

The Heart of Success

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In his groundbreaking book, *Emotional Intelligence*, researcher Daniel Goleman reported on compelling breakthroughs from the fields of neuroscience and business. His research showed that success in life is based more on our ability to be aware of, and able to manage our emotions, than on our intellectual capabilities. This created a mini-revolution in how organizations think about leadership and how people think about success.

A simple definition of emotional intelligence is the collection of emotional skills we need to manage our relationships and ourselves. Goleman and other researchers have now demonstrated conclusively that corporate and health care leaders who excel in emotional intelligence skills achieve not only superior business results, but also have higher levels of personal fulfillment and increased well-being. Research at the Institute of HeartMath also reveals that a lack of success in personal and professional life is more often than not due to mismanagement of emotions.

The most commonly accepted framework of emotional intelligence includes skills in four areas:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship management

Research at HeartMath has confirmed that these dimensions are key to personal and professional development. Simply put, the level of the emotional intelligence possessed by the leader largely determines the emotional environment within the organization. Thus, it is critically important that leaders develop skills to manage their emotions, especially emotions such as anxiety, anger, frustration, and depression as these drastically impact the energy, vitality, perspective, and overall effectiveness of a workforce. HeartMath has demonstrated that it is through the coherent development of the intelligence of the heart that emotional intelligence and management skills can be learned and sustained.

Built into the emotional-cognitive structures of the brain are many evolutionary functions that date back to our species' struggle for survival and the mechanisms that evolved to cope with that stress. Brain structures like the amygdala in the emotional or limbic regions of the brain can 'hijack' intellectual processes when intense emotions are experienced in the system. This is why even very smart people can make very foolish choices when under emotional stress. And, even scarier for organizations and people today is that millions of people have maladapted to the stress in their lives and are just beginning to realize how much stress they have.

Research at the Institute of HeartMath has shown that emotions are reflected in the beat-to-beat changes in the heart's rhythms. This is called heart rate variability, or HRV. The analysis of HRV is recognized as a powerful, non-invasive way to measure nervous system dynamics. New clinical research identifies HRV as a key indicator of preventable stress and shows a relationship to a wide range of health problems.

When you're stressed, your body is out of sync. Typical negative emotions we feel when stressed - anger, frustration, anxiety and worry-lead to increased disorder in the heart's rhythms and nervous system. These negative emotions undermine emotional intelligence by blocking self-awareness, inhibiting our ability to manage ourselves, blurring our awareness of others, and damaging our relationships. Function within the cerebral cortex has been measurably inhibited.

In contrast, positive emotions like joy, appreciation, care and kindness create harmony in the heart's rhythms and the nervous system. Other bodily systems sync up to this rhythm, which scientists call coherence. Developing coherence leads to increased mental clarity, creativity and enhanced problem-solving abilities, so it becomes easier to find solutions and better ways of handling any stressful situation. Functioning within the cortex has been measurably enhanced. Learning to self-generate positive emotions on demand accelerates the development of all the emotional intelligence competencies.

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