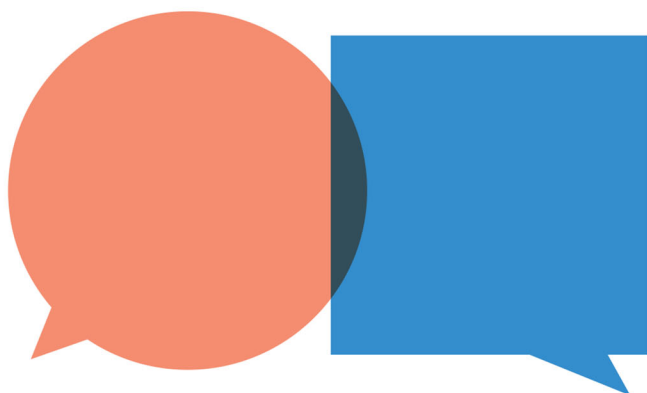


THE  
EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE  
ADVANTAGE



MASTERING CHANGE AND  
DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

AMY JACOBSON

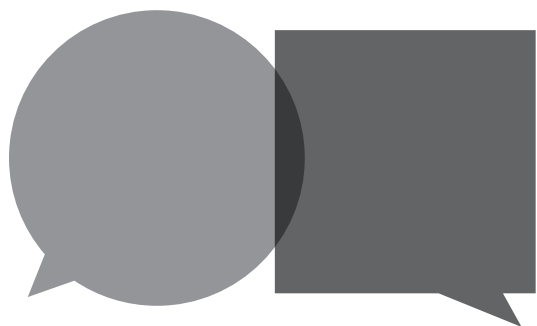
WILEY



THE  
**EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE**  
ADVANTAGE



THE  
**EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE**  
ADVANTAGE



MASTERING CHANGE AND  
**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

**AMY JACOBSON**

**WILEY**

First published 2025 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd

© John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd 2025

All rights reserved, including rights for text and data mining and training of artificial intelligence technologies or similar technologies. Except as permitted under the *Australian Copyright Act 1968* (for example, a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review) no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise. Advice on how to obtain permission to reuse material from this title is available at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

The right of Amy Jacobson to be identified as the author of *The Emotional Intelligence Advantage* has been asserted in accordance with law.

ISBN: 978-1-394-33794-1



A catalogue record for this  
book is available from the  
National Library of Australia

*Registered Office*

John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd. Level 4, 600 Bourke Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Australia

For details of our global editorial offices, customer services, and more information about Wiley products visit us at [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Trademarks: Wiley and the Wiley logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

*Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty*

While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this work, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives, written sales materials or promotional statements for this work. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a specialist where appropriate. The fact that an organisation, website, or product is referred to in this work as a citation and/or potential source of further information does not mean that the publisher and author endorse the information or services the organisation, website, or product may provide or recommendations it may make. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Cover design by Wiley

Cover image: © orsonsurf/Getty Images

Set in 11.5/14.5pt Warnock Pro by Straive, Chennai, India.

# CONTENTS

<i>About the author</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Prologue</i>	<i>xi</i>
<b>Part I: The emotional intelligence process</b>	<b>1</b>
1 Understanding the EI process	5
2 Mastering the EI process	25
3 The constant evolution	37
<b>Part II: Change intelligence</b>	<b>49</b>
4 Our relationship with change	53
5 The change intelligence model	73
6 Step 1: Own and face the loss	79
7 Step 2: Feel and ask through the liminal space	93
8 Step 3: Drive the change like a champion	105
<b>Part III: Difficult conversations</b>	<b>119</b>
9 The excuse mindset	123
10 Five easy steps	135
11 The emotion over the situation	149
12 Putting it into practice	157

## The Emotional Intelligence Advantage

13	Managing up	177
14	Reflection	191
	<b>Part IV: High-performing teams</b>	<b>195</b>
15	Team alignment	199
16	Trust	213
	<i>Conclusion: The emotionally intelligent workplace</i>	235



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy is an emotional intelligence (EI) specialist who challenges and disrupts people's mindsets to own it, take control and be unstoppable.

With her fascination for the human mind, neuroscience and neurolinguistic programming (NLP), Amy balances tough love and infectious energy to create purpose-driven teams who *get results!*

Amy takes people out of their comfort zone with her methodology, challenging their mindset and helping them bring ownership and purpose to every work day.

Amy is driven to break through the misconception of EI and see people reach their full potential, embrace their strengths and be great human beings.

Based in Perth, Australia, with an international reach, Amy is a media personality across TV, radio and print. She delivers keynotes, EI programs, workshops and coaching across the world in all industries and sectors.

As a wife to her supportive husband and best friend Mark, mother to two amazing children, Amelia and Koen, and business owner of Amy Jacobson Pty Ltd, Amy completely gets the challenge of balancing all the roles in our life while still finding time to include herself somewhere near the top of the list.

Amy defines success as being happy. 'Find the things that make you happy and spend as much time as you can doing them. It really is that simple.' Travelling and enjoying adventures with her beautiful family brings Amy happiness, along with seeing people's faces light up as they 'find' themselves.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The motivation to write this book came from a client requesting a summary of one of my emotional intelligence workshops, specifically the emotional intelligence process. While aspects of this workshop were detailed in my first book, *Emotional Intelligence: A simple and actionable guide to increasing performance, engagement and ownership*, the parts they really wanted were new additions. In my head I thought, 'If I'm going to write a summary, I might as well write another book ...' And voilà! Here we are 😊.

So, my first thank you goes to my client for the small, unintentional request that turned into this book!

My family thought it a bit extreme to write another book rather than a summary, but they are used to my shenanigans so, like absolute champions, they supported me like they always do and celebrated all the milestones. I have so much love for my family, my friends who have become family and the support networks in my life. There really is nothing more important to me.

The year 2024 was big for work travel, so a large chunk of this book was written on planes. Thank you to the wifi in the air, the people who had to sit next to me tap, tap, tapping away, and the endless supply of snacks that got me through words, pages and time zones. (By the way, this book goes really well with chocolate of any type, so treat yourself!)

I'm ridiculously grateful for the opportunity to do what I do. I really do work with the most interesting and fantastic people around the world and get to learn so much from them in return.

It still absolutely makes my day to hear from people who have read my first book, attended my programs or heard me through media, in particular when they tell me the learnings really hit home and made a difference to who they are today and to their relationships.

Sending love and thanks to you all, far and wide. Xx

# PROLOGUE

Traditional workplace and leadership expectations have changed. I'm not talking small changes; I'm talking massive shifts. Massive shifts in mindset, in focus, in expectations and in priorities.

Emotional intelligence (or EI) has become a necessity in workplaces and the commitment to people's wellbeing now sits at the top of many organisations' agendas.

The unexpected and unprecedented changes that we have faced, and continue to face, in the workplace have provided a new lens and have us looking at the work component of our lives in a completely different way.

## **Ask**

Do we live to work, or do we work to live? Or is there a middle ground? What is our true purpose in life and is our

*(continued)*

definition of how we define 'success' realistic and not just materialistic? So many unanswered questions lurk in our minds, taking up real estate space and making us rethink our relationship with work.

## The current state of the workplace

Workplaces have been turned on their heads as they watch their employees go through these changes, reacting in slightly different ways. Some cope better than others; some really struggle. We tend to take for granted the impact that people have on our bottom line, products/services and the customer. But we are quickly reminded that without our people being able to work physically and mentally, there is no workplace. The bottom line, the products/services and the customer become totally irrelevant without the people!

This shift has been evident across the world as we watch people prioritise what is important in life, and for many, it isn't spending endless long hours working.

Resources seem to have become low across every industry as people decide to reduce their hours, switch to something they like or enjoy doing and find the ultimate life balance. It creates confusion and leaves us wondering how we can suddenly be so short staffed or under resourced across every industry even if our workload and head count hasn't changed. But it isn't the number of resources or our workload that are necessarily changing; it is our relationship with work and what we are willing to give that are changing. How many hours and how much focus are people now willing to dedicate to work? For many people, this number has decreased dramatically.

It had become such standard and accepted practice in the past that we work 10- to 12-hour days and sometimes without any breaks. While this is not always quality work or healthy for us, it's what many of us did and had accepted as the norm of work. In some instances, being forced to take downtime and spend more time at home increased the value of life outside of work, reminding us how it felt to let go of some of that stress and refocus on the parts of our life that are important. Once people start to get a taste of it, they want more of this balance and more time to focus on the important things. With this we see decreased working hours and some people simply reverting to the standard hours of seven- to eight-hour days. The fact that we built our workforce requirements on people working much longer hours than they were being paid or contracted to do, is our downfall.

For some industries, downtime wasn't an option, and the changes and intensity are increasing due to resource shortages or increased needs from the community. Those 10- to 12-hour days are becoming even longer and it feels like the impossible is upon us without any sign of relief in the near future. This is like the straw that broke the camel's back and for some people, it is enough to quit their job, their industry and their relentless dedication to work. Some people just aren't willing to give this much of themselves to work any longer. They don't want the stress or the responsibilities.

There is a definite shift in personal priorities. People are more comfortable in themselves, and we are encouraging each other to be real, to feel and speak up in the workplace like anywhere else in our lives. It's not just 'do what I say and not what I do'. It's 'speak up and talk about how you are feeling and the role that work plays in your life'.

Employees have so much more choice. A new job opportunity is around almost every corner now. Expectations are changing and increasing as new generations enter the workforce. The hierarchical difference between the managers and employees is decreasing and the confidence and rights of employees are increasing. Whether this is right or wrong is irrelevant. We are not here to argue what the workplace should look like; we are here to accept that this is what it does look like and as leaders, we must adapt and lead the way.

Leaders have leveraged their known and lived leadership skills to support their team members as much as possible with an increased focus on people leadership. For some team members, this is enough, while for the majority of others it isn't. Leadership is being redefined and a leader without the ability to leverage and build their emotional intelligence finds it very difficult to manage the variety of people, the shifting demands and the different responses to situations.

### **Ask**

Why do these changes impact people differently? Why are the needs and expectations of people so varied?

Leadership never was a blueprint or a template, yet it's becoming even more ad hoc with the need to adapt to every situation and person. As we continue to bring more humanistic approaches into the workforce and encourage people to be authentic and real, the variance will continue to grow. The upside is that performance, engagement and creativity also grow by giving people more ownership and freedom



to think. However, they also break the ‘cookie mould’ approach and we end up with big variations in personalities, attitudes, expectations and emotional responses.

Basic leadership skills are no longer enough. It is going to take every ounce of our emotional intelligence to first understand ourselves, then understand what each of the people around us is going through and how they are wired or what makes them ‘tick’, before we can even consider what they need from us as leaders. It’s challenging even the greatest and most experienced leaders as they take a step back and focus on the fundamental basics of understanding and adapting to the person in front of them. We can reap the benefits of having modern and humanistic workplaces, but not without addressing the new challenges arising from the change.

Difficult conversations are becoming more prevalent due to the changes and level of human interaction. I don’t think I’ve ever met anyone who loves to have a difficult conversation. I’d even say it would have to be one of the most avoided things we do as leaders, resulting in the situation snowballing while we look the other way hoping it will go away. When we do have the difficult conversations, they are poorly executed, lack outcomes and become a defensive battle between the people involved.

This is attracting attention and becoming a priority for managing directors, chief executive officers (CEOs) and pretty much everyone at the high-level running of an organisation that relies on people to achieve results. They recognise that the bottom line and profit, the products and services, and their customers are irrelevant if they haven’t got their people right. They want help with the people in their organisation, but also, they want help for themselves

and their own leadership skills to lead the team from the top in an environment overflowing with change in priorities, change in operations and change in people when emotions run wild.

This is why the need for EI and the role it plays is now much more present and really is a necessity for all workplaces.

## What is emotional intelligence?

Whenever there are human beings involved in any situation, there are also emotions. Every second of every day we are feeling some kind of emotion. Emotional intelligence (EI) is our ability to recognise these emotions, manage the emotions as they play out, and understand the impact they have on the people around us and the outcome of the situation.

From a world-renowned expert in EI, Dr Travis Bradberry's research shows that only 36 per cent of people can accurately identify emotions as they occur. This helps to explain why EI can be a challenging skill to master.

Some people are lucky enough to be born with the natural skill to identify and manage their emotions, but the millions of other people need to learn and work on growing their EI.

EI can be taught. I've taught many people in this field. The key is you must *want* to learn it. In a workplace with extensive human interaction, it is a 'must' to not only have the awareness of our emotions as they occur, but to also have the skills that are required to manage, process and align the emotions.

## **EI is not about what we know or what we can do; it's the how and why we do it!**

The 'what we know or what we can do' is our IQ. This is our knowledge, education, talent and what we can deliver. The 'how and why we do it' is our EI. How well we interact with others, how we make people feel, how we manage emotions, the effectiveness of our communication and the purpose or 'why' behind what we do.

Neither is more important than the other. Our IQ will only take us so far in life before we require our EI to kick in. Equally, our EI will only take us so far in life before our IQ needs to kick in. I like to say that often it's our IQ that gets us the job, but it's our EI that gets us promoted! Bradberry's studies also show that 90 per cent of top performers are also high in EI, whereas only 20 per cent of bottom performers are high in EI. So it's the balance of both EI and IQ that we are striving for to become a high performer.

There are five key concepts around EI: Own It, Face It, Feel It, Ask It and Drive It. These concepts build the foundational skills of EI. I truly believe there is no such thing as an emotionally intelligent person. I teach EI and I would never refer to myself as being emotionally intelligent. Each and every one of us has emotional intelligence within us and we have a choice in every situation. Do we respond in an emotionally intelligent way or do we not? Sometimes we get it right and sometimes we really don't. My teenage daughter calls me out on this at times saying, 'That wasn't very emotionally intelligent, was it, Mum?' And she is absolutely right. Sometimes my emotional brain takes over and I don't get it right first go. It's what we choose to do when we don't get it right the first time that really shows our

level of emotional intelligence. Do we have the awareness to Own It, get our emotions under control, understand the impact we've had on others, apologise when appropriate and have another go to constantly develop our EI? It's not about perfection every time; it starts with self-awareness and is something we work on every day.

In my book, *Emotional Intelligence: A simple and actionable guide to increasing performance, engagement and ownership*, I dug deep into each of the five EI key concepts. I wrote about what each of these concepts means and how to build our core skills in all five areas to grow and respond in a more emotionally intelligent way.

The five key concepts are:

1. Own It
2. Face It
3. Feel It
4. Ask It
5. Drive

In chapter 1 I'll delve more deeply into these.

## **What to expect from this book**

This book applies the core concepts of EI at the next level. I will show you how to take the practical side of the concepts and put them into action every day to be a better leader and a better human being. It's no longer about knowing what EI is and the best ways to use it; it's about taking action and applying EI in some of the most challenging situations that occur in the workplace.

You'll see that the book is divided into four parts:

- *Part I: The emotional intelligence process*

In part I I'll show you how to understand and follow the emotional intelligence process, not just the concept. You will learn how to recognise where people are in their own emotional intelligence process and what support they will need from you to help them move through each step of the process effectively in readiness for starting the process again as the situation shifts.

I'll help you identify how this process occurs constantly in everything you do and the role it plays in causing conflict, confrontations and denial — as well as lack of progress in individuals, teams and organisations. It is not just a one-time process but a fluent and continuous process relying on your EI every step of the way.

- *Part II: Change intelligence*

In part II we will move away from process-driven change management. It's often not the change that isn't effective: it's the lack of buy-in from the people that causes the problems. You will come to understand what actually happens in our mind as it transitions with change and the huge role that the emotional intelligence process plays within change. Ticking a box for each step of the change management plan is not enough. Change involves developing new neural pathways in our mind, and this requires creating new habits and beliefs — but, more importantly, knowing how to let go of the old ones first.

We don't have to love change — in fact, we need people who love consistency in every workplace — but we do need to accept change and transition our mind with the change. If we skip the mind transition, we end up with people still holding onto change that happened years ago.

- *Part III: Difficult conversations*

This is where we will address what is easily the most avoided part of leadership — even possibly the most avoided part of life! You'll learn how to not overthink difficult conversations, overanalyse them, become a robot in defence mode and blow it all out of proportion.

I'll show you how to implement a core framework that will bring a humanistic and honest approach to the difficult conversation to ensure it is an effective conversation and that the desired outcomes are achieved for everyone. And it won't just be a one-off followed by a relapse, but a way to create positive change and ownership through emotions.

Difficult conversations don't always take place top-down. Some of the most difficult conversations happen when we are communicating with people in positions above us or equal to us. When we have the right skills and approach, and we follow the emotional response, magic happens.

- *Part IV: High-performing teams*

Behind every high-performing team you will find alignment, trust and great communication. I'll show you how you can complement your newfound communication skills with the elements

of an aligned team led by a great leader who knows how to balance their time across strategic, operational and people leadership to get the team on the same page with a common purpose.

I will discuss how to create trust, which is one of the foundations of a high-performing workplace environment, and how to ensure each person feels safe and part of a culturally unified workplace.

We will break down the word ‘trust’ and its drivers to understand how trust is created and developed, and what it takes to create a high-performing team where people can trust each other and the space they play in.

So that’s the crux of the book: using the five key concepts as a framework, we will take your EI to the next level and learn how to apply it in the most common workplace challenges.

It’s time to step up our game. Are you ready for the ride?





Part I

# THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE PROCESS



Life is not static. Nor is our mind.

Learning information and new skills will always be a moving and growing process. Even the application of the learnings become part of a process as they form with our existing habits and day-to-day workings.

Our mind goes through processes based on the neural pathways that run through it. These pathways are created based on our values, beliefs, habits, experiences and memories. At the start of each pathway is a trigger (something that occurs) and the pathway leads through a number of consecutive steps, arriving at an emotional feeling and response. So, when \*this\* happens, I respond like \*this\*. Millions of these pathways exist within our mind, detailing processes for different situations.

Whether it is our morning routine, a simple 'bless you' that follows a sneeze or hugging someone when they are upset, processes drive what we do and help us to get from the start of an occurrence to the outcome that we desire. It is the process that each one of us takes that determines our level of comfort and acceptance of what is happening and our ability to move forward.

EI also forms a process. After years of studying people in this field, I have found that there is a process that occurs within our mind through our emotions when situations happen all the way through to our response and acceptance. Like any process, having an understanding of the steps of this process, which step a person is at and how to support them to move through the process provides a far superior