

# 5 Steps to Emotionally Intelligent Decision-Making

1

Emotional Self-Awareness

**Label the emotion precisely.**

Naming an emotion reduces its intensity (Lieberman, 2007).  
“Worried” is more useful than “bad”.  
Specificity creates cognitive distance from the feeling.

*“I’m feeling anxious about this outcome.”*

*“I notice I’m feeling some resistance here.”*

NAME IT

2

Impulse Control

**Create space between stimulus and response.**

Before deciding, delay – even briefly. A breath, a walk, or sleeping on it re-engages the prefrontal cortex and reduces the amygdala’s urgency signal.

*“I need a moment before I respond.”*

*“Let me come back to you on that.”*

PAUSE

3

Reality Testing

**Challenge the emotional signal.**

Is this emotion responding to what is actually in front of you – or to a past experience, a bias, or a fear?  
Separate signal from noise.

*“Is this fear telling me something real, or is it pattern-matching from the past?”*

*“What evidence do I actually have here?”*

CHECK IT

4

Empathy

Interpersonal Relationships

**Meet others where they are.**

Before sharing your decision, understand what matters to others. Others also decide emotionally – connect to their concerns before presenting the logic.

*“What matters most to them right now? What are they worried about?”*

*“I want to understand your perspective first, before I share mine.”*

ENGAGE

5

Problem Solving

**Decide – informed, not hijacked.**

Now choose and communicate with conviction. Use emotion as data, not as the driver. Express your reasoning authentically to build genuine buy-in.

*“I’ve thought this through. I’m ready to decide.”*

*“Here’s my decision and the thinking behind it.”*

ACT