

These 3 Questions Will Immediately Increase Your Emotional Intelligence

An important life lesson is revealed by an unlikely source.

By Justin Bariso



Emotional intelligence (EI or EQ) is marked by a person's ability to recognize and understand emotions (both his or her own and those of others), and to use that information to guide decision making. It includes demonstrating extremely complex qualities such as empathy, sympathy, and compassion.

Of course, these qualities help us to be better people. But they can also help you break your worst communication habits, so that others receive your message in the best way possible.

For example, have you said something recently that you wish you could take back? For years, I struggled with the weakness of speaking too quickly, without thinking things through.

Curbing that tendency is easier said than done, but there's a quick "three question method" that can prevent you from saying something you'll later regret.

The 3 Vital Questions

I discovered this brilliant strategy through an unlikely source. I was watching an interview with comedian and television personality Craig Ferguson, when he gave some very sage advice:

There are three things you must always ask yourself before you say anything.

- *Does this need to be said?*
- *Does this need to be said by me?*
- *Does this need to be said by me now?*

Ferguson says it took him three marriages to learn that lesson.

Before you dismiss this method as simplistic, think about how many antagonistic comments this would eliminate from social media. Or, we can take it a step further and consider how it might apply at work:

When you ask yourself the three questions, you'll probably conclude one of the following:

- You know, the criticism I wanted to share wasn't so important after all. My opinion may even be changing on this. (Maybe I need more information in order to draw my conclusion?)
- It might be better if I speak to a team leader first. Maybe what I saw a few weeks ago wasn't really the whole picture? (Maybe a private conversation is best to open this discussion?)
- I definitely still need to talk to them about the problem I saw. But now's not the right time. Let me set a reminder to schedule an appointment with the person after I'm better prepared.

See how well it works?

This is just one scenario, but practicing these three questions will help you in various situations. Imagine if everyone did it: We would see [far fewer \(and shorter\) emails](#), shorter meetings, and fewer employee complaints about others' in the workforce. (We will see greater collaboration, teamwork, and witness a happier work environment)