

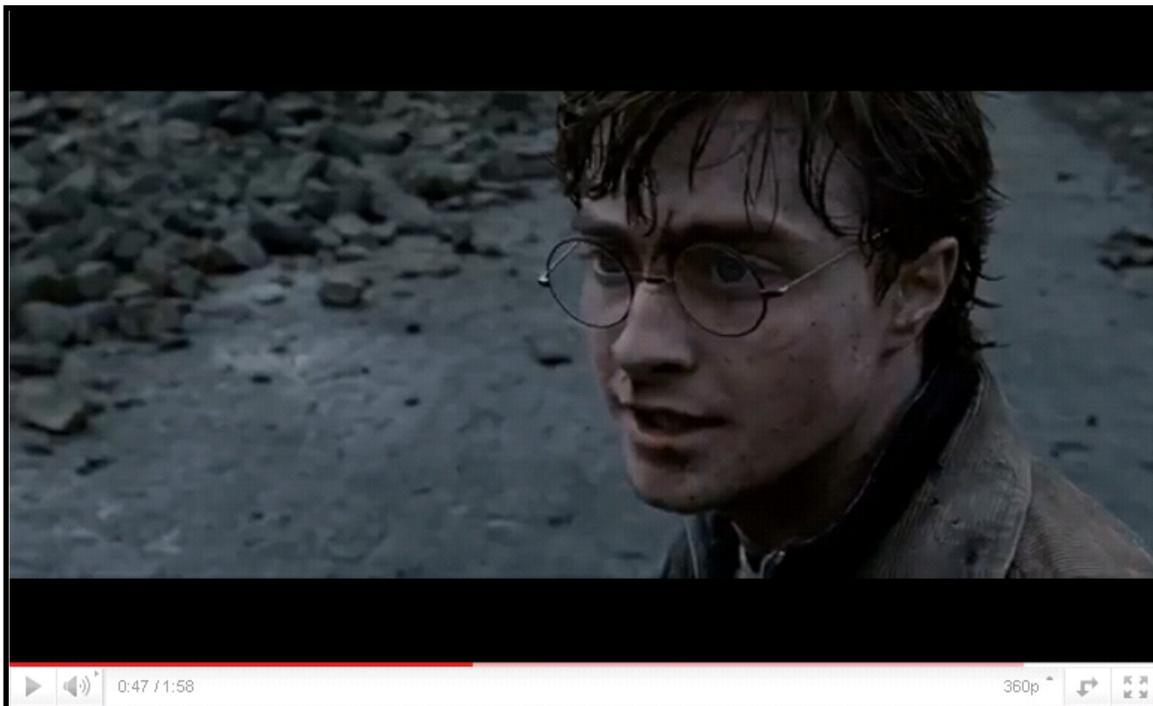
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## What to Do When Someone Blows Up at You: EQ in Harry Potter

By Dr. Jean Greaves

Do you know what to do when someone blows up at you? Sometimes you can see it coming and sometimes you can't. When emotions take over, rational alternatives disappear beneath the explosion of intense feelings. This is called an “emotional hijacking” and is the epitome of low emotional intelligence (EQ). In a moment like this, emotions hijack a person's behavior to a place they don't want to go. Next time you are on the receiving end of someone else's emotional hijacking, what can you do in response?

With the final Harry Potter movie releasing this week, why not use Harry Potter as an example? As the trailer for the new film demonstrates, the emotional tension has grown tremendously since the early Potter films.



**[Click here to watch the “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows” trailer.](#)**

There is plenty to learn about emotions by watching Harry's friends bear the brunt of his struggle with emotions. At the beginning of *The Order of the Phoenix*, after yet another summer in the

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stifling house of his Aunt and Uncle, Harry feels increasingly targeted and always alone. It's been a long, lonely summer for Harry, without news or help from his mentor, Dumbledore. When he arrives at a safe house to discover that his two best friends, Ron and Hermione, are there, he lets his emotions take over. Consider the following conversation from the book:

***“Maybe Dumbledore thinks I can’t be trusted,” said Harry, watching their expressions.***

***“Don’t be thick,” said Ron, looking highly disconcerted.***

***“Or that I can’t take care of myself –”***

***“Of course he doesn’t think that!” said Hermione anxiously.***

***“So how come I have to stay at the Dursley’s while you two get to join in everything that’s going on here?” said Harry, the words tumbling over one another in a rush, his voice growing louder with every word.***

Notice that Ron feels *highly disconcerted* by Harry’s suggestion and Hermione feels *anxious*. Harry’s friends feel the ripple effect of his emotions and realize that something major is upsetting him. Harry jumps to the conclusion that their respected schoolmaster has doubts about him and then loses control of the speed and tone of his words. Ron focuses on Harry with “*don’t be thick,*” while Hermione focuses away from Harry onto Dumbledore: “*Of course he doesn’t think that!*”

Those who’ve read the book or who are familiar with Harry’s character know what happens next: Harry becomes intensely bitter and shouts at his mates:

***“Every bitter and resentful thought that Harry had had in the past month was pouring out of him; his frustration and lack of news, the hurt that they had all been together without him.”***

***The Order of The Phoenix, page 65***

Once Harry’s feelings burst out, there is nothing to hold them back. A painful summer cumulates in an emotional explosion directed at his mates. Harry’s tirade (“*...I’ve handled more than you two ever managed and Dumbledore knows it...*”) continues for a page and a half, leaving his friends

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stunned. Ron stands motionless with his “mouth half-open” and Hermione is “on the verge of tears.” The person on the receiving end of such an explosion is rarely to blame for the outburst, even though they are often the trigger. In this case, Ron and Hermione are Harry’s only real friends and they don’t deserve to be the focus of Harry’s anger.

So, how can Ron and Hermione understand Harry’s feelings and manage their response when Harry hasn’t extended the same courtesy? Ron takes an important first step by speaking up and letting Harry know assertively that his worry isn’t true: “*Mum won’t let us near the meetings*”. This reassurance is only a start, and certainly not enough to move them out of this difficult conversation. Ron does avoid escalating the situation by responding to Harry rationally. He doesn’t get angry and yell back, but Ron’s use of reason isn’t enough to stop Harry from coming up with new accusations about how everyone’s been leaving him out. It’s ultimately Hermione who steps in and is able to stop Harry’s fury with empathy: “*You’re absolutely right, Harry – I’d be furious if it was me!*” Hermione validates Harry’s emotions by telling him she’d also be upset if placed in the same situation. She doesn’t comment on his yelling; she simply speaks to what Harry is trying to tell them: he is extremely upset.

### What to do when someone blows up at you

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1. Take control of your self-talk and tell yourself this isn’t about you, because it rarely is. (Self-Management Strategy #9)
2. Avoid talking about the facts and just listen, because the other person’s ability to be reasonable has been hijacked. (Social Awareness Strategy #11)
3. Acknowledge that the person’s feelings are valid by saying, “I’d be upset too if I were in your shoes.” (Relationship Management Strategy #10)
4. Give yourself and the other person time to regroup. (Self-Management Strategy #4)

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When reason isn't enough to quell an emotional outburst, honoring the other person's experience often is. No matter how irrational the other person may seem, his or her emotions are in control. and speaking to those emotions is the only way to connect with any success. Validating someone else's feelings doesn't mean that you have to agree with what he or she *is saying*, just how he or she *is feeling*. Once Hermione tells Harry his feelings are justified, Harry is able to stop, breathe, get it together and move on. He finally feels understood.

The next time you face the wrath of a Harry Potter, try Hermione's approach. Who knows? Emotional intelligence may just help you work a little magic of your own.

### Product Spotlight:

One important step you can take to increase your influence is to receive feedback from others on your emotional intelligence skills. The most accurate rating of your behavior comes from those who see you in action on a regular basis. To this end TalentSmart offers the *Emotional Intelligence Appraisal Multi-Rater (360°)* Edition. This online assessment provides detailed feedback on your emotional intelligence skills via 28 closed-ended questions and three open-ended questions, which are answered by up to 28 others and compared to your responses to the same questions.



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