Emotional Intelligence and You

**Part 1: What is Emotional Intelligence, and how can I improve in this area?**

More than ever before, people are turning to self-improvement books and presentations for the secret to success in their personal lives and careers. While the quality of these sources can vary greatly, they can be a very valuable source of information.

Something that is focused upon a great deal in these venues either implicitly or explicitly is the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI). The concept of EI in its broadest terms has become extremely prevalent in popular culture. The idea that our emotional capabilities are just as important, even more so, than our intellectual capabilities is now largely mainstream. However, the concept of Emotional Intelligence as originally formulated is very often misunderstood and not largely known.

The concept of EI is complex and multi-faceted, and its exact configurations are not always agreed upon. However, the basic concept and its underpinnings are quite easy to describe and understand. Emotional Intelligence is a measure of capability, like the I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient). Unlike the I.Q., however, which tends to stay stable from the late teenage years onward, your E.I. can readily be developed and improved. This improvement can begin with consciously improving your self-awareness and monitoring your emotions and thinking. This possibility of improvement will be discussed later on. For now, we will focus on the general definition and characteristics of Emotional Intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is primarily centred in the emotional component of the brain, rather than the rational. It is the level of someone's self-awareness and self-management (personal competence and intrapersonal skills), as well as their social awareness and relationship management (social competence and interpersonal skills). All of these aspects are equally significant, and are intertwined. Emotional intelligence is linked to the rational part of the brain in so far as people with a high level of EI utilize their emotions to improve their thinking and problem solving.

Self-awareness entails clarity of knowledge, awareness, and understanding of your own emotions. If you have high EI, you should be able to identify your emotions. Self-management, regulation, and discipline are equally critical components, allowing you to reign in your emotions, as well as control your expression of them. Self-management is also the source of self-motivation, which is a crucial component of any kind of real success and ability to fight through difficult circumstances.

Social awareness involves recognizing, identifying, and understanding the emotions of others (empathy), as well as being able to foresee how another person's emotions will likely affect their thinking. Relationship management involves the application of one's social awareness skills. If you have strong relationship management skills, you can very effectively utilize your knowledge

of other people's emotions to make yourself appear more relatable and affable to others. Good relationship management skills allow you to make others more likely to want to be around you and interact with you.

You are probably wondering how to find out how to ascertain the level of your EI. Unfortunately, there does not exist one single test or method that all psychologists and people working in the field endorse. There is quite a bit of disagreement, and many feel that there is really no way to make an absolute determination of one's EI, as too much of its evidence is contained within a person's motivations and mind in general. Also, there are too many outside factors that affect one's success, and there is often no way to know precisely how much one's EI is helping or adversely affecting it.

If you reflect deeply on the question, you will probably arrive at a good sense of what your EI range probably is. It is also very likely that you will want to improve your EI, as having a strong EI can be so beneficial to one's life, and no human being has an absolutely perfect EI. Luckily, as mentioned earlier, EI can be improved through one's own efforts. Brain plasticity helps make this possible.

Plasticity is the brain's ability to change its circuitry and the strength of its different components. It used to be generally thought that true plasticity ended with childhood, but we now know that is not the case. While children do have better plasticity than adults, the adult brain can indeed change. Plasticity can be harnessed by deliberately engaging in new habits of thinking and behaving. The constant practice of this will help establish new circuitry.

There are five areas of emotion and behavior that you should carefully monitor in order to raise your self-awareness and EI. The first is your reactions to other people. Do you find that you are judgmental, even in situations where you do not know the full background of a situation? Do you push for constant, overt recognition, or do you demonstrate real confidence? In the workplace, seek to have strong confidence in your accomplishments, and pay attention to recognizing those of others. You will be surprised at how much this will assist you in your journey. Another area is comprised of your tendencies in self-evaluation. Are you honest with yourself, or do you pretend you have no weaknesses? Remember that everyone around you, and in this world, for that matter, has weaknesses, and it shows strength of character to acknowledge them and seek to improve in those areas. The next area is your reactions and behavior in stressful situations. To what extent are you able to control your emotions and the expression of your emotions in such situations? An additional area is the question of whether you take responsibility when you do something wrong. Do you readily recognize when you are wrong, and apologize promptly? And lastly, ask yourself the question as to whether you think about how others will be affected by your behavior, before you act. Part of this is the ability to put yourself in another person's shoes, and to act towards others as you would want them to act towards you.

As indicated above, self-monitoring and reflection are vital parts of EI development. If you want to improve your EI, you must be willing to work hard and demonstrate true dedication. Change can be very difficult, but you will find the results well worth the effort.

You may find that you need the assistance of another person, specifically a professional, to maximize your EI development. One such professional person is a certified EI coach. Many people who want to improve their career performance, seek this kind of help. It is also possible to engage such professionals in your quest for personal development. The presence of another person for both support and progress monitoring can be vital for many people. There are many coaches out there, and are easy to find with a simple internet search!

A specific technical framework for developing your EI is the Emotional Thought Method. This method can be used by an individual alone or by several people together in a group. It involves activities designed to help people learn and develop better Emotional Intelligence across varied aspects. It focusses upon several emotional competencies. Four of them focus on the self or intrapersonal skills, and the remaining three focus upon interpersonal skills (emotional skills related to the success of our interaction with others). The four intrapersonal areas include self-knowledge, self-evaluation, self-motivation, and control of one's emotions. The three interpersonal aspects are the ability to appreciate others different from ourselves, the ability to gain knowledge of others, and the ability to exert certain kinds of control over others. This last aspect can come in very useful especially in workplace situations, and more generally in situations calling for leadership skills. If you are interested in learning more specific information about these activities and becoming involved in them in some way, you should do further research and find a professional for consultation.

**Part 2: How can improving my Emotional Intelligence benefit me in my personal development?**

Personal development is a multifaceted experience and process, and many people have different definitions of the concept. While one person may see personal development as a spiritual quest, another may directly relate it to his or her job and career growth. While you may see it as a way to develop your intellectual skills, another may see it as a way to improve their relationships.

The fact is that all these definitions are equally true. People seek to achieve personal development for varying reasons. Two of the most common are to achieve better career success, and to become a better and wiser person generally, for its own sake. Personal development comes in varied forms. While some people seek specifically to develop in one area, others seek to develop in several or all! Personal development helps people enrich the quality of their lives, as well as their experience of their lives.

One example of a personal development goal is the acquisition/development of skills or knowledge that you have always wanted but never had the opportunity or confidence to pursue. This may or may not be related to your career. Examples could be painting (visual art), writing, acting, music, and yoga. There are limitless possibilities! Doing this can be vital to strengthening your confidence and self-esteem, the development of which is absolutely instrumental to personal development in general.

Confidence and improved self-esteem can make all the difference in the quality of your life, as well as your experience of your life. Let me explain the differentiation I have made here. Even if you cannot immediately improve the actual physical, everyday quality of your life immediately, you can make a choice to approach your life in a way that improves your individual perception and experience of it. This technique is more generally known as "making the best of things," but is more complex than that because it ties in the use of spirituality and conscious, self-reflective thinking techniques.

Another vital component of personal development is the growth of your ability to trust yourself, and feel at peace with yourself. Part of this is a feeling of oneness. You should seek to feel all aspects of your life and thinking are intertwined in a way that you have absolute control over. Many times you cannot control the actual circumstances of your life and how people behave around you, but you can control your own reactions.

General physical health and mental health, as well as concern about specific physical and mental health problems, often drive people to seek personal development. If you have a serious illness, a feeling of mortality might make you realize the importance of making the most of every moment. Mental well-being problems can be very significantly addressed by conscious devotion to personal development.

Now you may be asking, “what comes first, the chicken or the egg?” Do you have to have good EI in order to succeed in personal development, or does personal development improve your EI? The answer is that both things are intertwined. If you do not have good EI in the beginning, you can still engage in personal development, and you will likely find that your EI improves as a consequence. If you do have good EI in the beginning, you might find personal development easier. Therefore, EI is very effectively applied in personal development.

Your Emotional Intelligence, especially your intrapersonal (self-awareness and self-management) skills, are both used and developed extensively in personal development. The reflection and intense thinking required in many facets of personal development will ensure that this is the case. If you want to improve your self-confidence and self-esteem, you will have to reflect deeply on what the root of your low self-confidence and self-esteem is, and how you can manage your emotions to counteract your feelings and self-defeating ideas from the past. This is also the case with learning to trust yourself, and feeling at peace with yourself and forging a better connection to your individual spirituality and creating a feeling of oneness. Many people feel that methods of meditation and relaxation very effectively facilitate the growth of intrapersonal emotional intelligence capacity and skills. Examples of such methods are yoga, taking long walks and just thinking, reading a book or magazine you enjoy (preferably on a topic that will not trigger any stress reaction for you), and simply taking a few moments to breathe and take in your surroundings.

Your interpersonal skills (social skills/awareness and relationship management skills) are also prominent in their utilization and development. People who seek to develop themselves through improving their relationship skills perceive this very quickly. If you do not have good interpersonal skills to begin with, you will need to improve them and seeking to do so will be instrumental in making it happen. Many activities, such as team sports, volunteering at a charity, taking part in a book club, and a multitude of other pursuits also require successful interaction with others, and therefore if you have always dreamed of learning basketball to an advanced level, for example, your interpersonal skills will be called into play and exercised. Your personal development might also include joining a counselling support group to help you work through an issue from your past or present, and taking part in this will also require interpersonal skills. Like with many things in life, using what you have of something will help it grow, whereas just letting it remain dormant will allow it to deteriorate.

Personal development and fulfillment requires a strong commitment, as well as self-discipline. Make the decision that you are a good and worthy person, who deserves to have a happy life, and do everything you can to improve your experience of life.

**Part 3: How can improving my Emotional Intelligence benefit me in the workplace and career growth?**

Especially with the highly competitive nature of today's job market, the motivation for many people's self-development is their wish to find a job, or rise in the field they are already in. Personal development, and the use and development of Emotional Intelligence, are both vital in this quest.

Many employers today tend to consider EI to be even more important than traditional, intellectual intelligence, and the vocabulary and concepts of EI have entered both the interview and selections processes, as well as everyday HR practices within the workplace. Interpersonal skills, especially, are considered vital for success in most modern workplaces. Many workers, especially relatively older workers who grew up and went to university before the concept of EI was established and popularized, feel overwhelmed with the new HR EI buzzwords and concepts. If you are one of these workers, you very likely feel left out of the process and that employers are dismissing your hard-earned skill set. This is completely understandable. Just remember to be on your own side. Recognize that learning about EI and seeking to develop yours will not only help you in your career, but also in your day to day life. It will give you additional coping mechanisms, and increase your self-confidence and self-esteem in the face of difficult and frustrating circumstances.

You may well ask how employers measure or get an idea of a potential employees EI when they hardly know the applicant. This is a very good question, and, unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, there is not any one perfect test. Human beings are complex, and tests can fail in exploring this complexity. It is also unfortunate that interviewer's perceptions of an applicant's EI can be obscured and made inaccurate by their own preconceptions and prejudices.

Something effective that you can do is to, through personal development, explore your strengths and weaknesses, seek to bolster the former and address the latter, and enter the application and interview processes with the confidence of knowing this information about yourself. When you are asked questions touching on EI, you will know what would be your most effective and at the same time accurate answers. Employers want to see that you are aware of any weaknesses you have, and that thus through being aware, you can minimize their impact on your general job performance.

The significance of EI in the job market and workplace today is reflected in the number of career and success coaches who have additional specific EI qualifications. You can find many of them through a simple online search. These coaches, like the ones mentioned earlier, can administer appropriate tests and carry out other diagnostic procedures (provided that they are certified to do so).

You may be wondering how having a strong EI will help you in everyday workplace life. The answer is that the ways it will help are almost limitless! Consider the importance of reflecting on

your time management skills, dealing with difficult and non-communicative co-workers or an unfair boss, being diplomatic at meetings, seeing all the possibilities for improvement in your performance, and keeping notified of all opportunities for advancement. It is clear that all these abilities have the potential to make you much more successful in your workplace and career in general.

The information above applies, of course, to all jobs in today's marketplace. However, you should also be aware that there are jobs that actually require what is sometimes termed Emotional Labour. Jobs that require emotional labour are those in which displaying and fostering certain kinds of emotions are intrinsic parts of the job description. Examples of these are nurses, teachers, and counsellors, therapists, and psychologists. There are also jobs that require emotional labour as a necessity for fulfilling their organizational goals. This category is broader, and can include any number of fields. Emotional labour, even though it can be very draining and difficult to carry out successfully in a number of instances, is generally not given the recognition it deserves at this point in time. However, the reality of its requirements does exist, and you will need a strong level of Emotional Intelligence to fulfill them. Workers in such fields are expected to regulate and produce emotions to a very skilled degree, and being tired or feeling emotionally drained yourself on any given day will not serve as a valid excuse for not fulfilling the job's emotional requirements.

In such fields, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills are direly needed. Intrapersonal skills will give you the ability to create and summon up the strength needed when you feel you simply cannot do and feel what is required, and interpersonal skills will give you the ability to produce needed emotions in others, like calmness and confidence in a nurse's patient or a counsellor's client, or a feeling of encouragement in a teacher's student. People in professions that require a high level of emotional labour need to constantly reinforce and develop their EI and skills, as those who do not are in danger of suffering from emotional exhaustion (burning out emotionally) and/or even being seen as incompetent. Make sure to recognize and think about all these realities if you are in an emotionally demanding job, or you wish to enter such a profession in the future. If you do not enter with your emotional machinery and armour in good check, you are likely in for trouble in the future.

Jobs in almost every field can create some level of stress for the worker. Strong EI is a vital tool for use in the battle to manage stress and its effects on the mind, body, and work performance. It increases you tolerance to stress**,** in addition to your level of innovation (which is governed to a great degree by confidence), your adaptability, your general initiative, and your knowledge and practice of all interpersonal skills.

Something to keep in mind with regard to the workplace is the importance of intrapersonal skills (self-awareness and self-management). Some people tend to forget the significance of these

skills, and focus completely on the interpersonal realm. While interpersonal skills are indeed predominant, intrapersonal skills are also very useful. An example of their essential nature is that of the outgoing employee with outstanding interpersonal skills but poor intrapersonal skills, who never really evaluates themselves and has no idea that they are coming off as bossy or arrogant to his or her co-workers. Self-reflection and the ability to think deeply are always essential. This is a good example of how interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are on certain levels entwined and dependent upon one another.

We would all agree that time management is an essential workplace skill, but did you know that good time management skills are dependent upon EI? It is true. You need good intrapersonal skills to be able to really and intensively reflect upon your use of time and its effectiveness, and to think about the best ways you could improve your skills. If you cannot look at and evaluate yourself objectively, it is really difficult to improve a skill that you largely use and develop alone, whether while setting your alarm clock or deciding what project to work on, at a given time.

EI is a crucial factor in interpreting body language. We all know that if you cannot read body language, especially in a fast-paced work environment with relatively less opportunity for verbal communication, there will negative consequences for you in the workplace. Body language reading skills as well as the other facets of EI are crucial in rapport building, and rapport building is an extremely useful skill in the workplace as well as every other area of your life.

Leadership, a highly coveted role in the workplace, is also governed by EI. If you do not have good interpersonal (and intrapersonal) skills, you are unlikely to obtain a leadership position, and even if you do, you are unlikely to retain it. Other critical workplace skills, like successful collaboration and cooperation are absolutely dependent upon EI, as well.

Lastly, knowing what your talents are and how you can most effectively manage and develop them is a critical skill in workplace and career growth success. Good intrapersonal skills are necessary for excelling in this area. You need the ability to reflect, and to realistically and evaluate your strengths and the areas in which you could improve.

**Part 4: How can improving my Emotional Intelligence help me improve the quality of my relationships?**

While in personal development intrapersonal skills are most predominant, and in the workplace interpersonal skills tend to be most significant, in the realm of relationships, both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills tend to be equal in importance. It is most definitely an area that demonstrates the interdependence of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills in many instances.

In order to function well in a relationship of any kind, whether it be, for example, a friendship, a relationship between spouses or partners, or a relationship with a family member, you need strong intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. If you get into an argument with the other person, you need to be able to reflect upon your own behavior and think about where you might have gone wrong. As many of you know, this is vital. Strong interpersonal skills will help stop you get into an argument in the first place, and also have an important place in reconciliation. If you have good interpersonal skills, you will better know how to approach the person and broach the subject of the disagreement.

You are probably thinking that this is simply common sense. You are right. It is. However, you may not have really given detailed and intense thought to just how important your EI can be in every kind of relationship, in every facet of your life. Intrapersonal skills affect your level and intensity of self-reflection and true awareness of things you have done and ways you might have gone wrong. Interpersonal skills, on the other hand, more overtly affect relationships, and more directly govern the quality of our interaction with the various people in our lives.

As this area can seem deceptively simple, everyday, and common-sense, it could be a good idea to consciously sit down and write down what you feel are your strengths and weaknesses, both in terms of interpersonal skills (social awareness and relationship management) and intrapersonal skills (self-awareness and self-management). Make certain to be honest with yourself.

One vitally important skill in our relationships is our ability to sense and read the emotions of others. If you lack ability in reading facial expressions and body language, you will find yourself giving offence where you did not intend it, and possibly hurting people's feelings. A way you can try to improve in this area is to think about your own facial expressions and body language.

Also related to facial expressions and body language (non-verbal signals) are our own messages. Look in the mirror. Do you feel your facial expressions and body language accurately reflect your emotions and thoughts? It is useful here as well to sit down and write a list of your strengths and weaknesses.

An important skill in the area of relationships is your ability to put yourself in the other person's shoes, so to speak. Are you skilled in thinking about how you would feel in a situation you have never experienced, or do you tend to be judgmental and self-righteous? If your answer is the latter, you need to make significant more of a conscious effort to show empathy and sympathy.

**Part 5: How can improving my EI help my academic performance?**

As Emotional Intelligence and I.Q. have been strongly differentiated here and in the field in general, you may be surprised to think about the connection between EI and academic performance. While intellectual ability is more significant than EI in the more academic subjects and courses, in many instances, EI is also very significant, and can be even more important in some areas.

In individual study, note-taking, paper writing, and other tasks carried out alone, good intrapersonal skills are absolutely essential to success. Think about it. If you do not have a good capacity for self-reflection, self-awareness, self-motivation, and self-regulation, it is very difficult to manage and excel in your academic studies, especially at the university level. Imagine a person trying to study for a Master of Arts or Sciences, a Law degree, or a medicine degree, or for that matter a general undergraduate degree, without being able to regulate their study habits! People in such a situation are certainly not set up for success. These skills need to be taught and learned at all levels of education, including elementary and high school, in order to ensure that students develop their relevant intrapersonal skills as much as they can.

Interpersonal knowledge and skills are also very useful, more so than most of us think. These skills become most useful during classroom activities and assignments such as group work, as well as functioning in study groups. These sorts of methods are most popular in certain disciplines, but they do tend to have some level of presence in all subjects, at most levels.

As almost everyone is aware, test taking is a vital academic skill. A student may actually be competent in a subject but hindered in his or her ability to express and gain recognition for their knowledge and skill, by their difficulty with taking and performing well on tests. Tests are used in all disciplines and subjects at most levels.

Test taking skills involve not only intrapersonal skills but also some interpersonal skills. The ability to sit in a large room with numerous other people with the sound of those people's pencils and pens scratching on paper, and to be able to concentrate on the task at hand does involve the interpersonal skill of being able to deal with the presence of other people in various situations. It also, of course, requires the intrapersonal skills of focus, self-awareness, and self-regulation.

**Part 6: What have we learned about Emotional Intelligence and its significance in the quality of your life?**

In the course of this e-book, we have explored and learned about what Emotional Intelligence is, how we can improve our EI, and how strong EI can benefit us in our personal development, workplaces and careers, our relationships, and our academic performance. Ideas and concepts you may have considered common sense or common knowledge in the past have hopefully taken on a new relevance, complexity, and depth for you, and you hopefully now have an enlightened sense of how significant EI is in your life, and how you can strengthen your intrapersonal and interpersonal capabilities and skills.

The following are some questions to ask yourself, to ensure that the above has indeed taken place. I recommend actually writing out these questions and your answers in a designated notebook in order to reinforce your own learning, as well as for your own sense of accomplishment and for future reference.

- Have you thought about how your Emotional Intelligence has affected you positively or negatively in your personal development, career, academic performance, and relationships in the past, and how it might affect you in the future?
- Have you thought of concrete and realistic ways you can improve your EI, and are you committed to doing them?
- Have you looked back on your life and realized mistakes you have made because of a deficiency in your EI? Have you resolved to apply a strengthened EI to similar situations in the future?
- Have you done further research on EI and EI development resources, or do you plan on doing so in the near future?
- Have you given serious thought to the specific intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in which you may have room for improvement?
- Have you thought about concrete ways your life could improve if you took the initiative to improve your EI? Have you developed the confidence in yourself needed to make these positive things happen?
- Do you feel your new knowledge and understanding related to EI has empowered you? If so, in which ways? If not, why not, and how could you remedy this situation?
- What specific aspects of EI would you like to find more advanced information on? How do you think doing so will benefit you?
- Do you feel that reading this e-book will benefit your life generally in the future?

Thank you for joining me on this exploration of Emotional Intelligence!