



Emotional Intelligence

by Daniel Goleman
Bantam Books © 1997
352 pages

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Take-Aways

- IQ contributes only 20% to life success — the rest comes from emotional intelligence (EQ).
- The five areas of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, empathy and handling relationships.
- Human beings have the equivalent of two minds — one that thinks and one that feels.
- The two sections of the brain operate independently.
- Strong emotions interfere with clear thinking. Anxiety undermines the intellect.
- The goal is to find an intelligent balance of reason and emotion.
- Flow — a skillful person fully engaged in a task — is emotional intelligence at its best.
- Cultivating emotional intelligence is a cost-effective management imperative.
- Feedback is the currency of emotional intelligence in management.
- The success of a group is not determined by the IQ of the team members, but by their emotional intelligence.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
9	9	9	8

Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this Abstract you will learn: 1) The definition of emotional intelligence; 2) How the development of emotional intelligence contributes to your success in life, and 3) How managers can use emotional intelligence to improve group performance.

Recommendation

In this seminal work, Daniel Goleman introduced millions of readers to the concept of emotional intelligence — the amalgamation of psychological skills and traits that he claims accounts for 80% of success in life. Skills like self-awareness and self-motivation are instilled (or destroyed) in childhood, but Goleman claims that even adults can learn them and apply them to marriage, business and education. This book is at its best in making the general case for EI by providing a sound biological underpinning. Although later sections on real-world application cannot keep up in terms of insight, *getAbstract.com* strongly recommends this important book, which is relevant not only to business life, but to life itself.

Abstract

Emotional Intelligence

The past decade brought a surge of research into the biology of personality and emotion. Based on these studies, we can conclude that at least a portion of our intelligence and personality are determined by genetics. But this raises the question: What can we change? Why do some intelligent people founder in life, while less intelligent people prosper? The answer lies with a set of abilities called emotional intelligence (EI).

Evolution has given us emotions to help us cope with dangerous situations. Emotions evolved to drive us to take action in the face of danger. We retain the emotional system of our cave-man ancestors, who regularly faced life-and-death situations. In modern society, those emotions often overwhelm thought. In a real sense, we have two minds, one that thinks and one that feels. The rational mind lets us think, ponder and reflect. But the emotional mind is impulsive and powerful. Usually, the two work in harmony, but intense feelings sometimes allow the emotional mind to dominate the rational mind.

The brain's emotion centers evolved first. The limbic system surrounds the brainstem. This is the center of passionate emotion and also influences learning and memory. Later evolution produced the neocortex, where the brain thinks. Meanwhile, on the sides of the brain, there grew the amygdalas, a pair of structures that act as a storehouse of emotional memory. The amygdala gives life emotional meaning and passion. In a crisis, it reacts almost instantly, far more quickly than the neocortex. This emotional brain can act independently of the thinking brain. The amygdala gives extra weight to memories of emotional arousal, so we have vivid memories of pleasure or danger.

While the amygdala pushes us to action, the cortex works like a damper. It stifles or controls feelings. We experience emotional hijackings when the amygdala is triggered and the neocortex fails to control it. Strong emotions interfere with attention span and every aspect of clear thinking. Even so, our goal should never be to eliminate emotion. Instead, we must find an intelligent balance of reason and emotion.

“The notion that there is pure thought, rationality devoid of feeling, is a fiction.”

“In terms of biological design for the basic neural circuitry of emotion, what we are born with is what worked best for the last 5,000 human generations, not the last 500 generations — and certainly not for the last five.”

“The emotional mind is far quicker than the rational mind, springing into action without pausing even a moment to consider what it is doing.”

“People who take the pessimistic stance are extremely prone to emotional hijackings.”

“This sense of rightness or wrongness deep in the body is part of a steady background flow of feeling that continues throughout the day.”

Components of Emotional Intelligence

The IQ contributes only 20% to life success. The rest is the result of emotional intelligence, including factors like the ability to motivate oneself, persistence, impulse control, mood regulation, empathy and hope. IQ and emotional intelligence are not opposing competencies. They work separately. It is possible to be intellectually brilliant but emotionally inept. This causes many life problems. Yale psychologist Peter Salovey cites five major areas of emotional intelligence:

1. Self-Awareness — knowing one’s emotions.
2. Managing emotions — handling feelings so they are appropriate.
3. Motivation — marshalling emotions in service of a goal.
4. Recognizing emotions in others — empathy, which is the fundamental people skill.
5. Handling relationships — skill in managing emotions in others.

Self-Awareness

It would seem at a glance that our feelings are obvious, but they often are hidden from us. Emotional self-awareness is ongoing attention to one’s internal states, including the emotions. It is a neutral state that continues self-examination even during intense emotions. Psychologist John Mayer calls it being “aware of both our mood and our thoughts about that mood.” For practical purposes, self-awareness and the ability to change our moods are the same. Emotions can be and often are unconscious. They begin before a person is consciously aware of the feeling. Thus there are two levels of feeling, conscious and unconscious. Unconscious emotions can have a powerful effect on thoughts and reactions, even though we are not aware of them. When we become conscious of them, we can evaluate them. Thus self-awareness is the foundation for managing emotions and being able to shake off a bad mood.

Managing Emotions

A sense of self-mastery and the ability to withstand emotional storms has been praised as a virtue since the ancient Greeks. A life without passion would be boring; the goal is appropriate emotion. Our emotional life maintains a constant background hum, rarely becoming intense. Yet managing emotions is a full-time job. Much of what we do, from work to recreation, is an attempt to manage mood. The art of soothing ourselves is a basic life skill, some say one of the most essential psychic tools. The design of the brain means we have little control over when we will be swept by emotions or what those emotions will be, but we have some control over how long they last. We can change our behavior and even take medication.

One of the most difficult emotions to escape is rage, partly because anger is energizing, even exhilarating. It can last for hours and create a hair-trigger state, making people much more easily provoked. When the body is already in an edgy state and something triggers another emotional surge, the ensuing emotion is especially intense. One way to cool off from anger is to seek distractions. Going off alone helps, as does active exercise. Sadness and bereavement are often the emotions that alleviate rage, but full-blown depression is a danger. To break a depression cycle, challenge the thoughts feeding the depression and schedule pleasant distractions. These can include exercise, sensual treats, accomplishing some small task, helping others in need or prayer. One powerful tool is cognitive reframing, or looking at your situation in a more positive light.

“We have feelings about everything we do, think about, imagine, remember. Thought and feeling are inextricably woven together.”

“The question is, how can we bring intelligence to our emotions — and civility to our streets and caring to our communal life?”

“IQ and emotional intelligence are not opposing competencies, but rather separate ones.”

Self-Motivation

Positive motivation is a key to achievement. The greatest athletes, musicians and chess masters are distinguished by their ability to stick with arduous practice, year after year, beginning early in life. Emotions determine how we do in life by enhancing or limiting our capacity to use our innate abilities. One critical skill is the ability to restrain emotions and delay impulses, to defer gratification. This is the key to a host of efforts, from dieting to getting a degree.

Anxiety undermines intellect, while good moods enhance thinking. Those who are adept at harnessing their emotions can use their anxiety for motivation. The relationship between anxiety and performance has been described as an upside-down U. Too little anxiety means no motivation and poor performance. Too much anxiety impairs intellect. Peak performance comes in the middle. A mildly elated state called hypomania is ideal for writers and other creative people. Hope and optimism also play a powerful role in life. Hope means not giving in to negativism or depression in the face of setbacks. Optimism means having a strong expectation that things will turn out all right. Optimists attribute failure to something they can change, and therefore do not get depressed about it. Optimism is an emotionally intelligent attitude that boosts performance in the business world. Underlying both is self-efficacy, the belief that one has mastery over the events of one’s life and can meet challenges.

Psychologists have identified a peak-performance state called flow. This is emotional intelligence at its best. Flow comes when people become fully engaged in a task in which they are highly skilled. It comes in the zone between boredom and anxiety. Emotions are positive, channeled and directed at the task at hand. It is a state of self-forgetfulness. Full attention is focused on the task. It is a state of joy, even rapture. The brain actually becomes calmer in flow; the most challenging tasks are finished using minimal energy. Any person or child can learn flow by repeatedly performing tasks that they love.

Empathy

The more self-aware we are, the more skilled we become at reading the feelings of others. Rapport, the root of caring, arises from the capacity for empathy. Those who can read others’ feelings are better adjusted, more popular, outgoing and sensitive. Empathy begins in infancy, with attunement, the non-verbal physical mirroring between child and parent. Attunement reassures an infant and makes it feel emotionally connected. This requires enough calm to be able to read subtle, non-verbal signals from the other person.

Handling Relationships

Expressing our feelings is a key social competence. Emotions are contagious. We send emotional signals in every encounter and unconsciously imitate the emotions we see in others. These signals affect others. As people interact, they often mirror each other’s body language. The more they show this synchrony, the more they share moods. This coordination of moods is the adult version of infant-parent attunement, and is a key determinant of interpersonal effectiveness. The better we are at sensing the emotions of others and controlling the signals we send, the more we can control the effect we have on others. This is a fundamental part of emotional intelligence.

Applied EI: Management

The arrogance of some bosses and the bad morale that they create diminish productivity and drive employees away. As such, the application of emotional intelligence becomes a

“Being able to enter ‘flow’ is emotional intelligence at its best.”

“We send emotional signals in every encounter, and those signals affect those we are with.”

cost-effective method of organizational management. The basic currency of managerial emotional intelligence is feedback — managers must learn not only to provide it, but also to accept it intelligently. Be careful not to confuse feedback with criticism as personal attack. An artful critique should be delivered face-to-face with empathy, including specific praise as well as criticism and a focus on solutions. Those on the receiving end of criticism should learn to hear it as valuable information. In an economy dominated by knowledge workers, the concept of the group emotional quotient (EQ) is critical. The ability to work in harmony and take advantage of members’ talents provides the basis for successful work groups.

Applied EI: Marriage and in Medicine

Emotional intelligence can help counteract the social and personal tensions that pull marriages apart. Men and women learn different emotional skills as children. A key warning sign of trouble in a marriage is harsh criticism. It is important to criticize an action without attacking the person. Personal attacks leave people feeling ashamed and defensive and can trigger a fight-or-flight response.

The emotional brain is closely tied to the immune system. Stress makes people more susceptible to infectious diseases. Hostility has long been associated with heart disease, but any intense negative emotions can have the same effect. Relaxation exercises are a good countermeasure. So is self-confession. Talking about problems even enhances immune function. Doctors should learn that managing feelings is a form of disease prevention and that patients do better when their psychological needs are attended to.

Emotional Literacy

Studies of children show a decline in emotional condition across the industrialized world. This trend is reflected by widespread withdrawal, anxiety and depression, attention disorders and delinquent behavior. Children and adults should be trained in the five key emotional intelligence skills. The old-fashioned word for these skills is character. Putting aside self-centered focus and impulses opens the way to empathy, understanding and an acceptance of different perspectives.

About The Author

Daniel Goleman, Ph.D., covers the behavioral sciences for the *New York Times*. He has taught at Harvard and was formerly editor of *Psychology Today*. Previous books include *Vital Lies*, *Simple Truths*, and *The Meditative Mind*. He is co-author of *The Creative Spirit*.

Buzz-Words

Attention disorder / Cognitive reframing / Emotional Intelligence / Emotional literacy / Emotional Quotient / Flow / Hypomania / Neocortex