

RULER is an acronym for the five key skills of emotional intelligence. Each letter stands for a skill: Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions. Use this tip sheet as a quick reference guide for each skill and to learn strategies to help you practice them daily.

R

Recognizing emotions in ourselves and others involves interpreting facial expressions, body language, vocal tones, words, actions, and physiology: how our bodies feel. This skill helps us build self-awareness and understand ourselves and others better.

To improve our ability to recognize emotions, we can:

- Pay attention to what is happening in our minds and bodies that signal changes in our emotions
- Ask others how they're feeling to move beyond our own perceptions and perspectives

U

Understanding emotions is the skill of knowing what causes our emotions and how they can affect our thinking, learning, decision making, and behavior. It also means knowing that an event may cause different emotional responses in different people.

To build the skill of understanding of emotions, we can:

- Reflect on our interpretation of a situation or event
- Explore how a feeling influences behaviors in ourselves and others
- Ask questions without judging or making assumptions

L

Labeling emotions involves having and using feeling words to describe a full range of emotions. Giving our feelings a specific label provides greater clarity about our feelings and allows us to communicate our feelings more clearly.

To expand our emotions vocabulary, we can:

- Discover new words in books, films, or conversations
- Replace words like "sad," "mad," and "upset" with more specific emotion words
- Ask questions about what others mean when they use emotion words

E

Expressing emotions involves knowing how and when to display emotions. Emotion expression is influenced by individual differences, culture, and social norms.

To strengthen our emotion expression skills, we can:

- Reflect on our personal comfort level with expressing different emotions
- Pay attention to and ask questions to clarify norms and unspoken rules about emotion expression in unfamiliar situations
- Notice how different people express their emotions differently

R

Regulating emotions involves doing something to feel the way we want to feel and responding to situations in helpful ways. Regulating emotions helps us make better decisions, improve our relationships, and enhance our well-being.

To develop our emotion regulation skills we can:

- Identify and practice emotion regulation strategies that work for us
- Analyze situations to identify strategies that would be most helpful
- Practice self-care, including getting enough sleep, eating healthy, and engaging in regular physical activity so that we are in a better place to manage the range of emotions that come up in our lives