

Self-directed learning: managing yourself and your working relationships

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The term *Emotional Intelligence* was popularised in the 1990's by Daniel Goleman, but the idea goes back for centuries. Indeed Goleman begins his book *Emotional Intelligence* with a quote from Aristotle which captures the essence of EI:

Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not easy.

As an aside, I'd like to disagree with Aristotle's view that everyone finds it easy to become angry. I think some people find it very, very difficult to become – or perhaps allow themselves to become – angry.

One of the things which the term *Emotional Intelligence* itself did was to legitimise – to some extent anyway - discussion of feelings in organisations where the main focus was on task and where discussions were assumed to be based on logic and rational argument.

Awareness and responsibility

In the chapter on coaching later in the book we shall look at an idea that lies at the heart of coaching effectively. In his book *Coaching for Performance* John Whitmore offers this equation to summarise what you are seeking to achieve when coaching:

Awareness + Responsibility = Performance

In other words, to coach effectively you are trying to do two things – to help the other person to become more aware of what they need to do and how to do it, and to encourage them to take responsibility for acting. The fundamental premise is that someone who is aware of what to do and who takes responsibility will perform well - whatever performance means in their context. It might be delivering excellent customer service, leading a sales team, playing tennis, etc, etc.

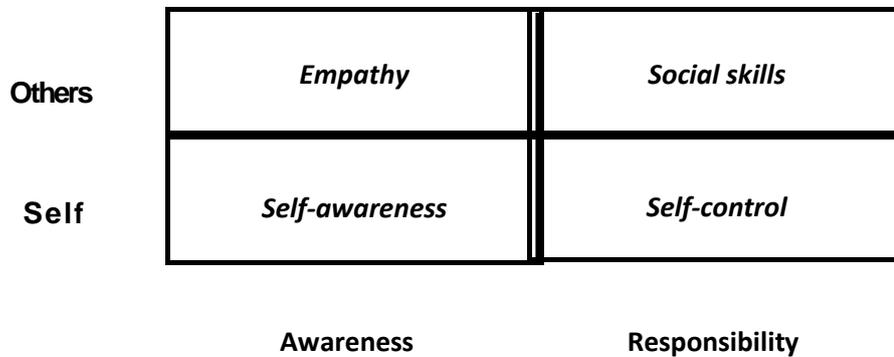
You might view the various ideas introduced in this and later chapters as seeking to raise your awareness and then inviting you to consider how you will respond in the light of your changed awareness. Awareness and responsibility are key themes that will reappear throughout the book.

You might recast the word *responsibility* as *response-ability*. Once you've become more aware, the next challenge is your ability to respond effectively.

A framework for Emotional Intelligence

I think that the simple framework shown in Figure 1.1 is a very good summary of the essence of Emotional Intelligence.

Figure 1.1 A framework for Emotional Intelligence



The framework begins with Awareness and moves on to Responsibility. The starting point – as with so many things – is self-awareness. Simply noticing what emotions you are feeling can be very useful.

One thing which helps here is to have a vocabulary to name emotions. In his book *The Skilled Helper* Gerard Egan writes, “The words *sad*, *mad*, *bad*, and *glad* refer to four of the main families of emotion, whereas *content*, *quite happy*, and *overjoyed* refer to different intensities within the *glad* family.” I sometimes imagine a palette of emotions, somewhat similar to the range of colours you are offered when creating a Word or Powerpoint document. For example, maybe the red colours are like different degrees of anger, and, just as there are shades of pink and of maroon, so too there are anger-type emotions ranging from irritated to incandescent.

One way of naming emotions is simply to find one word which completes the sentence *I feel* Often when someone says *I feel* what follows is a thought, not a feeling. If you can insert the word *that* after *I feel* without altering the meaning, then almost certainly you’re dealing with a thought not a feeling. Compare, for example, *I feel we may miss the train* (a thought) with *I feel anxious* (a feeling).

Here is an example from an Ian McEwan novel, *The Innocent*, which describes vividly a character developing self awareness as he recognises and names the emotions he is feeling.

“Leonard had never in his life spoken about himself and his feelings in such a way. Nor had he even thought in this manner. Quite simply, he had never acknowledged in himself a serious emotion. He had never gone much further than saying he quite liked last night’s film, or hated the taste of lukewarm milk. In fact, until now, it was as though he had never really had any serious feelings. Only now, as he came to name them – shame, desperation, love – could he really claim them for his own and experience them. His love for the woman standing by his door was brought into relief by the word, and sharpened the shame he felt for assaulting her. As he gave it a name, the unhappiness of the past three weeks was clarified. He was enlarged, unburdened. Now that he could name the fog he had been moving through, he was at last visible to himself.”

The other aspect of Awareness is awareness of how the other person is feeling, which is often described as empathy. Once again the ability to put a name to an emotion is useful. Even more important is the ability to listen attentively and to observe carefully in order to recognise emotions in others. People don't always – or even usually – tell you how they feel, but may communicate this non-verbally through their tone of voice, the colour of their cheeks, their gestures or their movements. When you listen to understand another person, you need to look out for what's not being said as well as the words that are spoken. Picking up on emotions that are revealed non-verbally is inevitably more provisional or tentative than picking up on the words that they say.

With an awareness of how you are feeling or how the other person is feeling, you still need to manage how you will respond. Someone who is emotionally intelligent is able to control what they do with their emotions. For example, noticing that you are becoming angry informs what you say or do next. In some contexts it may be wise not to show or reveal that you are feeling angry. In other contexts this might be a very powerful thing to do. And, as Aristotle wrote, to be angry with the right person, to the right degree isn't easy.

Similarly, as you become aware of how the other person is feeling, you still need to choose how to respond. As an illustration, at an early stage in my career in management development I was at times able to recognise when the participants in a workshop were becoming bored. But I didn't always know what to do with this awareness. When I detect that the participants are getting bored these days, I generally get the group to do something active and different from what they were doing. An emotionally intelligent person has a range of social skills that enable them to respond appropriately and successfully to a wide range of people and situations.

Daniel Goleman's framework for Emotional Intelligence

My impression is that in his later writings Daniel Goleman includes more or less everything other than technical skills under the umbrella of Emotional Intelligence, which for me dilutes the concept too much. However, in his article *What Makes a Leader?* published in the Harvard Business Review in 1998 he offers this framework. It is similar to the framework described earlier with the explicit addition of self-motivation.

Self-awareness: the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions and drives, as well as their effect on others.

Self-regulation: the ability to control or regulate disruptive impulses and moods, and the propensity to suspend judgement and think before acting.

Motivation: a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status, and a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence.

Empathy: the ability to understand the emotional make up of other people, and skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions.

Social skill: proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, and an ability to find common ground and build rapport.

The benefits of Emotional Intelligence

In the course of my career working in a number of large industrial companies and at the University of Warwick, I have observed emotionally intelligent managers who were able to motivate others and deliver business results. I have also seen other managers who rose to senior levels in their organisation, achieved good performance, and were emotionally very unintelligent. I can think of two types of manager who were successful in their careers without being emotionally intelligent. One type is the hard-driving manager who is concerned only about business results and isn't bothered about upsetting, bullying or at times terrorising others. The second type is the manager who is very skilful at managing upwards and is able to impress those above them in the organisation but who is disliked or even loathed by those who work under them. I guess this latter type does have some degree of emotional intelligence which they deploy when interacting with senior people.

In the chapter on managing people we shall argue that you are more likely to succeed if you can combine concern for task achievement with concern for the wellbeing and success of your people. In other words, an emotionally intelligent leader can achieve far more through their team than one who can only work at a task level. Emotionally intelligent managers are able to empathise, communicate, build relationships and establish consensus. They understand what makes people tick and can use this constructively to manage performance and to develop capability. Daniel Goleman estimates that for leadership positions emotional intelligence competencies account for up to 85% of what sets outstanding managers apart from the average. A survey of managers in a UK supermarket chain found that those with high EI experienced less stress, enjoyed better health, performed better and reported a better work/life balance. There are wide reaching benefits - both for yourself and for those you manage - in being more emotionally intelligent.

Measuring Emotional Intelligence

While I think that the idea of emotional intelligence is very useful – and indeed I have chosen this as the overture to this book – I am sceptical about attempts to measure emotional intelligence. There are a number of self-report and 360 degree feedback instruments available. I am not familiar with all of them, but I've not been impressed by the ones I have looked at.

There are some fundamental problems in measuring EI. First, if I am emotionally unintelligent and lack self-awareness, then my self-assessment of my emotional intelligence will be inaccurate and hence any measurement based on my responses to a questionnaire will be wrong. Second, while other people might usefully assess how I impact on them, they are to a greater or lesser extent forced to guess when answering questions about my level of self-awareness.

In an article *Emotional: intelligence: Extravagant hype or a damaging folly?* Andrew Munro, who is an occupational psychologist, suggests that people who self-report high levels of EI probably have low levels of emotional maturity. He also argues that EI measurements offer little additional information beyond existing measures of cognitive ability and personality.

Issues of poor self-perception and of faking answers bedevil all self-report questionnaires. In the next chapter we shall look at the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory, a self-report personality assessment that I think is far more robust and useful than any Emotional Intelligence instruments that I have seen.

Self-awareness

At the heart of both emotional intelligence and of managing others effectively lies self-awareness. Understanding yourself is fundamental. In *the Emotional Intelligence Pocketbook* Margaret Chapman writes:

Self-awareness is the ability to see ourselves with our own eyes, to be aware of our...

- Goals, immediate and long term
- Beliefs, about ourselves and others
- Values, those things we hold dear
- Drivers, that affect how we work
- Rules, that we live by, the *shoulds*, *musts* and *oughts*
- Self-talk, the inner voice that tells us we *can* or *cannot* do something

... and the ways in which these impact on what we do and contribute to our *map of the world*.

To develop your emotional intelligence and to bring into focus what underpins your approach to managing people, you will find it very useful to spend some time – on your own or with someone you trust – clarifying and articulating your goals, beliefs, values, drivers, rules and self-talk.

Developing your Emotional Intelligence

Whereas conventional intelligence – as measured by IQ – is more or less given, you can improve your emotional intelligence as you go through life. Your life experiences – and how you handle them – will be a far richer source of emotional development than any book or course.

In my book *Growing People: learning and developing from day to day experience* I described a number of ways in which you might use your day to day experiences to develop your emotional intelligence.

- Learn to recognise and put a name to your feelings. Use three word sentences that begin “I feel” - for instance I feel happy or I feel angry
- Practise empathy – develop your active listening skills and try to pick up on the emotions as well as the facts. Explore the things that are important but are not being said.
- The term *self-talk* refers to the things that we say to ourselves – inside our head, as it were. Think about the messages you are saying to yourself. Consider how your self-talk might be shaping your behaviour. What would be more useful self-talk?
- Keep a journal that records significant events where you felt strongly about something or someone. Make a note of how you felt, what you thought, what you said or did (or what you didn't say or do), and what the consequences were. From time to time look back at your journal and see if there are any patterns.
- Note what happens next time you are in a conflict situation. Do you passively withdraw or give up? Do you aggressively seek to win at the expense of the other party? Or do you assertively look for how both of you can gain some benefit – a win-win outcome?
- Spend some time clarifying what really matters to you in your life.

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- Observe those people who create positive, nourishing relationships with other people. What can you learn from how they treat people?
 - Observe those people who leave you feeling drained or upset or somehow less positive. What do they do that triggers this? How do you collude with them?
 - Who are the key people that you interact with at work and outside work? What really matters to each of these people? What can you do to make your relationships with each of them more satisfying and productive?