

The Emotionally Intelligent Leader: Managing Ourselves to Lead Others

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❖ **The Fruit of the Spirit describes who we are becoming**, The Spirit *forms* the fruit... Galatians 5:22-23: “but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

❖ **Emotional Intelligence describes how that formation shows up emotionally and relationally**, EI *demonstrates* the fruit... Emotional Intelligence (EI) comprises essential components like self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, which collectively enhance our emotional growth and interpersonal relationships.

❖ **HEAD: Understanding & Discernment ~ Intrapersonal Awareness & Adaptability:** *Emotional Intelligence at the level of the HEAD helps us recognize what is happening inside us so we can respond faithfully instead of impulsively.*

FoS

- Faithfulness: groundedness, integrity, clarity of values
- Self-control: awareness before action, better decision making

EI

- Problem-Solving: brainstorming, solution-focused
- Emotional self-awareness: “I feel _____.”
- Reality Testing: What is true?

Emotional Self-Awareness: The Feelings Wheel

Reality Testing: 7 Steps

1. Identify the Thought What is the specific thought that is causing you distress?
2. Evidence in Support What evidence do you have that supports this thought? List any facts or experiences that confirm its accuracy.
3. Evidence Against What evidence contradicts or challenges this thought? Consider any facts, experiences, or outcomes that disprove or question its validity.
4. Alternatives Can you think of any alternative explanations or viewpoints for the situation or your feelings?
5. Consequences How does holding onto this thought affect your emotions and behavior?
6. Reality Testing Based on the evidence for and against, and considering alternative perspectives, how accurate do you think this thought is?
7. Balanced Can you formulate a more balanced or rational thought that reflects your reality testing?

❖ **HEART: Motivation, Values & Compassion – Interpersonal Awareness & Direction:** *The HEART is where emotional intelligence meets spiritual formation - our emotions become shaped by the Fruit of the Spirit, rather than fear or control.*

FoS

- Love: empathy, sacrificial concern
- Kindness & Goodness: moral warmth, care
- Joy: hope rooted in God not circumstances, resilience

EI

- Prosocial: positive, good outlook, inclusive
- Empathy: “I feel what you feel.”
- Interpersonal relationship: MWe

Sympathy is “I care about your suffering.”; **Empathy** is “I feel your suffering.”; **Compassion** is “I want to relieve your suffering.”

Mwe: *The reciprocal response to the experience “to know and be known”*

❖ **HANDS: Behavior, Regulation & Relationship – Stress Management & Relational Action:** *The HANDS show the fruit - how emotional maturity looks when we speak, confront, forgive and lead.*

FoS

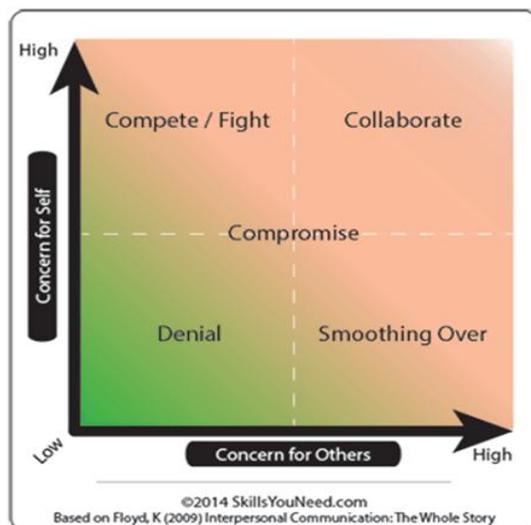
- Patience: tolerance under stress
- Gentleness: strength under control, humility
- Peace: emotional steadiness, reconciliation

EI

- Stress Tolerance: Maintaining functionality
- Impulse Control: delayed gratification
- Conflict Management: Win-Win scenario

Impulse Control

Conflict Management



FoS - EI

	FoS	EI Skill
HEART	Love	Empathy, perspective-taking
HEART	Joy	Optimism grounded in hope
HANDS	Peace	Behavioral regulation
HANDS	Patience	Stress tolerance
HEART	Kindness	Emotional awareness of others
HEART	Goodness	Values-based decision-making
HEAD	Faithfulness	Self-awareness, integrity
HANDS	Gentleness	Impulse control
HEAD	Self-Control	Emotional self-regulation

When the Fruit Becomes Visible

Galatians tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is *evidence of God's work* within us. Yet fruit does not appear in isolation—it *grows, matures, and shows itself* over time. Emotional intelligence helps us *notice the moments* where that growth is needed most: in conflict, stress, disappointment, and relationship repair.

Jesus modeled this perfectly. He felt deeply—compassion, grief, righteous anger—yet He responded with wisdom, restraint, and love. His emotional life was *not reactive but rooted in faithfulness to the Father*. In the same way, emotional intelligence does not replace spiritual maturity; it gives the Spirit room to shape how we respond.

As we grow in awareness, regulation, empathy, and grace, the *fruit of the Spirit becomes visible not just in belief, but in behavior*. This is how peace enters homes, patience enters conflict, and love becomes tangible in everyday life.

Closing Prayer: “Lord, form Your fruit within us, and teach us to live it out with wisdom, humility, and love.”

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QUIET REFLECTION:

WHO is one person God is inviting me to have a gentle, honest conversation with?

WHAT emotional intelligence skill do I need to use in this conversation?

WHICH Fruit of the Spirit must guide me as I do?

Exercise 1 — HEAD: “Reality Testing in Ministry”

Scenario

A staff member has noticeably withdrawn. They’ve missed deadlines, seem disengaged in meetings, and have stopped volunteering for anything extra. Meanwhile, several other people have quietly commented that “leadership doesn’t seem aligned lately.” As a leader, you begin to think:

- “They don’t care anymore.”
- “They’re checked out and abandoning the team.”
- “This is going to fracture trust.”

Use the Reality Testing model to think differently:

- 1 Identify the Thought:** What story am I telling myself?
- 2 Evidence Supporting the Thought:** What do I see happening?
- 3 Evidence Against the Thought:** What might I *not* be seeing?
- 4 Alternative Perspectives:** What other explanations could exist?
- 5 Consequences of the Thought:** If I stay in this mindset, how will I respond?
- 6 Reality Testing:** What seems most truthful and faithful?
- 7 Balanced Thought:** Create a more grounded, Spirit-led viewpoint.

Fruit of the Spirit Check

- Which Fruit of the Spirit is most needed in this conversation?
- Which is hardest to live out?

Exercise 2 — HEART: “Empathy, Compassion, & MWe”

Scenario

Conflict is rising around a sensitive issue (choose one that fits: worship style, finances, generational differences, a pastoral decision, etc.). You are meeting with a long-time member who feels hurt, a young member who feels unheard, and a staff person caught in the middle.

Activity

Discuss the position of each individual stakeholder.

- What might this person be **feeling**?

Long-time:

Young:

Staff:

- What might this person be **fearing**?

Long-time:

Young:

Staff:

- What might this person **need**?

Long-time:

Young:

Staff:

- What might this person **hope for**?

Long-time:

Young:

Staff:

How might you get them to connect in the following ways:

- Sympathy → “I care about your suffering”
- Empathy → “I feel your suffering”
- Compassion → “I want to relieve your suffering”

Fruit of the Spirit Check

- Which Fruit of the Spirit is most needed in this conversation?
- Which is hardest to live out?

Exercise 3 - HANDS: “Mapping a Faithful Response”

Scenario

You are meeting with a strongly emotional stakeholder in your church who feels unheard and is becoming increasingly hostile about a leadership decision (e.g., worship style, finances, generational change, or a pastoral decision).

You want to respond faithfully, protect the relationship, and move toward repair—without becoming reactive or defensive.

Activity

Build the conversation on paper. Construct the conversation together by moving step-by-step through the EI conflict framework.

STEP 1 — Stress Tolerance

- What emotions might *you* feel in this situation?
- What helps you stay grounded before responding?
- Before speaking, I would...

STEP 2 — Impulse Control

- What would be the temptation in this moment?
- What does choosing gentleness look like here?
- Write one measured opening line that reflects patience and care:

STEP 3 — Conflict Management (Win-Win)

- What values might *the other person* be protecting?
- What values do *you* need to hold without aggression?
- What would restoration sound like for both parties?

Fruit of the Spirit Check

- Which Fruit of the Spirit is most needed in this conversation?
- Which is hardest to live out?