



Figure 16.2 A representation of the four-branch model of emotional intelligence

Source: Mayer *et al.*, 2008

There are four levels to the model and within each of these levels there are different abilities. The lowest level in the model is the ability to perceive emotion. Without perceiving and recognizing different emotions, it would be impossible to interpret them and respond to both our own and other people's behaviour. This level concerns the perception of emotion not only in oneself and other people (facial expressions, voices, etc.) but also in music and art. Once the emotion has been perceived it can then be used (level 2). If someone is high in emotional intelligence then they will use emotions to assist cognitive processing. For example, emotions can be used in all sorts of ways to facilitate reasoning, communication and decision making. The third level, understanding emotions, is all about language and thought. It 'involves language and propositional thought that reflect the capacity to analyze emotions' (Brackett *et al.*, 2006, p.781). (For propositions, see Chapter 10, Section 3.3.2.) The highest level concerns the management of emotions and emotional responses. Importantly, this level stresses the role of emotion management in different social contexts. Someone who is high in emotional intelligence will modify their responses and subsequent behaviour to suit their social and interpersonal environment. What is appropriate in one context might not be in another.

This model indicates that if someone is able to perceive emotions accurately and understand and regulate them, then they are highly aware, not only of their own and others' emotions, but also of the consequences of behaviours and emotional responses in differing social circumstances. It may be this awareness that leads to lower levels of stress and higher levels of well-being: being able to 'read' and adapt to social situations and circumstances means that they won't have the frustration and stress that accompanies 'not knowing what's going on'.