



# The History of Emotional Intelligence

Understanding the Evolution of Emotional Intelligence and Its Impact on Human Success

# Introduction:

## Why Emotional Intelligence Matters



Emotions shape every aspect of our lives—our decisions, relationships, and professional success. However, understanding and managing emotions effectively is what truly sets individuals apart. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognise, understand, and regulate emotions in ourselves and others. Over the past century, EI has evolved from an abstract psychological concept to a key predictor of leadership effectiveness, workplace performance, and overall well-being.

This brochure explores the fascinating history of Emotional Intelligence, from its early theoretical roots to its modern applications in business, education, and personal development.



## Early Foundations: The Birth of Social Intelligence

The seeds of Emotional Intelligence were first planted in the early 20th century. Psychologists began to explore intelligence beyond traditional cognitive abilities, questioning whether success in life required more than just IQ.

### Edward Thorndike (1920) Social Intelligence

One of the first to challenge the traditional view of intelligence was Edward Thorndike, an American psychologist who introduced the concept of social intelligence in 1920. He defined it as:

“The ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls—to act wisely in human relations.”

Thorndike’s work suggested that success wasn’t solely determined by logic and reasoning but also by how well people interacted with and influenced others.

### David Wechsler (1940s) The Role of Non-Intellective Factors

The importance of emotions in intelligence gained further traction in the 1940s when David Wechsler, the creator of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), argued that:

“No full definition of intelligence can exist without accounting for the ability to handle emotions.”

Wechsler’s work recognised that factors such as self-control, empathy, and motivation play crucial roles in personal and professional success.



# The Rise of Emotional Intelligence:

## From Theory to Practicality

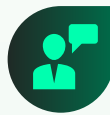
### Howard Gardner (1983) Multiple Intelligences

In the 1980s, Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner expanded the concept of intelligence with his Theory of Multiple Intelligences, which included:



#### Interpersonal intelligence

Understanding and interacting effectively with others.



#### Intrapersonal intelligence

Understanding oneself, including emotions and motivations.

This model reinforced the idea that intelligence was more than just logical reasoning or mathematical ability—it included the capacity to understand emotions and use them effectively.

### Peter Salovey & John Mayer (1990) The Birth of “Emotional Intelligence”

The term Emotional Intelligence was formally coined in 1990 by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in their groundbreaking paper, Emotional Intelligence. They defined EI as:

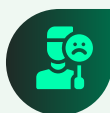
“The ability to monitor one’s own and others’ emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.”

Their research identified four key abilities within EI:



#### Perceiving Emotions

Recognising emotions in yourself and others.



#### Using Emotions

Applying emotions to facilitate thinking and problem-solving.



#### Understanding Emotions

Comprehending emotional signals and their meanings.



#### Managing Emotions

Regulating emotions in yourself and influencing them in others.

This academic definition set the stage for Emotional Intelligence to become a widely studied and applied concept.

## Daniel Goleman (1995) Emotional Intelligence Goes Mainstream

While Salovey and Mayer laid the academic groundwork, it was Daniel Goleman who brought Emotional Intelligence to the global stage with his best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1995).

Goleman expanded on the concept by introducing five key EI components:



### Self-Awareness

Recognising and understanding your emotions.



### Self-Regulation

Managing emotions constructively.



### Motivation

Using emotions to drive goals and resilience.



### Empathy

Understanding the emotions of others.



### Social Skills

Building and maintaining healthy relationships.



## The Business Case for Emotional Intelligence

Goleman's research transformed Emotional Intelligence from a psychological theory into a must-have skill for leaders, educators, and professionals. He found that:

- ✔ 90% of top performers in organisations had high Emotional Intelligence.
- ✔ Leaders with high EI were 2x more effective than those with high IQ but low EI.
- ✔ Companies that prioritised EI in leadership saw better team collaboration, higher retention rates, and increased profitability.

As a result, businesses worldwide began integrating Emotional Intelligence training into leadership development and talent management strategies.

# Emotional Intelligence in the 21st Century:

## AI, Neuroscience & Future Applications

### Neuroscience and EI: Understanding the Brain

Advances in neuroscience have provided deeper insights into why Emotional Intelligence is so crucial. Studies using MRI scans have shown that:

- ✓ The amygdala, the brain's emotional centre, plays a key role in emotional responses.
- ✓ The prefrontal cortex, responsible for rational thinking, helps regulate emotions.
- ✓ High EI individuals exhibit greater connectivity between these brain regions, allowing them to manage emotions effectively under stress.



### Artificial Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence

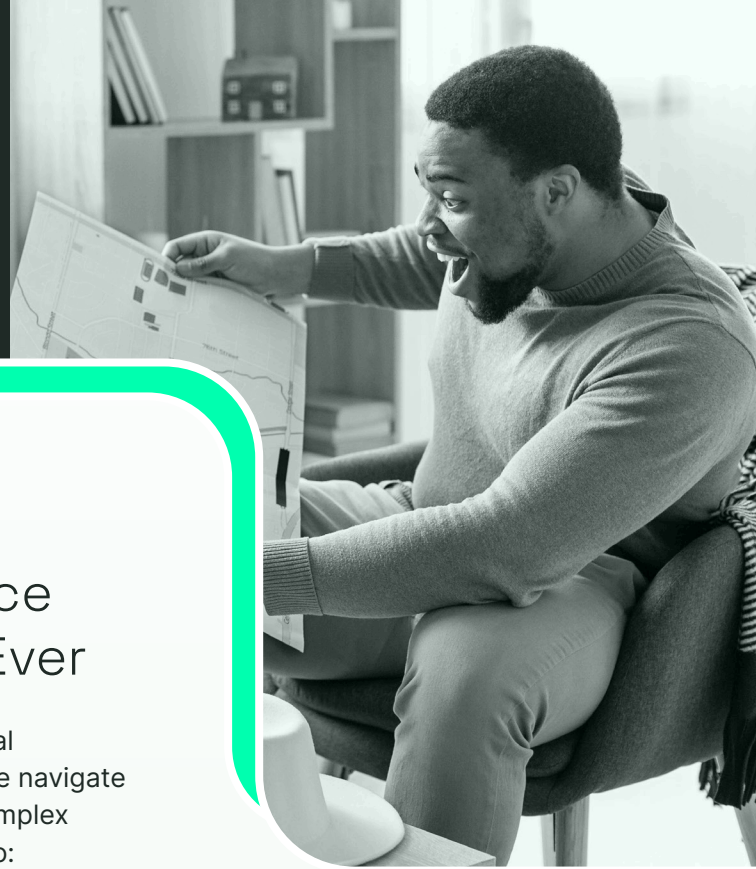
With the rise of AI and automation, human skills like Emotional Intelligence are becoming even more valuable. While machines can process data, they cannot replicate human empathy, intuition, and emotional awareness—making EI a future-proof skill.

Companies are now integrating AI-driven EI assessments to help employees develop self-awareness and improve workplace dynamics.

### Emotional Intelligence in Education & Mental Well-Being

EI is now a core focus in schools, mental health programs, and leadership coaching. Research shows that:

- ✓ Students with high EI perform better academically and have stronger social skills.
- ✓ Workplaces that foster EI see reduced stress, increased productivity, and higher employee engagement.
- ✓ People with high EI experience greater resilience, stronger relationships, and improved overall well-being.



## Final Thoughts:

### Why Emotional Intelligence Matters Now More Than Ever

Emotional Intelligence is more than just a psychological concept—it's a skill that determines how effectively we navigate life's challenges. In today's fast-paced, emotionally complex world, understanding and managing emotions is key to:



**Building stronger relationships**



**Improving mental well-being**



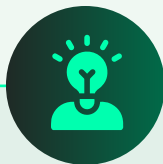
**Enhancing leadership and teamwork**



**Thriving in the future workplace**

The good news? Emotional Intelligence isn't fixed—it can be developed. By practising self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy, you can strengthen your EI and unlock new opportunities in both your personal and professional life.

#### Did You Know?



Emotional Intelligence accounts for up to

**58% of Job Performance**



People with high EI earn on average

**\$29,000 More Per Year**



Leaders with high EI have a

**70% Higher Success Rate**



## Emotional Intelligence:

### A Lifelong Journey

Emotional Intelligence is not a fixed trait—it is a skill that develops over time with practice and awareness. Understanding and managing emotions can enhance how you interact with others, make decisions, and navigate challenges in both personal and professional settings.

As you reflect on the history and impact of Emotional Intelligence, consider how it plays a role in your daily life. By becoming more self-aware, practising empathy, and refining your emotional regulation skills, you can strengthen your relationships, improve well-being, and contribute to more positive and productive environments.

The journey toward greater Emotional Intelligence is ongoing, and every step taken towards deeper understanding brings valuable growth and insight.