints will be able to appropriately debate," writes Heathfield. "You want to hire people who are willing to act boldly and who are unconcerned about whether they are well-liked."

## Why We Need Both Reason and Emotion to Make Good Decisions

"Don't let emotions cloud your judgment." It's an oft-repeated refrain in decision making. But emotions are a key factor in making good, rational choices, according to two researchers.

In an interview with [McKinsey Quarterly](#), Hebrew University professor Eyal Winter and Harvard University professor Eric Maskin discussed how often people view decision making as an either/or process.

"People have a perception about decision making, as if we have two boxes in the brain," says Winter, author of *Feeling Smart: Why Our Emotions Are More Rational Than We Think*. "This is a very wrong way of describing how people make decisions. There is hardly any decision that we take that does not involve the two things together."

Emotions, explains Maskin, evolved as a guide for our decision making. Most importantly, they help us grapple with ethical and moral decisions. However, he points out, sometimes feelings can trip us up. For instance, humans often have negative emotional reactions when meeting people who seem very different from us. This "fear of the other" evolved in a bygone tribal world where other tribes posed a threat. But today, that "introduces hostility where there shouldn't be hostility," he says.

So, says Winter, rationality allows us to analyze our emotions and clarifies why we feel a certain way.

"[Rational thinking] allows us to be critical when we're judging our own emotions," he says.

Neuroscience, Maskin and Winter explain, supports this interplay between reason and emotion: the interplay between the two takes place in the prefrontal cortex of the brain. When people confront tough decisions (such as ethical quandaries), there is a lot of activity in the prefrontal cortex, says Winter.

The fact that humanity still exists, Winter says, is a sign that we're able to analyze and control our potentially dangerous emotions, such as anger and frustration.

"Some people do it better, some people have more difficulty. But just imagine what would have happened if we couldn't have done it? We probably wouldn't have managed, in terms of evolution," he points out.