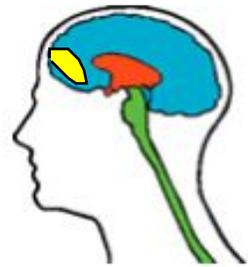


# The Importance of Emotional Intelligence

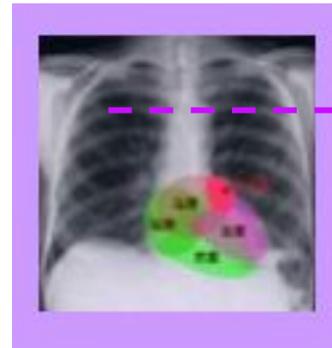
By Brian Muldoon



Have you ever wondered: Why is it that even smart, successful people who have risen to the top on their fields are at least as likely (and maybe, more likely) to create conflict in the workplace? How is it that, according to a recent study of 130 nurses in the *Journal of Professional Nursing*, that 90% of them reported being verbally abused in the past year? Others studies have shown that nearly one-quarter of the general workforce had been bullied in the past five years and another 50% had witnessed abusive incidents. The cost in turnover alone is astronomical.

*But none of this is necessary.* With some training and support, it's possible to significantly change the climate of the workplace. All we need to do is improve what scientists call our "emotional intelligence."

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to empathize with another, to be sensitive to the consequences of our behavior and to express our own emotions appropriately. Many times those with a high "IQ" (which measures only our ability for abstract reasoning) are complete idiots when it comes to the emotions. Indeed, much of our educational process—especially at the professional level—is designed to develop the former at the expense of the latter.



Since the time of Sigmund Freud psychotherapy has been attempting to alleviate our distress by providing insights into the childhood causes of

unhappiness. And of course the pharmaceutical industry has provided an extensive menu of mood-altering drugs that are now at work in nearly half the households in America. But the results of these approaches have been mixed, at best. We know endless details about our own unhappiness, and how to anesthetize ourselves from it, but can't quite figure out how happiness is to be found.

In fact, a team of research psychologists have established that most of us are usually wrong when it comes to making decisions that will actually make us happier. So what's missing? *Emotional intelligence*—the capacity to make emotionally wise choices and to live from the heart. Literally.

The new field of neurocardiology has discovered that the heart actually contains 40,000 neurons—the stuff that makes our brains work. So, as it turns out, we actually have two brains, and one of them is located in the heart. This exciting discovery has led to the foundation of the HeartMath Institute in California, which teaches people from all walks of life how to work with the recently-discovered neural network in the heart that governs our higher emotions. (Or you can read their best-selling book, The HeartMath Solution.) At the leading edge of the field is educator Joseph Chilton Pierce (The Crack In the Cosmic Egg, The Biology of Transcendence), who has shown how further utilization of the prefrontal cortex, which acts as a governor on our emotions, leads to extraordinary states of awareness previously associated with religious experience.

But one of the true pioneers in the field is author Daniel Goleman, who received his PhD at Harvard and was nominated twice for a Pulitzer Prize for his journalism at The New York Times. Goleman coined the term “emotional intelligence” to describe the difference between people who instinctively know how to negotiate the world of emotions while others require an order of protection to keep them contained. Goleman builds on the ground-breaking work of Harvard psychologist and educator Howard Gardner, who identified a minimum of seven different kinds of human intelligence (including spatial awareness, musical ability

and interpersonal skills). Gardner found that the prominence we have given to math and verbal skills (the traditional measure of “IQ”) in our educational system is misplaced. Studies have confirmed that a high IQ has very little to do with career success—or with success in a marriage.

Goleman’s book Emotional Intelligence explains how strong emotions can “hijack” the brain of an otherwise rational person. Giving his lay audience a compelling introduction to the emerging field of affective neuroscience, Goleman shows how otherwise brilliant people can suffer in life from their inability to correctly assess and respond to internal and external emotional challenges. More importantly, he gives practical direction on ways that we can more happily manage our emotions, and thus reduce the level of loneliness, depression and hostility in our world. (Depression is currently one of the leading causes of death and soon may be the number one medical burden throughout the world.)

What does all this tell us? That emotional competence is not simply a matter of personality, but that it can be learned. That we have the ability to turn down the temperature at work and create an environment that is both productive as well as supportive. And that we aren’t really smart in any meaningful way until we learn to balance our heads and our hearts.