

No Need to

Do you need to build emotional intelligence, or will it develop on its own

By Jeanne Anne Craig

When my grandmother was 82, she had to go into a nursing home for a week following eye surgery. She wrote me:

They put me in a room with two other women, one 88 and the other 91. I felt like a mere child. The day I went in, Ollie, the 88-year-old, nodded to Julia and said in a conspiratorial tone, "She's nuts." She waited a moment and with a roguish smile added, "I'm half nuts." She was a sweet and funny lady, but mostly you smiled with a lump in your throat.

Both Ollie and my grandmother had the ability to accept the inevitable and laugh at themselves in difficult circumstances. They both had high EQ.

EQ is short for emotional intelligence, a term that came into public consciousness in 1995 with the publication of Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence*. People with high EQ (I call it the "right smarts") have the ability to monitor their own and others' feelings and use this information to guide their actions. In other words, they have people skills and self-skills. Successful people in every field have high EQ.

IQ, or intellectual potential, is probably established at birth, though there's a difference in how well people live up to their potential. But here's the good news: EQ can be developed forever and by anybody. The sky's the limit.

Most people, however, prefer not to work on self-development. As it happens, the odds are in their favor. The chances are good that by the time people reach the age of

90, they will have EQ. By that age, a person has encountered the kinds of situations that develop EQ. In a life of that length, people have seen enormous social changes, experienced the death of loved ones, encountered health problems, and been through difficult times. These situations are what we call *development spurs*. In dealing with them, people get their

Successful people in every field have high EQ.

rough edges smoothed off. They acquire resiliency and the ability to see the humor in difficult situations. They accumulate wisdom. They develop high EQ.

Of course, not everybody does. We've all encountered old people who are bitter and evil-tempered. We've seen sad, lonely old people whom nobody wants to visit because they complain and blame. Not everybody develops high EQ. That's what happens when you leave it to chance. Some get it, some don't.

Furthermore, who wants to wait till they're 90 to gain the benefits of emotional intelligence? Fortunately, for those who *are* willing to work on it, there are other development spurs that enhance EQ and the benefits that go with it. There are many ways you can develop your emotional intelligence, starting right now.

One way is to read biographies of inspirational people to learn how they overcame obstacles that may be greater than those you face. Find out what made them successful and how you can apply these lessons to your life.

Another way is to develop new skills. Learn French, Thai cooking, the accordion. In the process,

you'll develop different parts of your brain.

A third way to raise your EQ is to have a child, or adopt one (or two or six). You learn a lot about yourself when you're up all night with a screaming baby.

These are just a few of many ways people can intentionally develop their EQ. A good way to begin is with a personal assessment. (I will be happy to fax a free assessment form to start you on your way. Just contact me at the address below.) Find out what's getting in your way. Discover your energy drains and make a plan for eliminating them. You don't have to wait till you're 90! ■

Selected References

Adams, Tom, "Do You Need a Coach?", *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 17, No. 5.

Jenson, Donna, "In Search of the Balanced Leader," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 16, No. 6.

Koenig, Bonnie, "How Relevant Is Global Thinking?", *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 19, No. 1.

Personnel & Human Development category in CD-ROM.

These resources are available at www.snpo.org/members.

Jeanne Anne Craig, Ph.D., M.Ed., is director of the *Right Smarts*, PMB 339NW, 218 Main Street, Kirkland, Washington 98033-9415, phone 425-822-8159, fax 425-803-0143, drja2@aol.com. She is a speaker, psychotherapist, and author of 101 Ways to Raise Your EQ: How to Be Successful by Developing Your Emotional Intelligence. To obtain a copy, send a double-stamped, self-addressed, business-sized envelope and \$5 to the *Right Smarts* at the above address.

Work on EQ

Ten Ways to Raise Your EQ

- 1. Find a pacer.** Hang out with people who are smarter, better educated, and more highly developed than you are. You will stretch yourself to keep pace.
- 2. Go back to school.** Education is one of the best ways to increase your EQ.
- 3. Read something besides the newspapers.** Upgrade the quality of what you read to increase your exposure to great thinkers.
- 4. Read. Period.**
- 5. Manage your anger.** Learn to soothe yourself when your temper is hot. Develop a ritual for calming yourself when you feel ready to erupt.
- 6. Learn to appreciate the arts.** They are an expression of the emotional life of people with highly developed sensibilities. Exposure to the arts develops your own sensibilities.
- 7. Hire a coach.** Ancient wisdom says when you're ready the teacher will appear. Till then, consider hiring someone to coach you in the skills you want to develop.
- 8. Travel,** especially outside your own culture. It helps you see other ways of viewing the world.
- 9. Keep a journal.** It's a wonderful way to observe your own growth and see patterns in what you're thinking and feeling.
- 10. Learn from difficult people.** Instead of thinking, "Get this person outta here," observe carefully to discover what the lessons are.

EQ can be developed forever and by anybody.

One way to raise your EQ is to have a child, or adopt one.