

# Smart and Fast Are Not Enough

## The Importance of Increased Emotional Intelligence to the Success of Your Mediation Practice and Your Life

*By Irene Becker, CCTA, Just Coach It - Executive and Personal Coaching at the Speed of Change, for the American Society of Conflict Resolution, November 2005*

Building a mediation or a dispute resolution practice of professional excellence and success requires more than skill, intellect and training. It requires the ability to manage and regulate the emotions that create transparent communication and trust. IQ may get you the job, but EQ will get you the promotion.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ or EI) is a hot topic today. The reasons for its importance are threefold:

- 1. Emotional Intelligence is recognized to be one of the most important predictors of personal, business and professional success.**
- 2. With appropriate education and training, Emotional Intelligence can be developed throughout our lives.**
- 3. In a world of unprecedented change and challenge it is our ability to increase our EQ that will help us build the leadership, transparent communication and collaboration to lead better lives, do better business and contribute to a better world.**

Like most human competencies, Emotional Intelligence is best increased in the learning and the doing, and that is why EQ focused coaching is so powerful, helping clients not only learn about EQ but integrate strategies and solutions that increase EQ in their lives and careers.

We believe that awareness is the most important of EQ competencies because it is the building block upon which our emotional intelligence can grow and thrive, as such this article is divided into four parts that will help you become more aware of:

- 1. What Emotional Intelligence is.**
- 2. How the human brain is constructed to be Emotionally Intelligent.**
- 3. The basic components or competencies of Emotional Intelligence.**
- 4. The critical importance of Emotional Intelligence to building a successful mediation/dispute resolution practice and a successful life at the speed of change.**

## **PART ONE: WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?**

Emotional intelligence (EQ or EI) is a set of abilities or competencies that enable us to understand and manage ourselves and our emotions effectively. EQ also helps us understand and effectively relate to others. Stress tolerance, leadership, communication, collaboration, social responsibility, problem solving, creativity and self-actualization all require high EQ. With appropriate education and training, EQ can be developed over our lifespan.

*"In a study of skills that distinguish star performers in every field from entry-level jobs to executive positions, the single most important factor was not IQ, advanced degrees, or technical experience, it was EQ. Of the competencies required for excellence in performance in the job studies, 67% were emotional competencies."*

*Working with Emotional Intelligence, by Daniel Goleman*

Whether Americans are by nature attuned to fighting for what they perceive are their rights; or the amount of litigation that is done in the United States reflects the need for the increased emotional intelligence competencies that can mitigate dispute, no one will argue with the fact that the United States is a very litigious nation.

America has 281 lawyers for every 100,000 people, compared to Britain with 94, 33 in France and a mere 7 in Japan. Conflict resolution and mediation are fields of practice that will continue to grow as the demands and stressors of a changing world fuel the lack of communication that creates disputes, and because there is a growing recognition of the financial and emotional cost of going to trial and engaging in adversarial litigation. Emotional Intelligence is a requirement for successful mediation or dispute resolution.

IQ may get you the client, but your EQ skills will help you keep the client and build a growing practice. Why? Because, while human beings like to intellectualize their decisions to purchase a product or a service, the bottom line remains that we buy services and products from those we trust and like. It is our ability to trust and like another person that makes us feel comfortable with the relationship and propels the desire to have or to purchase something from them. And, in a situation where we need to mediate a dispute, the desires to feel good and to feel validated are the primary drivers that help us select a mediator or dispute resolution specialist.

And yet, how many clients come to mediation or dispute resolution somewhat injured or skeptical at the very concept of a win win situation because they are so full of anger, frustration, fear, or any combination of the three? How much of the process of successful mediation compromised by clients whose feelings of

mistrust, acrimony and the pervasive sense of invalidation overtake reason and make it difficult for them to even conceive of a win-win situation?

How can those who mediate conflict use the very emotions that have created the conflict to bring both parties to the table, to start to ignite the transparent communication that will set the stage for successful mediation? By increasing, expressing and modeling your EQ competencies and coaching your clients into an emotionally intelligent platform of communication that helps them increase their own EQ competence.

To get a better understanding at the power of emotional intelligence lets take a look at how our human brains are constructed to be emotionally intelligent.

## **PART TWO: OUR BRAIN CONSTRUCTED TO BE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT**

What we call the oldest part of our brain is the Reptilian Brain. It is a bulb that sits at the top of the spinal cord. This brain is several hundred million years old. It controls very rudimentary things -- breathing, swallowing, and heartbeat, the visual tracking system that a frog uses to snap up flies, or the startle reflex that human infants are born with. For reptiles, it is a life of simple choices: Do I eat it? Do I ignore it? Do I run away? Do I mate with it? Creatures like reptiles do not have emotions; they *act without thinking*. They live a life of reflexive action... they live a life that is propelled and compelled by the Reptilian Brain.

Survival reactions (as opposed to emotions) come from our Reptilian Brain and they are stronger than those based on thought processes because we need them to survive. If, for instance, someone shoves a knife in your face, your reaction is going to be extreme. Your brain doesn't *want* you to think; that would slow you down. When you sense the knife being shoved into your face, your reptilian brain kicks off an all-systems-go alert, because it needs you to *act immediately without thinking*. When a human being perceives what they believe to be a danger or a threat to their wellbeing or survival, the Reptilian Brain kicks into action and pushes us to act without thinking.

The next part of the brain to evolve in human beings and other mammals was the limbic brain. The limbic brain can be expressive and can intuit, but it doesn't reason and it isn't logical, and it doesn't respond to our will. It can be *influenced* but that's about it. The role of the limbic brain is pivotal to human functioning because it is what makes our relationships possible. It is this part of our brain that helps us bond with our mates, care for our young, desire companionship, sing, or create vocal communication and play. The ability to create art, poetry, symbols, metaphors, parables and to feel responsibility, morals, duty, ethics and social responsibility probably reside in this part of the brain also... because all of these relate to our attachments and bonds with others. Less evolved, non

mammalian creatures like reptiles do not have a limbic brain. They are therefore unable to process feelings, bond, care, desire companionship, create vocal communication, sing or play.

The functions of the Reptilian Brain and the Limbic System are involuntary, and values are neutral. This means that our bodies and our Reptilian Brain and Limbic System respond chemically and instinctively in ways that we do not fully understand, whether we are consciously aware of them or not. While what a healthy, well balanced person does with his/her feelings is under their control, the actual emotions that we feel are not. The Reptilian and the Limbic System will not take orders, rather they work to send us signals about our feelings so we can tune into these signals and stay safe. Of course, we all know that just because you *feel* something doesn't mean it's always beneficial to *act* upon it. If a person has trouble controlling his or her impulses they need to seek professional help.

The ability to control behavior and actions in the face of very strong emotions is created in the third part of the brain, the Neo Cortex. The Neo Cortex is the largest part of the brain and it weighs approximately three pounds. Neo means "new" and the Neo Cortex is the most recently evolved part of our brain. It is the seat of our thinking, logic and reasoning. This brain is not only large, but it has two hemispheres - right and left. The left hemisphere or "left brain" makes linear, logical, step by step plans. The right hemisphere or "right brain" generates ideas, language and creative thought. The Neo Cortex is the only part that can use abstract symbols like math and words.

This part of the brain, the Neo Cortex, is the one most people are most familiar with, so we tend to think of it as *the* brain. Western civilization has almost worshiped logic and reason for centuries--well at least since the Age of Reason. We have put so much emphasis on education through words, ideas, and logic that we tend to forget--if we ever knew--that these things mean nothing to 2 brains out of our 3.

The Neo Cortex is the center for all our higher-level, "civilized" functioning - language, physics, math, analysis... It can modulate feelings and integrate them, and it can *talk* about them. However, to solve problems, we need the Reptilian Brain, Limbic System and Neo Cortex to be working together. Making good decisions means engaging the emotional intelligence, and that demands getting in touch with our feelings and using the Reptilian, Limbic and Neo Cortex in coordination:

- Reptilian = instincts (involuntary)
- Limbic = emotions (involuntary)
- Neo Cortex = thought (voluntary)

It is the human ability to align instincts, emotions and thoughts that gives us the capacity to increase our emotional intelligence. And it is the human ability to use

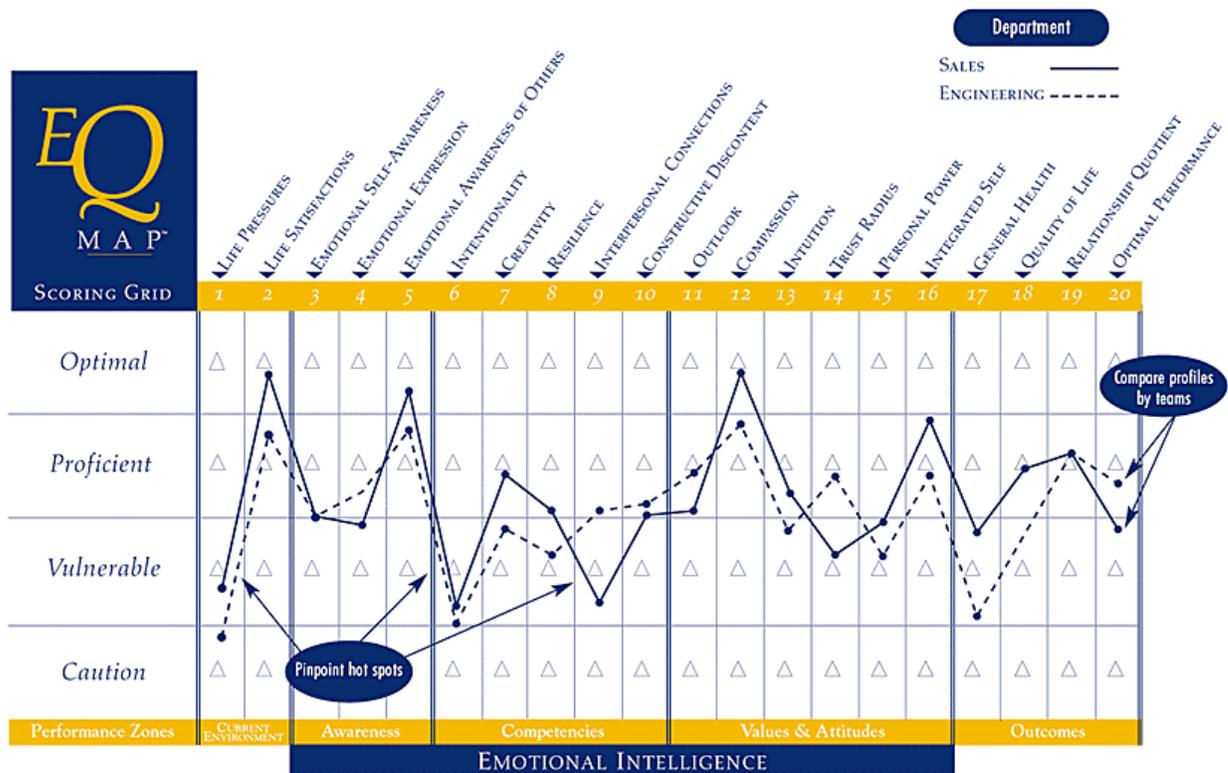
the changes, challenges and even crucibles we face to develop self awareness, emotional management and regulation that helps us feel better, lead better, communicate better and succeed better.

### **PART THREE: UNDERSTANDING THE GENERAL EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE COMPETENCIES**

Here are the major emotional intelligence competencies that make up a fully integrated personality as well as a sample of a state of the art assessment that measures EQ.

1. **Emotional Self-awareness** - The degree to which you are able to notice your feelings, label them and attribute them properly.
2. **Emotional Expression** – The ability to express your feelings and gut-level instincts. Emotional expression is an integral part of your day.
3. **Emotional Awareness of Others** - The ability to hear, sense or intuit what other people may be feeling from their words, body language (non verbal) or other direct or indirect clues.
4. **Creativity** – Tapping into the multiple non-cognitive resources that help us envision new ideas, frame alternative solutions, and find effective ways of doing things.
5. **Resilience/Flexibility/Adaptability.** The ability to bounce back, be flexible, and retain curiosity and hope in the face of adversity, change or challenge.
6. **Interpersonal Connections** - Creating and sustaining a network of people with whom you can be your real and whole self.
7. **Constructive Discontent** – The ability to stay calm focused and emotionally grounded in disagreement or conflict.
8. **Outlook/Optimism** - Being positive and optimistic.
9. **Compassion/Empathy** - The ability to be empathic, appreciate and honor others' feelings.
10. **Intuition** - The ability to notice, trust and use your hunches, gut-level reactions, and other non-cognitive responses produced by the senses, emotions, mind and body.

11. **Intentionality:** Saying what you mean and meaning what you say; being willing to forego distractions and temptations in order to be responsible for your actions and your motives.
12. **Trust radius** - Believing people are "good" until proven otherwise-Alternatively overcoming being too trusting.
13. **Personal Power** - Believing you can meet challenges and live the life you choose.



The personal and professional imperatives for understanding and increasing EQ are unassailable.

**IQ may get you the job, but EQ will help you achieve continued professional and personal success.**

The engagement of increased EQ drives successful dispute resolution and conflict mediation. Excellent mediation means modeling the clients' EQ competencies and further to help the clients increase their EQ where lacking and create anew transparency of communication, trust and collaboration - that will make win-win solutions possible.

**Here are four important reasons to consider about the value of EQ coaching in your life and your mediation or ADR practice:**

1. **Conflict resolution is a human process.** We need to focus on the rational decision making process and the facts at hand, but it is emotions that both fuel the fire of conflict and resolve them. It takes EQ skills both to evaluate the clients and to understand the real problems at hand that are fueling conflict.
2. **Conflict resolution demands communication. Communication in the face of conflict demands high EQ.** Part of the process of resolving conflict is allowing the parties involved to educate one another about their respective positions and to also come to a mutual understanding of one another. And while we know that 90% of communication is non-verbal, we are often so focused on the facts that we forget the feelings. Emotion is what non-verbal communication is made of.
3. **EQ coaching is a powerful way that you can learn how to better read your clients, understand their feelings and use what they are feeling to help them move past conflict** by helping both parties increase their EQ and also educate each other in a mediator directed dialogue that focuses on issues that clients might not have even realized were fueling the conflict at hand.
4. **Increasing EQ competencies will help you to create a greater quality of life and career** by helping you develop better strategies and solutions that disengage stress and increase motivation, interpersonal communication and collaboration.

## **PART FOUR: THE ROLE OF EQ IN SUCCESSFUL MEDIATION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

The engagement of increased EQ drives successful dispute resolution and conflict mediation. Excellent mediation means modeling the clients' EQ competencies and further to help the clients increase their EQ where lacking and create anew transparency of communication, trust and collaboration - that will make win-win solutions possible.

While all the EQ competencies are important to dispute resolution and mediation there are three EQ competencies in particular that can make or break the process: Flexibility/resilience, Creativity and Intentionality.

While flexibility/resilience, intentionality and creativity are the building blocks of dispute resolution and mediation they are also the most difficult to attain just by virtue of the fact that they are thwarted by fear and anger. Unfortunately the emotions of fear and anger that perpetuate dispute and conflict also distort and deflect communication and resolution because they are stronger than reason and related to our Reptilian Brain. When we are overcome with feelings of anger and fear our reason is clouded and the very anger and fear we feel takes us farther and farther away from a rational point of view.

We like to think we're rational beings, but most decisions are made on the basis of how *we feel about the facts we've uncovered. Emotions, not facts, move people.* Hence the key abilities are to use the changes and challenges at hand to understand and be aware of what really matters to the client, how they need to be validated, what they really want and what can make them feel that using their ability to be more flexible, embrace more creative solutions by remembering their basic intention or goals.

"Motivation" and "emotion" come from the same root and both are contagious. The ability to model empathy (an EQ competency) while also demonstrating management and regulation of emotions (an EQ competency) is one of the strongest ways that we can mediate conflict. Modeling empathy, management and regulation of emotions is important because emotions are contagious and have the ability to move us either away from our desired goal or towards our desired goal faster than a speeding bullet.

Keeping your pulse on what is really happening means more than understanding the logic of what is being said or proposed, it means being able to get into the client's skin if you will; being able to understand the feeling behind their communication, the true desire behind what they feel they need and using what they are feeling to create to mastermind a resolution to conflict.

Successful mediation or dispute resolution requires knowledge, training, professional excellence, integrity, agility and creativity of thought... but, of equal import, it requires the engagement of high emotional intelligence competencies that help both the mediator and clients tap into the emotions, thoughts and actions that create a resolve to perceived discrimination.

And the good news is that not only can EQ competencies be increased, but your ability to increase, model and express high EQ will be pivotal, not only in setting the stage for better professional results, but in helping you build a better life at the speed of change.

At a time when the World Health Organization is forecasting that stress will be the major cause of disability by the year 2020, understanding, increasing and engaging your emotional intelligence and developing your ability to coach EQ is not only critical to the excellence and success of your mediation or dispute resolution practice, but it is an investment in the quality, excellence and success of your life.

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