

# Reading People's Emotions

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Emotions are strong and generalized feelings. Reveal is to unveil, to show and to make known something that was unknown before. Emotions revealed is about reading and discovering feelings that are not clearly exposed or shared by people, and that are critical to explain psychological states and behaviors.

Our ability to identify and to cope accurately with how we and others feel is critical for success, happiness, high performance, and survival. This point was dramatically illustrated by Charles Darwin in his wonderful book: **The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals**. Constantly, many people ask me how they can identify emotions and my answer is by practicing with different skills:

1. Identify how much you feel and how others feel.
2. Sense emotions in art and music.
3. Express emotions, dare to cry or laugh.
4. Read deeply between the written and talked lines.
5. Detect real versus fake emotions.

The challenge is for developing emotional awareness. In other words, it is about distinguishing if people are feeling tired or sad, nervous or angry, etc. (P. Ekman, Emotions Revealed)

As researchers have established (Caruso & Salovey Read **People: Identifying Emotions**), awareness and the ability to introspect are the essential building blocks of personal growth and professional development. Yet there is a very delicate angle about these profound and complex undertakings. Introspection and reflection can lead to worsening mood and can result not in insight but in feelings of depression and shame.

Awareness is an important component of emotional intelligence, but it must be accurate and not obsessive. When we attempt to determine how we feel, we have to be fully aware

about gradations and shifts of feelings. **Warning:** It is important to know which are our feelings when engaging in a business conversation, coming to some kind of agreements or making a sales presentation. This information provides insight about the proposal, the presentation or the sales message itself.

Emotions serve as a key signaling system, and leaders, professionals and managers have to learn to decipher signals and to send them in an adequate manner.

Expressing emotions is easy, and doing it so accurately is difficult. Some people are hard to read, and the signals they send are not clear. Others are purposefully unexpressive because they feel it is inappropriate to express them. Others may be afraid of emotional expression for personal reasons, or because they want to go the political way.

One thing should be clear. The inability to accurately express emotions means that we do not send clear signals about ourselves, and as a result, our needs or goals are not met. If I am angry regarding a previous experience during the day, and later on I engage in difficult meetings, I need support and understanding. If I don't receive them, chances are that I might explode.

The ability to communicate has a survival value for human beings. Our interpersonal communications consist of verbal and nonverbal cues.

There are channels for this kind of sensitive information:

- Our tone of voice
- Gestures
- Postures
- Facial expressions

Emotional expression begins to develop in infancy. People differ greatly in their ability to truly express various emotions and in being capable of accepting with tolerance and understanding when others do so.

Leading and managing effectively is about showing the ability to read facial expressions. Identifying accurately the emotions expressed in faces is a core skill.

This ability is essential to our interpersonal survival and to our physical and psychological well being. If a person is unable to read emotional signals, then his / her data and information about a situation is either incorrect or flawed. It can be that the person incapable of reading emotional signals may have an emotional knowledge deficit.

As I have shared with some friends, students, colleagues and customers in the past, the person with this kind of situation should go quickly into cultivating art, music or both as a brief therapy.

Art makes people think and feel. Art moves human beings intellectually and emotionally. The power of music to convey emotion is well felt by most people. I can just think of the chill of suspense that certain music produces inside of me and the happiness, joy and satisfaction that I feel when listening to certain tunes.

Accurate emotional identification also means that you can't be easily fooled by people expressing emotions that they don't feel. It is hard to create a true smile if you don't really feel it. Sometimes people who are not emotionally sensitive pay no attention to facial and emotional expressions, and they miss an important psychological display. This leads them to incorrect conclusions, wrong basic assumptions, and faulty emotional information. In this case, they make wrong decisions because, as **Harold Hill** says in **The Music Man**, they don't know the territory. We all need to increase our formal and informal understanding of the sales (emotional) territory of other people in order to be effective. This will result in a better core emotional data required for making decisions and taking actions. Inaccuracies within this psychological domain can have a mayor downstream impact on professional outcomes.

Recognizing negative and positive emotions accurately can provide people with extremely important information during a business meeting. So emotional awareness is based on being extremely careful, delicate and sensitive with what you express verbally and nonverbally, especially in social settings.

Nonverbal information has a high impact on successful social interaction. As Barret and Salovey have shown in **The Wisdom in Feeling: Psychological Processes in Emotional Intelligence**, 10 percent of the

information in an interchange between two people comes from their actual words; the rest comes from tone of voice, gestures and facial expressions.

The person who is not skilled in reading his / her emotions or the emotions of others through subtle cues is likely to behave roughly whether intentionally or not, but always with same negative consequences. The challenge for us is to work for achieving emotional relaxation as a part of experiencing deep inner peace and acquiring a greater frame of mind and heart while reading people and allowing them to read us as well. If we learn to relax, we will experience much greater health.

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