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Emotional intelligence: a better predictor of future success

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ABSTRACT

Journalistic accounts of emotional intelligence in books and magazines of the mid-1990s explained the concept to an interested public -but not without introducing some crucial inaccuracies. Moreover, much has been learned about emotional intelligence since those early writings. The systematic study of emotional intelligence is often dated to the early 1990s, when scientific articles suggested that there existed an unrecognized but important human mental ability to reason about emotions and to use emotions to enhance thought.

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Introduction

"Emotional Intelligence is a master aptitude, a capacity that profoundly affects all other abilities, either facilitating or interfering with them."--Daniel Goleman

Emotional intelligence is the innate potential to feel, use, communicate, recognize, remember, describe, identify, learn from, manage, understand and explain emotions. - S.Hein.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge from your emotions and the emotions of others. You can use the information about what you're feeling to help you make effective decisions about what to say or do (or not say or do) next. - Byron Stock

The term encompasses the following characteristics and abilities:

Here are some indications inspired by a list quoted by Goleman from a book called *Self Science: The Subject is Me* (2nd edition) by Karen Stone McCown et al. [San Mateo, Six Seconds, 1998]

Self-awareness

One of the basic emotional skills involves being able to recognize feelings and put a name on them. It is also important to be aware of the relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions. What thought sparked off that feeling? What feeling was behind that act? (knowing your emotions, recognizing feelings as they occur, and discriminating between them)

Managing-emotions

It is important to realize what is behind feelings. Beliefs have a fundamental effect on the ability to act and on how things are done. Many people continually give themselves negative messages. Hope can be a useful asset. In addition, finding ways to deal with anger, fear, anxiety and sadness is essential: learning how to soothe one when upset, for example. Understanding what happens when emotions get the upper hand and how to gain time to judge if what is about to be said or done in the heat of the moment is really the best thing to do. Being able to channel emotions to a positive end is a key aptitude.

Empathy

Getting the measure of a situation and being able to act appropriately requires understanding the feelings of the others involved and being able to take their perspective. It is important to be able to listen to them without being carried away by personal emotions. There's a need to be able to distinguish between what others do or say and personal reactions and judgments.

Communicating

Developing quality relationships has a very positive effect on all involved. What feelings are being communicated to others? Enthusiasm and optimism are contagious as are pessimism and negativity. Being able to express personal concerns without anger or passivity is a key asset.

Co-operation

Knowing how and when to take the lead and when to follow is essential for effective co-operation. Effective leadership is not built on domination but the art of helping people work together on common goals. Recognizing the value of the contribution of others and encouraging their participation can often do more good than giving orders or complaining. At the same time, there is a need to take responsibilities and recognize the consequences of decisions and acts and follow through on commitments.

Resolving-conflicts

In resolving conflicts there is a need to understand the mechanisms at work. People in conflict are generally locked into a self-perpetuating emotional spiral in which the declared subject of conflict is rarely the key issue. Much of the resolution of conflicts calls on using the other emotional skills mentioned here.

Why Do We Need Emotional Intelligence?

According to a report from the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, the most critical element for a student's success in school is an understanding of how to learn. (*Emotional Intelligence*, p. 193.)

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The key ingredients for this understanding are:

- Confidence
- Curiosity
- Intentionality
- Self-control
- Relatedness
- Capacity to communicate
- Ability to cooperate

These traits are all aspects of Emotional Intelligence. Basically, a student who learns to learn is much more apt to succeed. Emotional Intelligence has proven a better predictor of future success than traditional methods like the GPA, IQ and standardized test scores.

Hence, the great interest in Emotional Intelligence on the part of corporations, universities and schools nationwide. The idea of Emotional Intelligence has inspired research and curriculum development throughout these facilities. Researchers have concluded that people who manage their own feelings well and deal effectively with others are more likely to live content lives. Plus, happy people are more apt to retain information and do so more effectively than dissatisfied people.

Building one's Emotional Intelligence has a lifelong impact. Many parents and educators, alarmed by increasing levels of conflict in young schoolchildren—from low self-esteem to early drug and alcohol use to depression, are rushing to teach students the skills necessary for Emotional Intelligence. And in corporations, the inclusion of Emotional Intelligence in training programs has helped employees cooperate better and motivate more, thereby increasing productivity and profits.

Emotional intelligence Vs Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be used to make meaningful and interesting predictions to a person's life outcomes. Daniel Goleman's (1995) popularization began with some carefully-couched suggestions about the power of EI and its potential for prediction in life. Those claims also reflected some considerable optimism.

No one can yet say exactly how much of the variability from person to person in life's course it accounts for. But what data exist suggest it can be as powerful, and at times more powerful, than IQ. For decades, a lot of emphasis has been put on certain aspects of intelligence such as logical reasoning, math skills, spatial skills, understanding analogies, verbal skills etc. Researchers were puzzled by the fact that while IQ could predict to a significant degree academic performance and, to some degree, professional and personal success, there was something missing in the equation. Some of those with fabulous IQ scores were doing poorly in life; one could say that they were wasting their potential by thinking, behaving and communicating in a way that hindered their chances to succeed.

One of the major missing parts in the success equation is emotional intelligence, a concept made popular by the groundbreaking book by Daniel Goleman, which is based on years of research by numerous scientists such as Peter Salovey, John Meyer, Howard Gardner, Robert Sternberg and Jack Block, just to name a few. For various reasons and thanks to a wide range of abilities, people with high emotional intelligence tend to be more successful in life than those with lower EI even if their classical IQ is average.

To understand and evaluate the influence of emotional intelligence, it helps to know something about how the parts of personality influence a person's life in general. Most parts of

personality exert a slow but consistent influence on a person's social interactions and environment more generally.

For example, a given personality trait, such as extraversion, typically accounts for between 9% and 16% of the variance of a single act, such as deciding to go to a party. The idea is that, because many personality qualities are consistent over time, these traits exert influence over the individual's actions and behaviors for very long periods of time, and that over those periods of time, they influence the person's social development and attainments.

Emotional Intelligence (measured as an ability) is Distinct from Other Commonly-Measured Variables Related to Personality and Intelligence.

- Emotional intelligence has rather low test-to-test correlations with scales of other types of intelligence (e.g., $r = .00$ to $.35$).
- Emotional intelligence has rather low test-to-test correlations with scales of social and emotional traits (e.g., $r = .00$ to $.35$) (including self-judged/mixed model scales of emotional intelligence).

People with higher emotional intelligence are likely to have better social support, and fewer problematic interactions with others.

- People higher in emotional intelligence are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol.

- People higher in emotional intelligence are more satisfied with their social networks and appear to receive more social support.

People higher in emotional intelligence seemed to more successfully avoid interpersonal arguments and fights. No one can yet say exactly how much of the variability from person to person in life's course it accounts for. But what data exist suggest it can be as powerful, and at times more powerful, than IQ. The problem is not with emotions as such, but with the appropriateness of emotion and its expression. The task is not so much to suppress emotions - every feeling has its value and significance - but to strike a balance between rational thought and emotions. One of the keys to sound decision-making is a greater awareness of our emotions and those of others. Emotions are not just present when we fly off the handle or jump for joy, but are omnipresent in the most subtle ways in all our acts. How often are we in the way of our emotions without even realizing it?

The Four Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence

The four branch model of emotional intelligence describes four areas of capacities or skills that collectively describe many of areas of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). More specifically, this model defines emotional intelligence as involving the abilities to:

- accurately perceive emotions in oneself and others
- use emotions to facilitate thinking
- understand emotional meanings, and
- manage emotions

1. Perceiving emotion. The initial, most basic, area has to do with the nonverbal reception and expression of emotion. Evolutionary biologists and psychologists have pointed out that emotional expression evolved in animal species as a form of crucial social communication. Facial expressions such as happiness, sadness, anger, and fear, were universally recognizable in human beings. Emotions researchers, evolutionary biologists, specialists in nonverbal behavior, and others, have made tremendous inroads into understanding how human beings recognize and express emotions. The capacity to accurately perceive emotions in the face or voice of others

provides a crucial starting point for more advanced understanding of emotions.

2. Using emotions to facilitate thought. The second area appeared every bit as basic as the first. This was the capacity of the emotions to enter into and guide the cognitive system and promote thinking. For example, cognitive scientists pointed out that emotions prioritize thinking. In other words: something we respond to emotionally, is something that grabs our attention. Having a good system of emotional input, therefore, should help direct thinking toward matters that are truly important. As a second example, a number of researchers have suggested that emotions are important for certain kinds of creativity to emerge. For example, both mood swings, and positive moods, have been implicated in the capacity to carry out creative thought.

3. Understanding emotions. Emotions convey information: Happiness usually indicates a desire to join with other people; anger indicates a desire to attack or harm others; fear indicates a desire to escape, and so forth. Each emotion conveys its own pattern of possible messages, and actions associated with those messages. A message of anger, for example, may mean that the individual feels treated unfairly. The anger, in turn, might be associated with specific sets of possible actions: peacemaking, attacking, retribution and revenge-seeking, or withdrawal to seek calmness. Understanding emotional messages and the actions associated with them is one important aspect of this area of skill. Once a person can identify such messages and potential actions, the capacity to reason with and about those emotional messages and actions becomes of importance as well. Fully understanding emotions, in other words, involves the comprehension of the meaning of emotions, coupled with the capacity to reason about those meanings. It is central to this group of emotionally intelligent skills.

4. Managing emotions. Finally, emotions often can be managed. A person needs to understand emotions convey information. To the extent that it is under voluntary control, a person may want to remain open to emotional signals so long as they are not too painful, and block out those that are overwhelming. In between, within the person's emotional comfort zone, it becomes possible to regulate and manage one's own and others' emotions so as to promote one's own and others' personal and social goals. The means and methods for emotional self-regulation has become a topic of increasing research in this decade.

Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Children

We need to place as much importance on teaching our children the essential skills of Emotional Intelligence as we do on more traditional measures like IQ and GPA. Research in brain-based learning suggests that emotional health is fundamental to effective learning. According to a report from the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, the most critical element for a student's success in school is an understanding of how to learn. The key ingredients for this understanding are: Confidence, Curiosity, Intentionality, Self-control, Relatedness, Capacity to communicate, Ability to cooperate.

These traits are all aspects of Emotional Intelligence. Basically, a student who learns to learn is much more apt to succeed. Emotional Intelligence has proven a better predictor of future success than traditional methods like the GPA, IQ, and standardized test scores. Hence, the great interest in Emotional Intelligence on the part of corporations, universities, and schools nationwide. The idea of Emotional Intelligence has inspired

research and curriculum development throughout these facilities. Researchers have concluded that people who manage their own feelings well and deal effectively with others are more likely to live content lives. Plus, happy people are more apt to retain information and do so more effectively than dissatisfied people. Building one's Emotional Intelligence has a lifelong impact. Many parents and educators, alarmed by increasing levels of conflict in young schoolchildren--from low self-esteem to early drug and alcohol use to depression, are rushing to teach students the skills necessary for Emotional Intelligence. And in corporations, the inclusion of Emotional Intelligence in training programs has helped employees cooperate better and motivate more, thereby increasing productivity and profits.

Are Children with High Emotional Intelligence More Successful?

Research on the predictive significance of E.I. over I.Q. was spurred by Goleman's initial publication on the topic which claimed that emotional intelligence could be "as powerful, and at times more powerful, than I.Q." (Goleman, 1995, p.34). Much of this claim was based on past research revealing that the predictive nature of I.Q. on job performance was not promising, with I.Q. accounting from 10-25% of the variance in job performance (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Sternburg, 1996). The results of longitudinal studies further implicated emotional intelligence as being important. One study involving 450 boys reported that I.Q. had little relation to workplace and personal success; rather, more important in determining their success was their ability to handle frustration, control emotions, and get along with others (Snarey & Vaillant, 1985). Although this study did not attend to emotional intelligence directly, the elements which it addressed (the ability to regulate one's emotions and understand the emotions of others) are some of the central tenants of the emotional intelligence construct.

While research exists supporting the contention that emotional intelligence does contribute to individual cognitive-based performance over and above the level attributed to general intelligence (Lam & Kirby, 2002), current theories tend to be more judicious regarding the incremental benefits of E.Q. over I.Q. Both Goleman (1998) and Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (1998) emphasize that emotional intelligence by itself is probably not a strong predictor of job performance. Instead, it provides a foundation for emotional competencies which are strong predictors of job performance.

In later work, Goleman (2001) attempts to theoretically clarify the relationship between I.Q. and E.Q., and their respective applicability to job performance. He describes I.Q. as playing a sorting function, determining the types of jobs individuals are capable of holding. He theorizes that I.Q. is a strong predictor of what jobs individuals can enter as well as a strong predictor of success among the general population as a whole. For example, in order to become a medical doctor, an individual requires an above average I.Q. Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, is described by Goleman as a stronger predictor of who will excel in a particular job when levels of I.Q. are relatively equal. When the individuals are being compared to a narrow pool of people in a particular job in a certain organization, specifically in the higher levels, the predictive power of I.Q. for outstanding performance among them weakens greatly. In this circumstance, E.Q. would be the stronger predictor of individuals who outperform others. Thus, the doctors in a particular clinic would all have similarly above average I.Q.'s. Goleman would hypothesize that what would

distinguish the most successful doctors from the others would be their levels of emotional intelligence.

Emotional literacy- A practical application in school system

The pressures on schools these days often generate high levels of anxiety in staff and students. Emotional literacy is a strategy for transforming this anxiety, and other difficult emotions, into productive energy.

The school's new commitment 'emotional competence' is creating opportunities for schools to do work on creating an emotionally literate environment for staff and students. The challenge is to find a way to take advantage of these openings. A school should

- Discover how teachers are using emotional literacy to create positive learning communities where there is less stress and more energy, less conflict and more enjoyment, less mediocrity and more achievement;
- Work out ways of integrating emotional literacy into other school strategies – national curriculum, citizenship training, NSS activities inclusion – into an overall approach to creating a whole-school environment that enables everyone to realize more of their potential.

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