

2025

# PSYC 1205

## Emotional Intelligence

ASSIGNMENT ACTIVITY UNIT 7  
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# Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) matters for leadership because it shapes how leaders perceive emotions in themselves and others, make decisions under stress, and build trust across teams. Leaders who harness EI create cultures that encourage engagement, resilience, and clear communication. This assignment explains why EI is central to effective leadership, examines two high-profile leaders who exemplify emotionally intelligent behavior, and summarizes how emotionally intelligent leadership promotes a positive workplace. I draw on foundational EI theory and contemporary examples to ground the discussion (Goleman, 2005).

## Part 1: Emotional intelligence in effective leadership

### a. Why emotional intelligence matters

Emotional intelligence gives leaders three practical advantages. First, it improves decision making under uncertainty by helping leaders recognize emotional bias in themselves and others and adjust accordingly. Second, EI supports relationship building: leaders who accurately read team members' emotional states can respond in ways that preserve dignity and increase psychological safety. Third, EI enhances conflict resolution because emotionally intelligent leaders can de-escalate tensions and reframe disagreements into constructive problem solving (Goleman, 1995). These advantages are not theoretical; they change measurable outcomes such as employee engagement, turnover, and productivity. For teams facing rapid change or crisis, EI determines whether the leader navigates the situation with clarity or inflames anxiety (Goleman, 2005).

## b. Examples of EI contributing to effective leadership

A leader with strong EI listens before prescribing solutions. For example, they solicit candid feedback, acknowledge uncertainty, and show visible concern for people affected by difficult decisions. That combination—listening, transparent communication, and visible empathy—builds credibility. Emotionally intelligent leaders also model self-regulation: they slow responses under provocation, prefer facts and questions over blame, and make accountability concrete and humane. Over time these behaviors reduce rumor, lower defensiveness, and increase team alignment.

## Part 2: Case studies of emotionally intelligent leaders

### a. Leader 1: Satya Nadella (Microsoft)



When Satya Nadella became Microsoft's CEO he emphasized empathy as a strategic capability, reframing product development and culture toward learning and inclusion. Nadella publicly credits empathy for driving innovation: understanding customer problems and employees' perspectives led to product shifts and a renewed collaborative culture. He encouraged a growth mindset, removed internal silos, and invested in listening mechanisms that surfaced genuine user pain points—moves that analysts and business press have linked to improved organizational performance. Nadella's public interviews and company initiatives show how empathy can be operationalized on a scale: it informed hiring, product roadmaps, and how leaders set behavioral expectations (Ignatius, 2021).

**Case details.** Nadella introduced cultural rituals and language that rewarded curiosity and vulnerability instead of status-protecting behavior. He reinforced those norms through performance criteria and storytelling from the CEO office. Those changes aligned incentives across large teams and helped Microsoft shift from defensive product competitions to platform partnerships, illustrating how empathy can be a lever for strategic transformation (Ignatius, 2021).

## b. Leader 2: Jacinda Ardern (former Prime Minister of New Zealand)



Jacinda Ardern's response to the 2019 Christchurch Mosque shootings is a well-documented example of empathetic, decisive leadership. She combined visible grieving with quick policy action—announcing gun law changes within days—and she communicated in

plain, compassionate language that acknowledged victims and a grieving nation. Her public demeanor—listening, human presence at vigils, and candid emotional expression—helped unify a traumatized society and demonstrated how empathy and resolve can coexist. Subsequent public commentary and profiles highlight both the short-term solidarity her approach created and the long-term personal cost of leading in that register (Lester, 2019).

**Case details.** Ardern's style made empathy a norm of national leadership: she prioritized community healing, consulted survivors, and used policy levers quickly. The result was not just symbolic comfort but concrete legislative change, demonstrating how emotionally intelligent leadership can accelerate meaningful action while preserving communal dignity.

## Part 3: Role and impact of emotionally intelligent leadership

### a. How EI fosters a positive work environment

Emotionally intelligent leaders create psychological safety, which encourages people to speak up, share ideas, and report problems early. They model vulnerability, which lowers interpersonal risk and normalizes learning from failure. They also manage emotions at scale by setting norms for respectful disagreement and clear escalation paths. These practices reduce chronic stress and burnout because team members perceive fairness, predictable responses, and support when pressures rise. EI thus directly impacts engagement metrics and indirectly shapes innovation capacity by making experimentation less costly emotionally.

### b. Techniques and examples to foster a positive environment

1. **Active listening routines.** Formal check-ins where leaders summarize what they heard, and state follow-up actions reduce ambiguity and build trust.
2. **Narrative transparency.** Leaders who explain the “why” behind decisions reduce resentment and rumors. Nadella’s storytelling about cultural change and Ardern’s public narratives after crisis events illustrate this principle (Ignatius, 2021).
3. **Structured empathy training.** Workshops on perspective-taking, feedback practice, and stress management help scale EI across levels.
4. **Feedback loops tied to behavior.** Including EI-related behaviors in performance reviews (for example, collaboration and responsiveness) signals organizational priorities and aligns incentives.

## Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is not a soft add-on; it is an operational capability that improves decisions, accelerates constructive action in crises, and builds environments where people can do their best work. Satya Nadella and Jacinda Ardern show different contexts—corporate transformation and national crisis—where empathy and emotional competence produced clearer outcomes and stronger legitimacy. Organizations that train leaders in EI, institutionalize listening practices, and align incentives toward empathetic behaviors will be better positioned to sustain performance and well-being in uncertain times (Goleman, 2005).

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## References

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