

Emotional Mastery

Seek to excel in four dimensions.



by Daniel Goleman

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE has immense practical applications in leadership roles because beyond being smart intellectually (IQ), leaders need to excel in four domains of EQ:

1. Self-awareness. Emotional self-awareness—the ability to be aware of and understand your feelings—is critical for empathizing with the emotions of others (social awareness). Tuning in to *how you are feeling* plays a central role in *how you sense what someone else is feeling*. To make a good decision, you need to have *feelings about your thoughts*—connect your thoughts with emotional pros and cons to sense priorities and principles. And to more fully access your life experience on the matter, you need to access inputs from the basal ganglia: *when I did that, that worked well; when I said this, it bombed*. Your accumulated wisdom is stored in this primitive circuitry. The basal ganglia has connection to the verbal areas, and rich connections to the gastrointestinal tract—the gut. So in making the decision, *a gut sense of it being right or wrong is vital, too*. If the data doesn't fit what you're feeling, you should think twice about it. The best decision-makers are voracious consumers of any information that might bear on their decision. Then they all test their rational decision against their gut feeling. *If a deal doesn't feel right, they might not go ahead, even if it looks good on paper*. Answers often come to you via this gut sense. Then you put them into words.

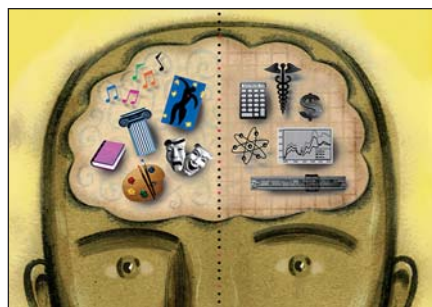
2. Self-management. Self-awareness (awareness of your internal states) and self-management (management of those states) are the basis for self-mastery and high performance. Competencies like managing emotions, focused drive to achieve goals, adaptability, and initiative are based on self-management.

Self-regulation of *emotion* and *impulse* relies greatly on interaction between the prefrontal cortex—the brain's executive center—and the emotional centers in the amygdala. The prefrontal cortex, in a sense, is the brain's *good boss*, guiding you when you are at your best. The dorsolateral zone of the prefrontal area

is the seat of cognitive control, regulating attention, decision-making, voluntary action, reasoning, and flexibility in response. The amygdala is a trigger point for emotional distress, anger, impulse, and fear. When this circuitry takes over, it acts as the *bad boss*, leading you to take actions you might regret later.

For the most part, you can't dictate *what emotions you will feel, when you'll feel them, nor how strongly you'll feel them*. Your choice comes once you feel a certain way. How do you express it? If your prefrontal cortex has its inhibitory circuits going full blast, you'll have a decision point that will make you more artful in guiding how you respond, and how you drive other people's emotions, for better or worse, in that situation.

The amygdala is the brain's radar for threat. If it detects a threat, in an instant it can take over the rest of the



brain—an amygdala hijack. You can't focus on what your job demands—you can only think about what's troubling you, what's relevant to the threat. You rely on habitual behaviors. You can't learn, innovate, or be flexible. You get the classic *fight-flight-or-freeze* response.

The problem is that the amygdala often makes mistakes. While it gets its data on what you see and hear in a single neuron from the eye and ear, it only receives a small fraction of the signals those senses receive. Most go to other parts of the brain that take longer to analyze the inputs—and get a more accurate reading. The amygdala gets a sloppy picture and reacts instantly. So you overreact in ways you later regret.

Here are the five top amygdala triggers in the workplace: 1) *condescension and lack of respect*; 2) *being treated unfairly*; 3) *being unappreciated*; 4) *feeling that you are not being listened to or heard*; and 5) *being held to unrealistic deadlines*.

How can you minimize hijacks? First,

notice early when you experience one. Monitor what's going on in your mind. Reason with yourself; challenge what you tell yourself: "He isn't always unkind—maybe I should give him a chance." Or try some empathy, or use meditation or relaxation to calm down.

One value of self-mastery is being in the right brain state for the task at hand. Every internal state has its advantages and downsides. The pluses of being in a positive mood are that you are more creative, better at problem solving, and more efficient in decision making. The negatives include a tendency to be less discriminating, make decisions *too quickly*, or pay too little attention to detail.

3. Social awareness. Social mastery requires social awareness and relationship management. *Mindsight*, the term coined by Daniel Siegel, refers to the mind's ability to see itself. Our awareness of another person's inner reality and of our own, are both acts of empathy.

The social brain includes circuitry designed to attune to and interact with another person's brain. The brain is peppered with mirror neurons and they activate in us exactly what we see in the other person: Their emotions and movements, even intentions. In one study, people were given performance feedback. If given negative feedback in a positive tone, they felt good about it; if they were given positive feedback in a judgmental tone, they felt negative. So the emotional subtext is more powerful in many ways than the ostensible interaction. We are constantly impacting the brain states in other people.

4. Relationship management. You are responsible for *how you shape the feelings of those you interact with*—for better or for worse. In this sense, relationship skills have to do with managing brain states in other people. For peers, the sender tends to be the most emotionally expressive person. But when there are power differences, the most powerful person is the emotional sender, setting the emotional state for the team.

People pay most attention to what the leader, the most powerful person in that group, says or does. If the leader is in a positive mood, that spreads an *upbeat mood* to others and that *collective positivity enhances group performance*. A leader's negative mood hurts group performance. Such emotional contagion is found in groups making decisions and seeking creative solutions. This contagion happens because of the *mirror neuron system circuitry in our social brain*. Person-to-person emotional contagion operates automatically, instantly, unconsciously.

Social rapport has three elements:

1) *paying full attention* (both people need to tune fully to the other); 2) *being in synch non-verbally* (moves are almost choreographed, like a dance—such *synchro* is orchestrated by neurons or oscillators, that regulate how our body moves in relationship to another body); and 3) *feeling positive* (like a micro-flow, an interpersonal high—moments of interpersonal chemistry, or *simpatico*, are when things happen at their best).

The core skill in social awareness is empathy—sensing what others are thinking and feeling, without them telling you in words. You continually send others signals about your feelings through your tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, and other nonverbal channels. People vary greatly in how well they can read these signals.

There are three kinds of empathy:

1) *cognitive empathy*: I know how you see things. Managers high in this empathy can put things in terms that people can understand and pick up the unspoken norms of a culture quickly—and that motivates people; 2) *emotional empathy*: I feel with you. People who excel in this empathy make good counselors, teachers, managers, and group leaders because they sense how others are re-acting; and 3) *empathic concern*: I sense you need some help, and I'm ready to give it. These are the good citizens who voluntarily help out as needed.

You need to sense what another person is going through, what they're feeling, to feel compassion and to engage in compassionate action. Narcissistic, Machiavellian, and sociopathic leaders can have *cognitive empathy*, but lack *emotional empathy* and *empathic concern*.

Developing EQ

To enhance you EQ, first **mobilize the motivating power**. Draw on your dreams. Work from *where you are now* to *what you might improve* to get *where you want to go*. Get 360-feedback on your EQ competencies and use it to determine what competencies you should strengthen.

Next, operationalize your goal at the level of a specific behavior. Make it *practical*. Know exactly *what to do* and *when*.

Then, do it over and over. As you persist, you form new circuitry. One day you'll do *the right thing in the right way* without a second thought. Also engage in mental rehearsal—it activates the same neural circuitry as real activity.

It's never too late to improve your EQ abilities and competencies. LE

Daniel Goleman is author of *The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights*. Visit www.morethansound.net.

ACTION: Develop your emotional intelligence.

COMPETENCY ■ SELF-AWARENESS

Leadership Skills

It starts with self-awareness.



by Bill George

RECENTLY I SERVED AS *faculty chair* for Harvard Business School's new executive course, *Authentic Leadership Development*. Executives from 60 global companies spent five days honing their leadership—concentrating *almost entirely* on leading themselves, not others.

What does leading yourself have to do with becoming a leader? Everything, actually. Traditional leadership development programs have missed the mark for years, as they tried to remake leaders into someone different. I had this experience numerous times in my career. It was never successful.

One boss told me that I needed to improve my management style, which was an accurate observation. When I asked for clarification, he said, "*Be more like me.*" That feedback was not helpful, as his style and strengths were very different than mine. If I emulated him, others would have seen me as phony, and I would have been much less effective as a leader.

We've all seen leaders fail in trying to emulate great leaders. At one conference, I asked the participants, "Can we all agree that the *Great Man* theory of leadership is dead?" The essence of leadership is not trying to emulate someone else, no matter how brilliant they are. Nor is it having the ideal leadership style, achieving competencies or fixing your weaknesses. In fact, you don't need power or titles to lead. You only have to be authentic.

In 40 years, I've never seen someone fail for lack of IQ, but I've seen *hundreds* fail who lacked emotional intelligence (EQ). Daniel Goleman defined EQ as *competencies driving leadership performance*, including: *Self-awareness*: reading emotions and recognizing their impact; *Self-management*: controlling emotions and adapting to change; *Social awareness*: understanding others' emotions and social networks; and *Relationship management*: inspiring, influencing, and developing others while managing conflict.

In researching my book, *True North*, we interviewed 125 authentic leaders

and learned that *the essence of leadership comes from not from having pre-defined characteristics but from knowing yourself*—your strengths and weaknesses—by understanding your unique life story and the challenges you've experienced.

Everyone has a life story they are eager to share if anyone will listen in an accepting, nonjudgmental way. I have great admiration for Sen. Scott Brown's courage in telling his story of being sexually abused as a child. His story acknowledges the life forces that shape who we are. In sharing their stories at my *Authentic Leader* program, the executives found liberation and power by claiming who they are, not by trying to emulate someone else.

This isn't a new idea: 4,000 years ago the Oracle of Delphi said, "Know thyself." What is new is that we are learning how important *self-awareness* is to *leadership development*. Being self-aware is easier said than done. That's why so many leaders engage in self-defeating behaviors that cause failure.

How can you become a self-aware leader? Start with experiences in lead-

ing others in school, sports, or early work assignments. However, having one experience after another is not sufficient. Instead of plunging immediately into the next experience where you are prone to repeat your mistakes, you need to reflect on what you learned. Introspection can come from keeping a journal, meditating, praying or just sitting quietly.

Next, seek honest feedback from people you work with. The best developmental tool is 360-degree feedback from peers, subordinates and superiors. As one leader said, "*Feedback is the breakfast of champions.*"

Develop a small group of people with whom you can be open and honest in sharing your joys, sorrows, fears and dreams. They'll support you in challenging times and provide invaluable insights that enable you to grow as a human being and leader. We call these small groups *True North Groups* because they help you stay on course.

Leadership is not *exerting power over others* or *exhorting them to follow you*. It results from *your example of empowering others to step up and lead*. Leaders do that by *learning to lead themselves, becoming self-aware and behaving authentically.* LE

Bill George is the author of *True North* and *7 Lessons for Leading in Crisis*. Visit www.TrueNorth.com.

ACTION: Empower others to step up and lead.

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