



# A How-To Manual For Emotional Intelligence

*Emotional Intelligence for Dummies*

By Steven J. Stein

For Dummies, 384 pp. \$21.99

Reviewed by Dr. Doug Talley

The book is called *Emotional Intelligence for Dummies*, but don't let its title fool you. This book has the potential to significantly benefit almost everyone. Author Steven J. Stein is not new to the field of Emotional Intelligence, nor is he writing a simplistic book about a very important topic. Stein is a leading expert on psychological assessment and emotional intelligence, and his book is readily understandable and can be applied to increase the reader's Emotional Intelligence. Using the format of other "For Dummies" books, Stein clearly communicates the basics for growing and enhancing Emotional Intelligence.

For those new to the concept of Emotional Intelligence, it is basically the ability to accurately recognize your own emotions and the emotions of others. It also includes the ability to manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. Emotional Intelligence is directly connected to how well people adapt to life's pressures and demands and how successful they are. Emotional Intelligence impacts every area of our lives: personal and professional relationships, marriage, and parenting.

In social situations emotionally intelligent people are aware of their emotions but are more focused on other people rather than themselves. Those who are self-conscious tend to be preoccupied with their own feelings and are likely to be out of sync with others. One common characteristic of people with low Emotional Intelligence is a lack awareness of how they come across to others. The end result is decreased capacity to influence people due to relationships that misfire.

Stein explains that happiness and optimism are important components of Emotional Intelligence. While true happiness is values-based, it is also influenced by our emotions. The good news is each of us can take steps to change our emotions by identifying the emotions that aren't very helpful and changing the thoughts that lead up to them. Optimism, as viewed within the field of emotional intelligence, is not simply thinking positive thoughts, but rather it is choosing a "strategic approach to challenging situations" that believes a solution exists and one can take steps to work towards the desired outcome. This process involves reframing circumstances that are negative so that the person views them as challenges to

overcome, rather than helpless situations.

Emotional Intelligence is about adapting to life's demands and pressures. People with high Emotional Intelligence adapt well and are able to take charge of their lives, while people with low Emotional Intelligence adapt poorly and feel like their lives are out of control. The instinctive "flight or fight" response to stress can actually be moderated by heightening Emotional Intelligence, which enables people think differently about emotional situations.

Empathy is another important component of Emotional Intelligence. Empathy enables one to connect with another person through reading his or her emotions. The goal is not to manipulate or control the person but to step out of your world into the other person's world so that you can influence the other person and work for his or her best interests. This skill is the foundation of leadership. Leadership is not telling another person what to do, but instead it means helping people realize you have their best interest at heart so they can be and do their best. It is an aspect of serving others.

Stein indicates that emotional intelligence accounts for "about 28 percent of leadership performance." He provides help for raising a person's leadership capacity by increasing one's competency in key areas of emotional intelligence, such as empathy and decision-making. These helps are very practical and transferable.

A helpful application that Stein addresses in his book involves organizational intelligence. He defines it as an organization's "ability to deal with change, reach its goals, and still care about the people that work there." Just as a person's Emotional Intelligence can sabotage his or her performance, so can an organization's Emotional Intelligence undermine its effectiveness and purpose. Stein breaks organizational intelligence down into various components and provides work place examples of how to address each one.

Stein explains the connection between Emotional Intelligence and marital satisfaction. The most significant factor that affects marital fulfillment is happiness. Raised happiness and optimism levels correlates with increased satisfaction within relationships. Self-regard is another contributor to a satisfying marriage because it impacts how criticism is handled. It also determines the level of security felt in the relationship. Bottom line: greater control over emotions enables couples to focus more on strengthening their relationship with each other. Stein compares it to developing more agility in steering around relational potholes.

Additionally, Stein applies Emotional Intelligence to surviving college, navigating life as a parent, developing emotionally intelligent children, and even helping difficult people work on their Emotional Intelligence. Did you know that having children significantly lowers the IQ of parents and "retards the brain's activity"? It's true: The parts of the brain that control logic and reality testing are compromised in both parents upon having children. Having children also weakens both parents' tolerance as a result of difficulty managing expectations. What parent hasn't experienced reduced impulse control after having kids? Stein provides helpful instruction for effectively navigating these challenging areas.

Most books that I've read about Emotional Intelligence are more theoretical and focus on

understanding the concept and how significant its impact is on a person's success. Stein has chosen to provide enough theory so that you can grasp the field of study, but focuses more on helping people understand how to practically develop their Emotional Intelligence in areas that relate to every day life. If you want to raise your Emotional Intelligence and increase your ability to cope, adapt and enjoy life, then this is a must read. This book is so helpful that I highly recommend it to all pastors and leaders.

After you read *Emotional Intelligence for Dummies*, then you'll be ready to tackle *The EQ Edge* by Steven Stein and Howard Book.

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