

Emotional Intelligence Summary

By Daniel Goleman

How often have you been asked what your IQ is? In contrast, have you ever been asked anything about your Emotional Intelligence (EQ)?

Emotional Intelligence critically examines EQ and skills such as self-restraint, compassion, persistence, and zeal. Daniel Goleman explores neurological research and science, to warn that although temperament isn't entirely fixed, failure to master our emotions can be detrimental.

One of the biggest concerns is the worldwide trend of children being more emotionally troubled than in the past. Children are more lonely, angry, anxious, and impulsive, and we need to look at fixing this.

Mention the name Daniel Goleman, and everyone thinks EQ. They're synonymous. And, even though *Emotional Intelligence* was published in 1996, the content is as relevant today as it was then. Our positive or negative emotions have a significant impact on other people, and our attitudes are infectious. Humans have such a remarkable capacity for positive behavior, but things can also go spectacularly wrong. In his bestseller, Goleman shares his understanding of how we can contain negative emotion, and build a more emotionally connected society.

We'll briefly explore the nature of emotional intelligence, how it evolves, and how we can boost our own EQ. However, before we do, let's delve into what emotions are, and why they matter. We'll also look at how we can equip ourselves to be more resilient and aware, and how we can support those around us. In short, Goleman asks, 'How can we bring

intelligence to our emotions – and civility to our streets and caring to our communal life.'

What's the Point of Emotions?

We have our limbic system, our emotional hub, to thank for our instantaneous reaction to danger, and for our capacity to prioritize relationships.

The drive for safety and propagation has kept our species going. But here's the problem. Our neural circuitry served us well throughout evolution, but has caused some more recent hitches. Quite simply, our neurology has not evolved sufficiently quickly, to keep up with postmodern problems. Our limbic system, and the amygdala, which forms part of this, are constantly primed for threat, and our current lifestyles provide no respite from possible perceived threats.

Over time, our limbic system evolved, and our neocortex blossomed, but in a crisis, the emotional connections of the limbic system reign supreme. Our body-brain connection also means that our emotions and our bodies are working closely together. When we're angry, blood flows to our hands, making it easier to defend ourselves, or harm someone else. Fear sends blood to our legs, and, after an initial and momentary freeze response, we can choose to advance or retreat. Surprise makes us open our eyes wider, allowing more visual span. Sadness lowers our energy, giving us a chance to withdraw and recover. The amygdala receives inputs from the senses, and we react before the logic of the neocortex can intervene. On the other hand, happiness reduces our negative feelings, allowing us to recover emotionally. Love arouses the parasympathetic nervous system, creating calm and cooperation.

All these reactions register in our bodies, brainstem and limbic system before the neocortex can exert some control and make sense of what our bodies and emotions are signaling.

How Do We Manage Our Emotions in Today's World?

We need to establish a balance between our emotional brain and our thinking brain, which is crucial for wise decision-making. Our thinking mind mediates our feelings, and our emotional brain adds intuition to our decision-making. So IQ and EQ both matter. Goleman reckons that 'at best IQ contributes about 20% to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80% to other forces.' These are the forces such as luck, circumstance, socio-economic status, and the crucial contribution of EQ.

We know that IQ is a good indicator of academic intelligence, but it certainly does not determine how we thrive in everyday life. It needs to combine with EQ to form the pathway to effectiveness and contentment. There's a slight correlation between IQ and EQ. Still, it's small enough to make them independent, and emotional intelligence is the one that contributes most significantly to our humanity, as well as our success.

Howard Gardner, the voice behind the research on multiple intelligences, points out that many people with IQs of 160, have bosses with IQs of 100. These bosses are probably high on intrapersonal intelligence or EQ.

How Do We Define EQ?

There are five domains of EQ developed by Salovey. Let's unpack these briefly.

The first is knowing our emotions. This self-awareness enables us to recognize a feeling as it happens, which helps us direct our responses. Secondly is how we manage emotions. If we're skilled at handling negative feelings, we can bounce back quicker from adverse events. Thirdly is motivation. If we can control our impulsivity and delay gratification, we can focus our attention on achieving our goals. Fourth is empathy or recognizing other's emotions so that we can tune into their needs. Finally, we have social competence, which builds our leadership skills, popularity, and effectiveness in social situations.

One: Know Our Emotions

Goleman shares the story of an argumentative Samurai who asked a Zen

master the difference between heaven and hell. The Zen master tells the Samurai that he is a lout and doesn't deserve his time, so the Samurai draws his sword, threatening to kill the Zen master. In response, the Zen master calmly says that was the definition of hell. The Samurai realizes that this was a lesson from the Zen master to teach him that being swept away by one's own emotions is hell. After accepting the lesson, the Samurai calmed down and thanked the Zen master for the insight. The master replied, 'That is heaven.'

Self-awareness involves self-observation, stepping away from our feelings, and observing them more dispassionately.

Two: Manage Our Emotions

People tend to fall on a continuum between being constantly buffeted by emotional storms, and barely experiencing any emotion, even under extreme duress.

However, for most of us, there are times when strong emotions engulf us and seem almost impossible to prevent. The key is to reduce the duration of this emotional turmoil. The greater the intensity of rage, anxiety, or depression, the harder it is to do this.

Anger is one of the most challenging emotions to manage. Dolf Zillmann, a psychologist from the University of Alabama, says that we feel extreme anger when threatened with physical or psychological danger. An energy surge gears us up for a fight response, and we also have an adrenal and cortical response which allows for quick adverse reactions.

We need to intervene as early as possible in the anger cycle, by quickly

challenging our original appraisal of the situation. The cooling-down period should involve distractions such as physical exercise, relaxation techniques, reading, TV, or even writing. Ongoing, low-grade repetitive worries don't respond well to reason, and can eventually deepen into panic attacks and phobias. The problem is that worry can have an almost magical component, where we have an unconscious belief that the mere act of worrying can somehow ward off the outcome we fear. This cognitive "reward" makes it hard to let go of worry, either physically or cognitively.

Constantly ruminating on all the reasons to be depressed, make these feelings worse. Therefore we need to emphasize upbeat activities to pull us away from the consistent reflection on sadness. Or we could focus on celebrating small successes. Interestingly, researchers have found the act of helping others to be particularly powerful, but sadly, quite rare.

Three: Motivating Ourselves

By the age of twelve, the Chinese Olympic diving team of 1992, had put in as much training as their American counterparts had, by their early twenties. The Chinese team had started this strenuous training at four years of age.

This discipline takes self-regulation to new levels. Let's look back at the famous marshmallow study, the one where 4-year-olds sat in a room with a delicious marshmallow in front of each of them. If they could delay eating the marshmallow until the researcher returned, they'd get two marshmallows. Resisting impulse is tough for anyone, especially 4-year-olds.

Apart from self-regulation, hope also keeps us on track to achieve our goals. Rick Snyder from the University of Kansas, compared freshmen students who scored high on hope, to those with lower scores, and found that hope was a better predictor of first semester results than SAT scores. The more hopeful students set higher goals, and were motivated to attain them.

Hope and optimism make it easier to counteract anxiety and depression, and believing that we can turn defeat around increases the chance of success. Success also comes from being highly disciplined and focused.

Motivation is a crucial aspect of flow. And getting into flow increases our output significantly. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined flow, and it's the experience of being completely immersed in something, to the exclusion of other emotions or cognitive preoccupations. Flow often works best when we engage at a level that demands a little more than our current ability level, and when we're using an optimal amount of cortisol.

Four: Connecting Our Empathy

Empathy is a critical and necessary component of EQ. The ability to read non-verbal cues is crucial for our social success and emotional well-being.

This is very apparent in childhood. Empathy helps children manage the rough and tumble of the classroom, and children with high empathy do better academically. Researchers estimate that 90% of an emotional message is non-verbal, and they found that even infants respond empathically to someone else's distress. From about two and a half years, toddlers start to differ in empathy levels, with some being very

responsive, and others tuning out. Early attunement, how a parent consistently responds to their child's emotions, is crucial in building this capacity.

Five: Connecting to Others

Social connection is a pivotal part of being human. However, even though we're wired for connection, it's difficult enough handling our own emotions, never mind someone else's difficult ones.

Our previous two EQ skills, self-regulation and empathy, are the foundations for building relationships with others. Emotions are contagious. In fact, when we watch someone else who is angry or cheerful, our facial muscles adjust to the feelings we're observing. What's more, the closer the coordinating movements between people are, the higher the rapport.

Marital relationships are the perfect place to work on this; unfortunately, statistics reveal that the long-term success of marriages isn't good. For instance, 67% of couples who married in 1990 are likely to head to the divorce courts. The ability to connect using EQ skills is crucial if these statistics are to improve.

Everyone jokes about men's lack of emotion and women's emotionality. Goleman says science supports these differences. There's a "his" and "her" emotional reality that begins in childhood, and it's partly biological and partly due to how we grow up. Considerable differences are noticeable by 13. Girls can be subtle and artful with aggression, whereas boys are more physically confrontational, and far less aware of girls' more indirect strategies.

On the other hand, girls do well in small intimate groups and build cooperation, whereas boys rely on competition. If someone falls during a game, girls will stop the game to assist, but a boy who is hurt is often expected to stop crying and continue. Carol Gilligan from Harvard points out that we basically go to different emotional schools, and this carries through into marriage where we have to learn how to argue. She explains that learning how to argue is more important than the content of an argument.

John Gottman from the University of Washington tracked more than 200 couples' conversations and could predict, with 94% accuracy, who would divorce within three years. Contempt was at the heart of this finding. Contempt isn't just found in our words, but also in body language. In fact, Gottman explains that contempt has a facial signature - a muscle pulls on the left-hand side of the mouth, and eyes roll upward. When we unconsciously observe this, our heart rate jumps. Gottman found that if a husband shows regular contempt, his wife will tend to be more prone to a range of health problems. And if the woman's face shows disgust four or more times within a 15-minute conversation, the couple is likely to separate within four years.

Then there's the ultimate form of defence, which is stonewalling. Stonewalling happens when one partner refuses to engage in a

conversation and resorts to stony silence and a blank expression. This feeling of distaste and superiority can be the death knell to relationships because it becomes impossible to solve any arguments.

The meaning that one partner attaches to the other's words and body language can also trigger what's called "flooding." People are so overwhelmed by the negativity that they feel out of control, their heart rates increase, and their muscles tense. Their emotions are so intense that they can't respond reasonably. Men are more likely to stonewall, often to avoid flooding, and women are more likely to be critical. The imbalance that results can create such tension that things spin out of control, and the cycle of criticism, stonewalling, negative thoughts, and emotional flooding escalate to divorce.

Goleman's advice is to argue more mindfully. When you argue, stick to one topic, and use empathy by listening to each other's point of view. Listen to, and then repeat what you think the other person is saying and thinking. This is a useful practice because it builds emotional attunement and decreases defensiveness.

What About the Workplace?

Goleman compares the cockpit of an airplane to a big organization. Studies have found that good teamwork among the crew can prevent 80% of airline crashes. The dynamics in a marriage can also show up in the workplace, with severe costs to the organization. Therefore management and employees need to view criticism in a healthy way, and as an opportunity to work together to solve a problem.

Excellence also relies on internal harmony because each person in a

group can then contribute freely to maximum advantage. Researchers have found that star performers differentiated from average performers, because of EQ rather than IQ. One of the things they did was to build strong informal networks before they needed them. With increasing numbers of knowledge workers, collective emotional intelligence counts for a lot, and improving how we work together allows businesses to flourish.

Emotions Also Count When It Comes to Health

Research reveals that emotions have a powerful effect on the immune system.

Some surgeons pay careful attention to this connection. Dr. Camran Nezhat, an eminent surgeon, says, 'If someone scheduled for surgery tells me she's panicked that day and does not want to go through with it, I cancel the surgery.' He says that when people are calm, they do better in surgery and are less prone to heavy bleeding and complications. The logic is that panic hikes blood pressure, which distends veins, causing them to bleed more. Meta studies show that distressing emotions are as much of a risk factor for health threats, as smoking and high cholesterol.

Goleman reminds us of the importance of "relationship-centered care," which incorporates social intelligence as a crucial component of medical care. As one patient put it, compassion is good medicine.

Emotional Intelligence Begins at Home

The first emotional lessons happen at home. The difficulty is that parents need to have some emotional intelligence themselves. It's very easy to

repeat early habits or childhood lessons by ignoring feelings, failing to show a child that there are alternate responses, or being harsh and punitive.

Parents can learn to be 'emotional coaches.' For example, saying things like 'Are you angry because Tommy hurt your feelings?' And offering solutions like 'Instead of hitting him, find something else to play with until you want to play with him again.'

There's a big payoff to EQ coaching. Children who are well-coached emotionally by their parents have lower stress hormones, more social skills, and pay attention more easily. Even when IQ is constant, five-year-olds with good parental EQ coaches, have higher achievement scores in math and reading.

In short, childhood is the perfect incubation period for EQ.

Is Our Temperament Our Destiny?

Some children have a more reactive neural circuitry that predisposes them to more substantial worries and physiological reactions to stress.

Parents of timid young children often feel that they have to protect them from anything upsetting, while other parents adopt more of a 'learn-to-adapt' philosophy. The latter approach is a lot more helpful because if children are exposed to small and manageable doses of dealing with the unexpected, they learn to manage these moments independently. A little bit of venturing out into the big world, with gentle but firm parents, can shift neural circuitry. And repeated small but positive experiences help children to make this shift towards confidence and independence.

As children get older, emotions start to become more disrupted. Mental illness is increasing among teenagers. For boys and girls between 10 and 13 years of age, the rate of depression can be as high as 9%. This figure remains unchanged for boys, but at puberty, this rate can double for girls. Up to 16% of girls between 14 and 16 suffer from bouts of severe depression.

Recent research suggests that children prone to depression reveal a gloomy outlook on life before becoming depressed. Children who get a lousy grade often respond by attributing it to a personal flaw, such as "I'm stupid." They feel more depressed than those who see it as something changeable. Interventions that use this opportunity to challenge thinking patterns, and to reframe failure, show good results. Learning to challenge pessimistic beliefs seems particularly helpful at the cusp of adolescence.

In Conclusion

Self-awareness, identifying, expressing and managing feelings, impulse control, delaying gratification, and managing stress are key to developing EQ.

Programs that develop EQ should be implemented from 6 to 11 years of age. This is particularly important when children transition into grade school, and then into junior high, or middle school. Puberty is crucial because of the changes to a child's biology and brain functioning, and social-emotional programs can inoculate them against the challenges these transitions bring.

As Goleman says, 'the optimal design of emotional literacy programs is to begin early, be age-appropriate, run throughout the school year, and intertwine efforts at school, at home, and in the community.

Daniel Goleman presents a convincing argument, backed by scientific research, that emotions are far more critical to our social and academic success than we realize. And, importantly, he shows us that emotional intelligence is something we can actively nurture, not only in childhood but throughout our lives.