

Emotional Intelligence:
A Closer Look

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Emotional Intelligence is a concept commonly underestimated. Taking the proper amount of time out to get to know oneself is a valuable skill not too many are aware exist. I intend to put the concept of emotional intelligence under the microscope. What IS emotional intelligence (EIQ)? Does it have a place in psychological and/or scientific history? To what extent are the components of emotional IQ rooted in our ontogeny, and which structures in the brain contribute to emotional awareness? How can the utilization of EIQ help to raise a more emotionally aware generation? In what ways can a working knowledge of body language, as it functions within each culture, enrich ones EIQ?

Emotional Intelligence has been defined in many different ways, though that is to be expected considering the fact that EIQ has yet to be universally recognized by science and psychology as a pure form of intelligence. Dr. Daniel Goleman, psychologist and author of various self-help books, defined EIQ as: Knowing ones emotions, Managing Emotions, Motivating Oneself, Recognizing Emotions in Others, and Handling Relationships. This is vastly different from the typical Intelligence Quotient which is defined as: "The ratio of tested mental age to chronological age, usually expressed as a quotient multiplied by 100."¹ Unfortunately, it isn't clear whether or not the "tested mental age to chronological age" has changed from that of its inception, or if these concepts even apply to today's expectations. Goleman points out:

IQ and emotional intelligence are not opposing competencies, but rather separate ones. We all mix intellect and emotional acuity; people with high IQ but low emotional intelligence (or low IQ and high emotional intelligence) are, despite the stereotypes, relatively rare. Indeed, there is a slight correlation between IQ and some aspects of emotional intelligence—though small enough to make clear these are largely independent entities.

"Each of us has embedded in him a large number of thoroughly learned response patterns that can be set off at any time by an appropriate stimulus. We can be pacified, enraged, or seduced almost at will by anyone who knows the code."² This observation emphasizes the fact that, whether willingly or not, we are at the mercy of those we interact with-and their levels of EIQ.

¹ Dictionary.com. 2004. www.dictionary.com

² Beier, Earnest. [People Reading](#). New York: Scarborough House, 1989

Examining the history of standardized testing as a means of diagnosing intelligence allows the plight of EIQ to surface all the more readily. The first intelligence tests were devised by Sir Francis Galton in 1895, who sought to show that intelligence was inherited. Alfred Binet, who developed a scale to measure a child's mental age, launched modern intelligence testing in 1905. In 1916, Lewis Terman revised the Binet scale to produce the Stanford-Binet, which introduced the Intelligence Quotient (IQ). In 1939, David Wechsler published an improved measure of intelligence for adults, which introduced the ~~IQ score~~ ^{WAIS score} based on the normal distribution. When 1983 rolled around, psychologist Howard Gardner came out with his influential spin on intelligence: ~~the theory of IQ~~ ^{the theory of multiple intelligences} which he claimed that:

Human intelligence encompasses a far wider, more universal set of competencies. Currently I count eight intelligences, and there may be more. They include what are traditionally regarded as intelligences, such as linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities, but also some that are not conventionally thought of in that way, such as musical, interpersonal and spatial capacities. These intelligences, which do not always reveal themselves in paper-and-pencil tests, can serve as a basis for more effective educational methods.

Then in 1994, psychologist Richard J. Herrnstein and policy analyst Charles Murray came out with the controversial classic: ~~The Bell Curve~~ ^{The Bell Curve}. Though not in conscious opposition to Gardner's ideas, it stated that intelligence was inherited, as opposed to being an innate quality one possesses. Gardner expands on the issue of emotional intelligence in the scientific realm:

Within psychology, the theory of multiple intelligences has generated controversy. Many researchers are nervous about the movement away from standardized tests and the adoption of a set of criteria that are unfamiliar and less open to quantification. Many also balk at the use of the word "intelligence" to describe some of the abilities, preferring to define musical or bodily-kinesthetic intelligences as talents. Such a narrow definition, however, devalues those capacities, so that orchestra conductors and dancers are talented but not smart.

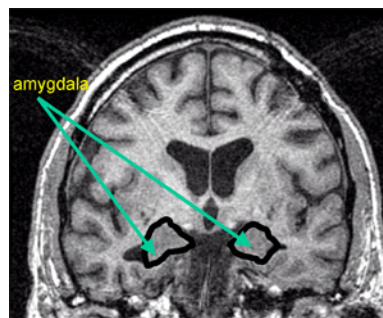
In the late 19th century (1884), psychologist William James introduced his theory of emotion, which revolutionized both psychology and physiology. John T. Cacioppo, psychologist at Ohio State University, elaborates on James theory:

James maintained that within the class of emotional phenomena, discrete emotional experiences can be identified with unique patterns of bodily changes, and that the perception of one of these specific patterns of peripheral physiological changes ~~is~~ ^{is} the emotional experience.

This idea was put to rest by studies showing that emotional reactions, but not sensory and motor processes per se, require the input of the hypothalamus. In 1934, on the basis of such observations, anatomist James W. Papez proposed a circuit theory of emotion that eventually evolved into the limbic system.

From what I've gathered from the lectures given by Fresno City College's Professor Allen Beck, many of the structures responsible for the homeostasis and rhythms of the body also produce emotion, which is not too surprising. The most important of the brain structures that produce emotion are called, collectively, the limbic system (the term limbic merely refers to its position at the inner edge of the brain). This system sits above the brainstem and under the cortex. A number of structures in the brainstem and parts of the cortex also participate in producing emotion. All these limbic, cortical, and brainstem structures are connected by neural pathways.

Of the three core structures that contribute most heavily to the functioning of the Limbic System (the hypothalamus, the hippocampus and the amygdala), the amygdala is most important in regards to emotional intelligence. Deep in the lateral forebrain lies the amygdala, an almond shaped mass of gray cells. It appears to play a key role in the ability to recognize facial emotion, particularly negative emotion such as fear, and to play a role in emotional memory. Goleman adds:



If the amygdala is severed from the rest of the brain, the result is a striking inability to gauge the emotional significance of events; this condition is sometimes called "affective blindness." Lacking emotional weight, encounters lose their hold. One young man whose amygdala had been surgically removed to control severe seizures became completely uninterested in people, preferring to sit in isolation with no human contact. While he was perfectly capable of conversation, he no longer recognized close friends, relatives, or even his mother, and remained impassive in the face of their anguish at his indifference. Without an amygdala he seemed to have lost all recognition of feeling, as well as any feeling about feelings. The amygdala acts as a storehouse of emotional memory, and thus of significance itself; life without the amygdala is a life stripped of personal meanings.

When the course of the neural pathways in the brain are traced, it becomes evident why all interactions with the environment have an emotional quality of some sort.

As was shown in the example above concerning the severed amygdala, how one's brain functions, or doesn't, plays a key role in one's level of emotional awareness/intelligence. If you can't properly discern various emotions based on facial cues and familiarity, it's going to be rather difficult to interpret a person's mood thereafter. Furthermore, the inability to discern facial cues disallows one to be completely involved in the situation at hand. If the man above had a gun put to his head, he would know intellectually that he should be afraid, but he would not FEEL fear. The connection to human emotional interaction would be severed.

"The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth." This startlingly succinct quote by philosopher Erasmus exemplifies where to go next, or perhaps, first with emotional intelligence teachings. The fact that many parents can fill the role of emotional mentor to their children (as early as infancy) can be enormously beneficial was originally introduced by Harvard pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton. He adds, "Parents need to understand how their actions can help generate the confidence, the curiosity, the pleasure in learning and the understanding of limits that help children succeed in life." Programs such as Head Start accentuate the acquisition of the social and emotional skills seemingly required for children to

develop the readiness to learn. E. L. Schieffelin, author of *Children's Language*, adds in regards to learning and emotional responses:

...Children learn that "how people feel in a particular situation is not only supposed to be 'natural,' given the situation, but it is also socially expected, or even socially required." Thus in every society, the how and when to express feelings is taught by example, instruction, and the administration of reward and punishment from the time of infancy.

Body language is clearly central to good communication and is particularly important when attempting to communicate across cultural and language barriers. In fact, body language is more important to people from other cultures than it is to most Americans. To native-born Americans, the spoken word is by far the most important communication tool. In other cultures, however, the way words are spoken (along with the gestures, posture and facial expressions that accompany those words) is of greater significance.



Between 60-80% of our message is communicated through our Body Language, only 7-10% is attributable to the actual words of a conversation. Some psychologists claim that the impact you make on others depends on what you say (7%), how you say it (38%), and by your body language (55%). Since how you sound also conveys a message, 93% of emotion is communicated without actual words. It's often not what you say that influences others; it's how you say it.³

It's a given that, although there are some similarities, for the most part body language is culture specific. Fuad I. Khuri, a leading Middle East anthropologist, has observed that:

Body language is culture-bound, and therefore, the same gesture may convey different meanings in different cultures. Whereas kissing men signifies amity and friendship ties in Arab culture, in many western societies outside the Mediterranean it often indicates a homosexual commitment.

³ Israel Language Training Center. 2000. <http://www.angelfire.com/co/bodylanguage/>

The same goes for facial expressions. Psychologist Paul Ekman coined the term Display Rules (“norms regarding the expected management of facial appearances”), the expected facial expression varies culture to culture.

“Anyone can become angry-that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way-this is not easy.” Philosopher Aristotle sums up the concept of emotional intelligence perfectly. By blending the sociohistorical, the physiological, the educational, and the kinesthetic, you have all the components needed for attaining a high Emotional Intelligence Quotient that will benefit anyone in most any situation.

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