



Why EQ matters more than IQ

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

The last two months I have written columns about the emotions of passion and fear. This laid groundwork for an even more important subject, in my opinion, emotional intelligence. What is emotional intelligence (EQ), and why does it matter more than IQ? Emotional intelligence is the study of how we produce and use our emotions. Our society as a whole places a great deal of emphasis on the cognitive processing of information. The general sentiment in our society is that emotions cloud our thinking and should be left out of decision making. This thinking couldn't be further from the truth. Actually, there is a very loose correlation between intelligence and success in life. On the other hand there is a significant correlation between EQ and success and happiness.

Daniel Goleman has done a significant amount of research in this area. In one of his earliest experiments he took a group of first graders and put a marshmallow in front of them. He told them he was leaving the room for five minutes. If the marshmallow was still there when he got back they would get another marshmallow. What is amazing is that Goleman then tracked those children's matriculation process through school. Those children who had the discipline to wait for the second marshmallow had far greater graduation rates, lower levels of truancy, and fewer problems with mental illness than their counterparts who couldn't delay gratification. This experiment predicted the success of these children far more accurately than their IQ. I find this to be amazing!

Additional research is equally compelling. As I said earlier, many people feel they could think more rationally if they could cut their emotions out of the equation. Research by Antonio Damasio appears to discredit this position. Damasio's subjects are patients who have lost the ability to understand their emotions because the electrical connections were crushed from sinus cancer. These individuals show NO DECREASE IN IQ from their cancer. Their brains appear to function normally; they just can't process emotions. The end result is that these people are unable to hold jobs or remain in meaningful relationships.

In my experience many people try to avoid processing their emotions because doing so is, at times, uncomfortable. My suggestion is that this is a sure road to making oneself ineffective. Our emotions give us critical information we need to make decisions, think, and be in relationships. Far from trying to distract ourselves from what our emotions are telling us, I believe we would all be much better off if we got in the habit of assessing what we are feeling and then using this information to assist us in living our daily lives.

This immediately leads us to the question of how one becomes more emotionally intelligent. That is a fairly complex discussion that will be presented in next months' ezine.