

## Emotional Intelligence Book Review

By Mike Taigman

All conversation stopped as the long white Mercedes Limousine glided to a stop. Everyone attending the twenty-year high school reunion jockeyed for position to see which of their former classmates would emerge from a door held open by the chauffeur. Sunglasses covering his identity from the crowd he helped his lovely wife from the car. He glanced at his diamond studded Rolex then took off his glasses and waved to his former classmates.

“Jimmy---Jimmy is that you? What’s with the limo and the threads Jimmy? We know you. You played starting center on the football team, drank tons of beer and barely graduated. How did you make all this money?” Jimmy replied, “It’s simple really, I buy these things for three dollars and sell them for five dollars. It’s amazing how much money you can make on a two percent mark up.”

What’s your IQ? Do you know? Do you care? Does it matter? Does it make you a better ambulance service manager? For years experts have argued about the accuracy and value of IQ tests. What factors are at play, for example, when people of high IQ flounder and those of modest IQ do surprisingly well? Research has shown that IQ is a poor predictor of personal and professional success. It does not correlate with happiness, good relationships, financial status, or anything but academic performance.

In his wonderful best seller, *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman has totally redefined what it means to be smart. The traits of emotionally intelligent people are the same as those for good leaders and good health care providers. Emotional intelligence includes:

1. *Knowing one’s emotions*. Self-awareness--recognizing a feeling as it happens--is the keystone of emotional intelligence. The ability to monitor feelings from moment to moment is crucial to psychological insight and self-understanding. An inability to notice feelings leaves us at their mercy.
2. *Managing emotions*. Handling feelings so they are appropriate is an ability that builds on self-awareness. It includes the capacity to sooth oneself, to shake off rampant anxiety, gloom, or irritability. People who are poor in this ability are constantly battling feelings of distress, while those who excel in it can bounce back far more quickly from life's set backs and upsets.
3. *Motivating oneself*. Marshaling emotions in the service of a goal is essential for paying attention, for self motivation and mastery, and for creativity. Emotional self-control--delaying gratification and stifling impulsiveness--underlies accomplishment of every sort. And being able to get in the “flow” state enables outstanding performances of all kinds.

People who have this skill tend to be more highly productive and effective in whatever they undertake.

4. *Recognizing emotions in others.* Empathy, another ability that builds on emotional self-awareness, is the fundamental “people skill.” People who are empathetic are more attuned to the subtle social signals that indicate what others need or want. This makes them better at callings such as the caring professions, teaching, sales, and management.
5. *Handling relationships.* The art of relationships is, in large part, skill in managing emotions in others. These are the abilities that undergird popularity, leadership, and interpersonal effectiveness. People who excel in these skills do well at anything that relies on interacting smoothly with others; they are social stars.

Unlike IQ, emotional intelligence can be learned and developed. There are many public schools experimenting with these concepts in the classroom. There are even a few EMS organizations flirting with developing these capacities in their students.

This book is incredibly well written. Daniel is a writer for the New York Times, so he can make challenging subjects fun and easy to read about. Out of the hundreds of non-fiction books I’ve read in the last ten years I’d have to rank this one in the top five. Daniel Goleman offers a new vision of excellence and a vital curriculum for life that can change the future for us personally and professionally.