

Forty-Four Ways to Build The Emotional Intelligence of a Team

To Create Team Awareness of Feelings..

Between Individuals

1. Include time at every meeting and longer chunks of time during the year for members to get to know each other.
2. Include many opportunities for team members to tell each other stories about who they are.
3. Check in at the beginning of meetings so that people can share how they are feeling.
4. Use poetry, metaphor, music, and art to give individuals entry points into sharing their feelings.
5. Share what you're thinking and feeling. Model language for talking about feelings.
6. Acknowledge emotions when you recognize them. Say, "It looks like you're feeling frustrated today—is that true?" or "I hear that you're angry."
7. Acknowledge nonverbal cues that might indicate emotions. Say, "Joe, I noticed that when Jane asked you that question you leaned back, crossed your arms, and frowned. How are you feeling about her question?"
8. Appreciate when individuals appropriately share how they're feeling. Say, "Thanks for letting us know that you're upset about yesterday's PD."
9. Include intention setting at the beginning of meetings and reflect on these at the end.
10. Invite participation from quieter members.
11. Let quieter and more dominant members know the impact of their participation. Say, "Jane, we appreciate your comments and they are helpful. I also recognize that you are not as much of a verbal processor as others." Or, "Joe, we appreciate your comments and they are helpful. I wonder if others might speak up more if you held back at times."
12. Acknowledge your part in any tension and apologize.

As a Group

1. Engage in appreciations at the end of meetings. Appreciate the group.
2. Acknowledge and discuss group moods. Say, "It feels tense in this meeting today. Would it be helpful for us to talk about what's going on?"
3. Regularly and systematically examine team effectiveness and group dynamics.
4. Use a process checker—ideally one who reports at the end of a meeting and who can speak up at any point during it.
5. Ask for feedback on your leadership.
6. Offer feedback to your team.
7. In general or at specific times, ask the group to use active listening.
8. Develop a comfort with silence and allow for pauses at times during discussions.
9. Share participants' feedback on meetings (anonymously) with team to raise awareness and empathy for each other.
10. Begin a meeting with 3 quiet minutes or five deep breaths.
11. Create rituals (e.g., shake it all out) for managing stress when it comes up.
12. As needed, stop a discussion and ask participants to take five deep breaths and do a feeling scan.



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To Help a Team Manage Feelings..

Between Individuals

1. Surface tensions if you sense them—either with the whole group or between individuals. Say, “I am noticing that you two disagree on that idea and it feels tense. What could we do about that?”
2. Give individuals options. Say, “I hear that you’re really frustrated by what happened yesterday. Do you feel like you can still productively engage in our team meeting today? Is there something we can do to help?”
3. Create norms or community agreements that support emotionally intelligent behaviors.
4. Use norms or community agreements religiously.
5. Have a process checker who will call out unproductive behavior.
6. Offer emotional support to members if they need.
7. Validate members’ contributions. Appreciate individuals.
8. Protect members from being attacked, put down, or ignored.
9. Follow up in private with individuals who attack, put down, or ignore others.
10. Respect individuality and differences

As a Group

1. Take breaks if or when you feel the group needs a break. Invite team members to ask for breaks.
2. Make time to discuss difficult issues and the emotions that surround them.
3. Find fun ways to acknowledge and relieve stress and tension.
4. Express acceptance of members’ emotions.
5. Express optimism that a team can manage a challenge.
6. Focus on what you can control.
7. Remind the group of their mission and vision.
8. Remind the group of how it has solved problems before.
9. Focus on problem solving, not blaming.
10. Acknowledge positive emotions and celebrations.