

Light your Fire with EQ: Emotion is Power – Know it! Use it!

Being able to listen to, and master, your emotions is a key to effective change in your life. Current thinking shows that it will help us integrate the impact of economic adversity and forge the strength, relationships and optimism to build a better future for yourself, your family and your business. In this newsletter we will summarise the key themes and skills you need.

The modern construct of Emotional Intelligence is only 14 years old (EQ - 2,65m Google hits). Popularised by Daniel Goleman in 1995, is now a leading theme in health, psychology, politics and brain sciences. It is vital for our children’s development, our relationships, our communities, and now as a catalyst for economic recovery. EQ has a raft of benefits:

1. Increase in math/reading tests scores (11%)
2. Greater social and sporting success
3. Improved health and longevity
4. Reduced distress and problem behaviour
5. Contributes 85% of outstanding leadership
6. Guides judgement and decision-making

The challenge is to make this real and practical in our lives? Here is a brief overview of how to grasp and use these concepts.

1. Body, emotion, & thought

We embed emotional intelligence as a catalyst for Resilience. To succeed in life we must understand how the body, emotions, thoughts, and action interact in daily activity. Then, we must learn to master and align them. This is the essence of our Performance Supply Chain (PSC) methodology.

The body is the physical reality of bone, muscle, blood and skin that interacts with the world. The body can be strong, flexible and adaptive or weak, rigid and resigned. Emotions occur in the body – muscles, viscera and blood chemistry. We have known since 1988 that holding the body in the position of an emotion (such as a forced smile) effects the emotion (happiness) and it’s perception as a feeling (exuberance).

With 412 mutually exclusive emotions it is not surprising that most are unconscious. In fact, Emeritus Professor Paul Ekman believes that humans are not designed to be aware of emotions. Rather, emotions evolved to evoke rapid survival-based action. Confronted by a sabre-toothed lion, it would not be helpful to wonder if that really was fear and if you should run or not. Fear sends blood to the legs, adrenaline to the heart and motivates flight.

A feeling is the mental image created by the bodily expression of emotion. This feeling milieu is the context within which thought emerges. We connect body, emotion, mind and action in the Performance Supply Chain (PSC). In brief:

Body	Emotion	Mind	Action
Distress	Fear	Worry	Avoidance
Tension	Anger	Blame	Attack
Fatigue	Sadness	Self-blame	Withdrawal
Energised	Happy	Hopeful	Engage

If we can recognise the emotion, we can reflect on the state of our bodies, the nature of our thoughts, and thus, be able to predict how we might act. With this insight we can challenge the emotion – and its PSC linkages – for validity. Knowing the options we can create a performance supply chain better suited to the situation.

This is also the precondition for Spirit in Action. Easy to describe! VERY hard to accomplish! Prone to decay! No time to waste!

2. Practice: Awareness

Begin, knowing that you are designed to fail in this task. Remember that leading academics build careers demonstrating that EQ is the key to health, happiness and performance. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT. And, let's use a topical issue as the storyline: **Financial Meltdown: the role of FEAR**

"Business pessimism remains deep and widespread across all industries and regions of the globe. ... Sales remain extraordinarily soft and pricing power continues to weaken." (Moody's World Survey 6/4/09).

Activity is well down. The action is avoidance. Thoughts are anxious and worry dominates. Therefore fear prevails as a dominant emotion and we are distressed (body). This PSC pattern stalls economic recovery. It risks our own viability and capacity for bounce back.

Of course, a year ago we were hyperactive with full employment, a booming market, hope and excitement. We had stretched to the far edge of happiness (mania) and ignored obvious risks (overconfidence). The absence of fear = stupidity.

The markets broadcast our emotions but rarely do we stop to reflect on how it manifests within. How do we cheat biology and "have a look inside"? We have to look deeper than "stress" and examine the physical sensations of fear; first detecting them and second describing them.

Perhaps start with a scary movie, then practice visualising your own very scary scenario and with time learn to watch and monitor the symptoms of fear (and other emotions) as they pass. In the case of fear the body is tense, the eyes wide, eyebrows draw up horizontally and the mouth is stretched horizontally.

Then notice the friskiness in your heart, the tightness in your neck and upper shoulders. Your breathing will be rapid and shallow, your gut will be tight and your legs/feet may bounce. If something is about to pounce this may help. However, in terms of modern life, you are a mess. You have impaired concentration, reflection and decision-making. Your ability to relate to others is compromised and you are activating a raft of "stress symptoms".

READY TO STOP THIS?

3. Practice: Calm and Restrain

No good comes from inappropriate emotion. In the moment fear renders you inactive. Over time it ruins your life. Thus we must learn to calm and restrain it. This is poorly understood and rarely achieved today.

We must invest in learning competent relaxation. Breath control, mindfulness, deep relaxation and sleep are tools we must master. Daily practice builds resilience against fear. Real-time practice allows us to catch and contain fear before it compromises the situation. We have to get good at this. It takes time, competent guidance and repetition – preferably 10,000 hours.

4. Practice: Emotional Combat

Once we have calmed fear, the next challenge is to generate a constructive emotional state. In this case, it is calm confidence; a state of self-assurance. This is an outcome of relaxation practice and is enhanced by actively mobilising self-assured confidence (watch President Obama).

Exercise supports the body; generating calm flexes emotion; and reframing our thoughts towards calm steadiness in the present focuses the mind. Taking considered action reinforces the loop. With practice it becomes natural and fast.

Whether this is deeply personal, or in support of your family, staff or constituency, these three steps are the key to effectively recovering from the recession. Opportunity abounds in recession. Those who succeed will bounce back and thrive in the next decades. Business and political leaders will need to win the emotion war before they, their business, or their country will succeed.

References:

Emotional Awareness, Paul Ekman & Dalai Lama, 2008
 Authentic Happiness, Martin Seligman, 2002
 Engage your Emotions, Sven Hansen, 2006
 Change your Thinking, Sarah Edelman, 2006
<http://www.rgbco.com/he/mindreading/mainfeatures.asp>
<http://www.danielgoleman.info/blog/topics/social-emotional-learning>