

# A Quick Guide to Emotional Intelligence for Female Leaders

Emotional Intelligence is dynamic and can be impacted by physical factors such as sleep, nutrition, stress, and hormonal shifts. Building awareness of these factors empowers female leaders to adjust strategies and maintain resilience.

4 Domains of EQ	What does higher EQ look like in Leadership?	What does low EQ look like in Leadership?	Impact of Physical Factors (see next page for more details)	Two Techniques to Improve this Domain
1. Self-Awareness	Clearly recognizes stress triggers before major presentations; stays attuned to confidence dips in high-stakes negotiations.	Misses emotional triggers leading to reactive decisions; blindsided by stress buildup	Poor sleep and elevated stress levels can dull emotional perception and delay recognizing emotional shifts.	1) End-of-day self-reflection: "What emotion was in my driver's seat at work today?" Use this <a href="#">Feelings Wheel</a> to help. 2) Conduct a body scan practice to identify tension early
2. Self-Management	Remains composed under pressure in client pitch meetings; manages frustration during shifting project deadlines.	Snaps at colleagues or sends curt emails when overwhelmed; freezes during high-stakes feedback moments.	Inadequate sleep, poor nutrition, and ovarian hormonal fluctuations can lower impulse control and increase emotional reactivity.	1) Create a Personal Pause Phrase to buy time under pressure. (see <a href="#">examples</a> below) 2) Practice 4-7-8 breathing before responding to difficult news. (see <a href="#">instructions</a> below)
3. Social Awareness	Picks up on subtle shifts in client moods; notices when a team is disengaging before deadlines.	Overlooks stakeholder hesitations or misses political undercurrents in meetings.	High stress and low energy can limit the ability to focus outwardly, reducing emotional sensitivity to others.	1) Schedule intentional "temperature check" questions in meetings such as "How is everyone feeling about this direction?" 2) Do a quick mental scan of facial expressions and posture before speaking to gauge energy and tone.
4. Relationship Management	Skillfully leads tense conversations toward collaborative solutions; builds strong client loyalty through emotional connection; knows when to pause or delay a conversation to protect the relationship and improve outcomes.	Avoids necessary conflict for fear of damaging relationships; over-accommodates to preserve harmony.	Chronic stress or ovarian hormonal fluctuations may heighten emotional sensitivity, making conflict or confrontation feel riskier.	1) Mirror key points back by briefly summarizing what the other person said or by reflecting their emotions before responding with your own point. 2) State your shared goal to ensure you are in alignment. See the below guide to "4 Steps to Difficult Conversations" for more.

# Physical Factors That Influence Emotional Intelligence

Below are important ways physical factors can impact Emotional Intelligence.

Based on current research in neuroscience and psychology, this reference can support greater self-awareness and improved strategy in leadership development.

Physical Factor	Impact on EQ Domains	What Research Shows	Strategy for Leaders
<b>Lack of Sleep</b>	Lowers self-awareness, reduces patience, impairs self-management	Women show stronger emotional disruption from sleep loss than men; poor sleep amplifies amygdala reactivity and weakens prefrontal control.	Prioritize consistent sleep; avoid emotionally charged conversations when sleep-deprived; use a body scan to check tension before reacting.
<b>Nutritional Imbalance</b>	Affects mood stability, increases irritability, lowers stress tolerance	Deficiency in key nutrients (e.g., omega-3s, B vitamins) impacts serotonin and mood regulation.	Eat balanced meals; reduce sugar and caffeine before key interactions; stay hydrated before negotiations or feedback sessions.
<b>Chronic Stress</b>	Shrinks capacity for empathy, narrows perspective, lowers relationship management	Women experience more social-emotional sensitivity to stress due to cortisol and oxytocin dynamics.	Build in micro-recovery practices: walk breaks, breathwork such as <u>4-7-8 Breathing</u> , peer debriefs; use structured pauses in conversations under pressure.
<b>Ovarian Hormonal Shifts</b>	Follicular phase: rising estrogen supports confidence, emotional regulation, communication, and resilience. Ovulation: peak social ease, empathy, motivation, and verbal fluency. Luteal phase: declining estrogen and fluctuating progesterone increases stress sensitivity, irritability, emotional reactivity, self-doubt, and reduced tolerance for overwhelm or criticism.	Ovarian hormone fluctuations can alter mood and emotional regulation; the luteal phase is more vulnerable to dysregulation.	Track cycle-related EQ shifts; schedule high-stakes conversations for follicular or ovulation phases; practice self-compassion during luteal phase.

# PERSONAL PAUSE PHRASE

Create a Personal Pause Phrase  
to buy time under pressure.

## Assertive and Composed

“I need a moment to gather my thoughts before I weigh in.”

“I want to be intentional with my response. Give me just a second.”

## Neutral and Professional

“Let me take a moment to consider that.”

“I’d like to give that the attention it deserves. Can I circle back shortly?”

## Supportive and Collaborative

“I really appreciate you bringing this to my attention. Can I take a moment to process?”

“That’s helpful context. Let me reflect before I respond.”

# 4 - 7 - 8 BREATHING

4-7-8 breathing is a simple breathing technique designed to regulate the nervous system. It helps shift the body from a fight-or-flight state into a rest-and-regulate state.



**01**  
**INHALE THROUGH YOUR  
NOSE FOR 4 SECONDS**



**02**  
**HOLD YOUR BREATH  
FOR 7 SECONDS**



**03**  
**EXHALE THROUGH YOUR  
MOUTH FOR 8 SECONDS**

# 4 STEPS TO DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS



**MAKE TOUGH TALKS  
LESS EMOTION-DRIVEN  
AND MORE PRODUCTIVE**



Be sure to...

- Find a place and time for a private conversation where both parties feel at ease, such as taking a walk together or meeting for coffee.
- Do a breathwork activity ahead of time to ensure you feel relaxed.

## **01** **START WITH YOUR DESIRED INTENTION**

- What is the outcome you want from the conversation?
- How does this conversation support you or your organization's purpose?
- What possibilities can the conversation create?

## **02** **STATE YOUR OBJECTIVE**

- Start the conversation with what you want the outcome to be.
- What is the shared desired outcome for both parties?

## **03** **WHAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING SHARE**

- Describe the situation, behavior, and opportunity cost you've observed.
- Do not assume intent or place blame.

## **04** **FIND COMMON GROUND**

- What are the other perspectives?
- What value is making this important to the other party?
- What have you both learned?
- What can you create together?
- What are the next steps for your shared desired outcome?