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The Source for Personal Development and Excellence Training



Emotional Intelligence

This week, Life Training Online is reviewing [Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ](#), by Daniel Goleman, the eleventh of fifty-two books in the [52 Personal Development Books in 52 Weeks](#) series.

IQ was once thought to be the major factor in determining one's success in life. In his best selling book, **Emotional Intelligence**, Goleman contends that basing one's success solely on IQ is far too limiting of a viewpoint. While IQ does measure one's analytical abilities, it does not measure "emotional" traits such as personal motivation, empathy, self-awareness, and the ability to love and be loved. It's the possession of these attributes — an indicator of "emotional intelligence" — that Goleman argues is the greatest determinant of success.

While not "officially" labeled a personal-[development](#) book (I got it from the psychology section), Goleman does provide tools which can help us to increase our emotional intelligence. Most of all, I think it may help us better understand ourselves, which is essential in our personal development. Will this be the "the groundbreaking book that redefines what it means to be smart?" Let's find out this week...

***Emotional Intelligence** is the eleventh of fifty-two books in Life Training - Online's series [52 Personal Development Books in 52 Weeks](#).*

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Emotional Intelligence: Chapters 1 - 5

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The Emotional Brain

Goleman sets aside the first two chapters of his book to establish a foundation of the workings of the brain. Without going into too much detail, he basically describes the relationship between the cortex (the rational, modern area of the brain) and the limbic [system](#) (the impulsive, emotional, more primitive brain). The interplay between these two areas of the brain are at the heart of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence can be described as the ability to police or moderate the primitive emotional impulses through the rational mind. Fortunately for us, emotional intelligence can be developed.

When Smart is Dumb

When I was much younger, I remember my older brother becoming frustrated with me when I did something stupid, often saying, "You're wicked smart (sorry we're from Boston) but have no common sense!" He summarized what this whole chapter is about.

Goleman — by citing a number of studies — tries to prove that many students with high IQs have failed in their practical lives, while those considered "average" have had incredible successes. IQ, according to Goleman, only accounts for 20% of one's success. It's those with a greater degree of intrapersonal intelligence who tend to have more success in all areas of life than those without. Having a lack of it, you'll make poor choices in who to marry, what job to take and so on.

It's not uncommon to have someone with an IQ of 160 working for another who has 100.

Know Thyself and Passion's Slave

Self-awareness is such a central part of emotional intelligence. It is "being aware of both our mood and our thoughts about that mood." It's having the ability to pay attention to our inner states or stepping back from our current experience, allowing a parallel stream of consciousness to, in effect, [monitor](#) our emotions.

Those who are highly self-aware generally have a positive [outlook](#) on life. And when they do get into a bad mood, because of this awareness, they can snap out of it and bounce back very quickly.

On the opposite end of the spectrum are those who have no self-awareness. They are controlled by their emotions. Without this external policing, they get easily swept away by every mood — both good and bad — feeling overwhelmed and emotionally out of control.

By actively monitoring your thoughts and feelings, you become more self-aware. This is very similar to learning how to [live in the Now](#). It's this ability to withstand the "emotional storms" in our lives — something that has been praised as a virtue since the times of Plato — that is the key to our emotional well-being.

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Emotional Intelligence: Chapters 6 - 10

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The Master Aptitude

What seems to set apart those at the very top of competitive pursuits from others of roughly equal ability is the degree to which, beginning early in life, they can pursue an arduous practice routine for years and years. And that doggedness depends on emotional traits — enthusiasm and persistence in the face of setbacks — above all else.

There's definitely no question to the importance of discipline, persistence and enthusiasm in one's success in life. It's not uncommon to see those who are less gifted or talented rising above others with more facility because of a strong will to overcome their supposed inherent weaknesses. In effect turning those weaknesses into strengths.

IQ isn't the end-all be-all in determining your ultimate outcome in life. But in my opinion, neither is emotional intelligence. If one simply lacks the mental aptitude (their IQ is say under 120), I don't think they'll succeed in becoming, say, an accomplished physicist, no matter how determined they may be.

The Roots of Empathy

In tests with over seven thousand people in the United States and eighteen other countries, the benefits of being able to read feelings from nonverbal cues included being better adjusted emotionally, more popular, more outgoing, and — perhaps not surprisingly — more sensitive. In general,

women are better than men at this kind of empathy. And people whose performance improved over the course of the forty-five-minute test — a sign that they have a talent for picking up empathy skills — also had [better relationships](#) with the opposite sex. Empathy, it should be no surprise to learn, helps with [romantic](#) life.

In keeping with findings about other elements of emotional intelligence, there was only an incidental [relationship](#) between scores on this measure of empathic acuity and SAT or IQ scores or school achievement tests.

I'd have to agree with Goleman on this one. One's empathic ability is totally independent of IQ.

I had a [friend](#) in college who, although very intelligent (high IQ), had no clue what it meant to "walk in someone else's shoes." Their overpowering logical mind reminded me of Spock from Star Trek — showing little emotion or understanding when it came to others sensitivities. It was simply "not logical."

Intimate Enemies

In this chapter, Goleman covers the role of emotion between the sexes and in [marriages](#). It reminded me a lot of **Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus**. Being recently [married](#) myself (2 years ago), I found this chapter to be very informative.

The differences of the sexes in handling emotional are very telling. Take this excerpt explaining how these differences are developed:

Boys and girls are taught very different lessons about handling emotions. Parents, in general, discuss emotions — with the exception of anger — more with their daughters than their sons. Girls are exposed to more information about emotions than are boys: when parents make up stories to tell their preschool children, they use more emotion words when talking to daughters than to sons; when mothers play with their infants, they display a wider range of emotions to daughters than to sons; when mothers talk to daughters about feelings, they discuss in more detail the emotional state itself than they do with their sons — though with the sons they go into more detail about the causes and consequences of emotions like anger (probably as a cautionary tale).

At age ten, roughly the same percent of girls as boys are overtly

aggressive, given to open confrontation when angered. But by age thirteen, a telling difference between the sexes emerges. Girls become more adept than boys at artful aggressive tactics like ostracism, vicious gossip, and indirect vendettas. Boys, by and large, simply continue being confrontational when angered, oblivious to these more covert strategies. This is just one of many ways that boys — and later, men — are less sophisticated than the opposite sex in the byways of emotional life.

These differences in handling emotion are carried with the individual into their marriage — especially during confrontations with their spouse.

Because women, in general, tend to “wear their emotions on their sleeve” they are more comfortable expressing their discontent with the marriage. This benign attempt to actually improve things is interpreted by the [husband](#) to be a direct attack on him. He reacts by oftentimes stonewalling her in order to keep from going over the edge and blowing up. This lack of emotion and empathy is then seen as a blatant disregard for her feelings, further stressing the relationship — and the cycle continues.

Goleman instead suggests “mirroring” as one of the best ways to understand and empathize with your spouses concerns. It goes like this: If one partner expresses a problem or complaint, the other repeats it back in their own words, “trying to capture not just the thought, but also the feelings that go with it.” Done effectively, not only does your spouse feel understood, but more importantly, has the added sense of being emotional in sync with you.

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Emotional Intelligence: Chapters 11 - 16

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In the remaining chapters of **Emotional Intelligence**, Goleman covers such topics as the important role that our families play in shaping our emotional aptitude. Physical and verbal abuse, for example, can cause major problems down the line in one's ability to develop emotional intelligence. He also covers in depth, the effects and causes of PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder), referencing examples of veterans of war.

But by far, one of my favorite chapters was "*Mind and Medicine*." Goleman focuses this chapter on the impact that our emotions have on our general health. Take this excerpt for example,

People who experienced chronic anxiety, long periods of sadness and pessimism, unremitting tension or incessant hostility, relentless cynicism or suspiciousness, were found to have double the risk of disease — including asthma, arthritis, headaches, peptic ulcers, and heart disease (each representative of major, broad categories of disease). This order of magnitude makes distressing emotions as toxic a risk factor as, say, smoking or high cholesterol are for heart disease — in other words, a major threat to health.

I find it very satisfying that science has now confirmed the link between emotions like anxiety and depression and a wide range of physical illnesses, confirming what I've always "instinctively known" to be true.

"*Schooling the Emotions*", the final chapter of the book, touches on the importance of including emotional-intelligence training classes, such as conflict resolution, in

our kids' school curriculum. Goleman makes an interesting case, sharing with the reader some schools that are currently including such classes and the success that they're having.

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Emotional Intelligence: Final Thoughts

This week, Life [Training](#) Online is reviewing [Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ](#), by Daniel Goleman, the eleventh of fifty-two books in the [52 Personal Development Books in 52 Weeks](#) series.

As I began [reading](#) the first few chapters of **Emotional Intelligence** earlier this week, I was so excited to get immersed in what Goleman had to offer. He started out strong, kicking it off with the workings of the brain during emotional experiences, which I found to be quite fascinating. Unfortunately by Wednesday, having got half-way through the book by that time, it had all but fizzled out until it became more of a chore than a pleasure to read. That's so unlike me. I love learning, and am so passionate about many subjects, but with its discussion of study after endless study, the book just dragged on for me.

I guess I was expecting more of a discussion on how one can improve their emotional intelligence. While Goleman does offer some suggestions, it's focused entirely on that of helping children through proper nurture and [educational](#) reform. That's all great and good, but now that I'm an adult and am looking for ways to improve my own life now, that doesn't do me much good.

For what it was though — an original and thorough [study](#) of the ramifications and importance of emotional intelligence — I found it to be very informative, albeit boring and drawn out at times. Would I recommend it? I guess that depends on what you're looking for. If you're seeking how to develop emotional intelligence in your own life, then this book won't help you. Otherwise, if you're a parent or [teacher](#) looking to develop a child's emotional intelligence, then this would be a good fit.

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