



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ

by Daniel Goleman



Overview

Emotions are necessary for survival, and for leading a happy and healthy life. This book discusses how emotions evolved, how to attune yourself to your own emotions as well as those of others, and how to control your own temperament. From the limbic system, to the effects of childhood trauma, to optimizing your leadership traits, this is both an informative and practical guide to harnessing your emotions.

“A view of human nature that ignores the power of emotions is sadly shortsighted.”

Chapter 1. What Are Emotions For

Our society lauds intelligence and logic while overlooking powerful, biologically ingrained emotions.

- **Anger & Fear** allow blood and hormones to flow and prepare us for action.
- **Happiness** mitigates negative thoughts.
- **Love** leads to tranquility and peace.
- **Disgust** causes physical reactions which protect us.
- **Sadness** lowers energy and deters recklessness.

The rational, logical, decision-oriented mind, and the emotional, feeling mind work together to help us make decisions. Physiologically, our emotional centers evolved after our primitive brain stem. Our sense of smell was the first necessary component of our emotional brain. One group of cells would determine what was associated with a smell, and a second group would determine physical reactions. Later, the *limbic system* was formed, allowing us to learn and memorize from our emotions. From this the *neocortex*, or the thinking brain, developed, helping us make smarter decisions based on our emotions.

“The fact that the thinking brain grew from the emotional reveals much about the relationship of thought to feeling; there was an emotional brain long before there was a rational one.”

Chapter 2. Anatomy of Emotional Hijacking

“Most intriguing for understanding the power of emotions in mental life are those moments of impassioned action that we later regret, once the dust has settled; the question is how we so easily become so irrational.”

Emotional hijacking occurs when our bodies react irrationally to emotions before the neocortex generates a more logical reaction. The *amygdala*, a cluster of nerves and cells seated above the brainstem, is the center of all passion, and processes information before the neocortex jumps in. The *hippocampus*, part of the limbic system, remembers the specific facts of a situation, while the amygdala remembers the emotions. When we experience familiar situations, our amygdala sends signals to release hormones to prepare the body for action. These illogical reactions are instant and likely helped our primitive ancestors survive.

Chapter 3. When Smart Is Dumb

“Emotional intelligence: abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize & to hope.”

Studies have found that the IQ test, which measures academic intelligence, has little-to-no correlation with an individual’s success. Valedictorians and salutatorians were monitored 10 years after they graduated high school, and only 25% of them were successful in their chosen profession. Ultimately, academic intelligence and emotional intelligence are both required for one to overcome obstacles and achieve maximum success in life.

