

Applied Emotional Intelligence

Maximising Your Organisation's Potential

Date: Wednesday 20 September 2006

Times: 8.45am to 5.30pm

Venue: Marriott Hotel Slough/Windsor

www.emotionalintelligence.co.uk/conference



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It's all about attitude

Reflective Learning by Tim Sparrow and Jo Maddocks

So far we have looked at scales 1 to 4 of the *ie*[™]. This month, surprisingly enough, we do not look at Scale 5 Emotional Resilience – that is for next month. But what we are examining this month is the new Scale 17 to form part of the new Self Knowledge section which is essentially self awareness over time. This will be in the revised version of the *ie*[™] due to appear this autumn. We have called this new scale Reflective Learning, and unlike the other scales it is not really an aspect of emotional intelligence itself, but is a vital prerequisite for emotional intelligence. Indeed, some people say it is the one single thing that most differentiates the emotionally intelligent from the emotionally unintelligent. The extent to which you practise reflective learning, you are likely to be in broad terms emotionally intelligent, and, the extent to which you are in broad terms emotionally intelligent, you are likely to practise reflective learning.

The importance of this process becomes clear if we consider the distinction, and the relationship, between awareness and knowledge, that is to say between self awareness and self knowledge and between awareness of others and knowledge of others. You will be familiar by now with our basic model of the processes of emotional intelligences:



1. Self Regard
2. Regard for Others
3. Self Awareness
4. Awareness of Others
5. Emotional Resilience
6. Personal Power
7. Goal Directedness
8. Flexibility
9. Personal Openness
10. Trustworthiness
11. Trust
12. Balanced Outlook
13. Emotional Expression & Control
14. Conflict Handling
15. Interdependence
16. Self Assessed EI

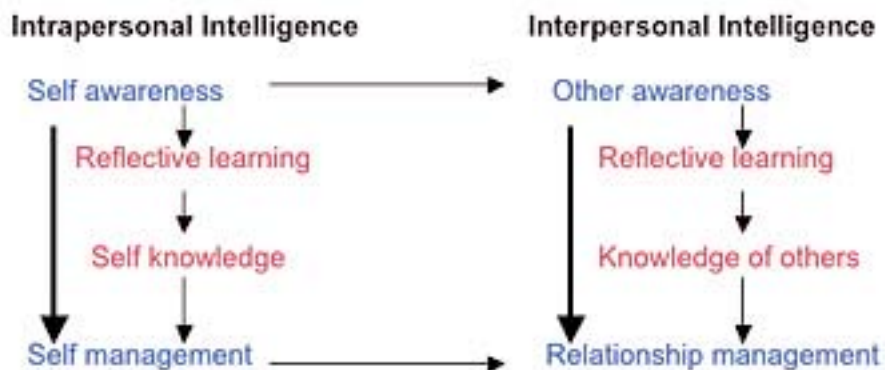
This suggests that in order to self manage effectively all you need is self awareness, and in order to manage your relationships effectively all you need is awareness of others and the capacity to self manage, but that is a bit of an oversimplification. We may be exquisitely aware of where we or someone else is at, and yet not know what to do about it. For that we need also to know how we, or they, work. We need not just self awareness or other awareness but self knowledge and knowledge of others (individual others or others in general) too.

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The basic distinction between these two types of entity is one of time scale, between the short-term and the long term. Self awareness, for example, is now-focussed. It is about being aware of what is going on in our body in this instant. Whereas self knowledge is more long term: it is about understanding how we work, and about the significance for us of our current bodily states, and what we need to do about them. Self awareness is converted into self knowledge by the process of reflective learning. The distinction between awareness of others and knowledge of others is exactly parallel.

In other words, to be accurate – if somewhat more complicated – our model of the processes of emotional intelligence needs to be developed to look like this:



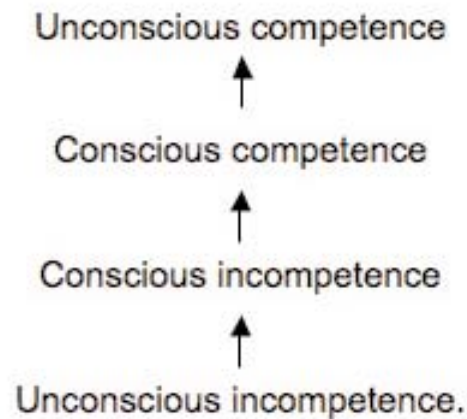
So not only do we need awareness in the moment for its own sake, but also we need to adopt the practice of reflecting on our experience and so converting our self awareness over time (a succession of moments) into self knowledge, and our awarenesses of others over time into knowledge of how individual other people, and other people in general, work.

It is this practice that the new scale of Reflective Learning measures, and it is defined as “the degree to which you enhance your emotional intelligence by (i) reflecting on what you and others feel, think and do, (ii) noticing the outcomes these produce, and (iii) altering your patterns as necessary.”

The practice of reflective learning is part of a continuous process of learning and developing: I become aware of my next experience, reflect upon it and evaluate it in relation to my other experiences and reinforce or revise my self knowledge.

Similarly to the other scales of the *ie*[™], our capacity for reflective learning is much affected by our life position. To learn effectively about how we and others work we need to be able to observe and evaluate our experience dispassionately, from an “I’m OK, You’re OK” position. If we believe we are Not OK, that will interfere with our learning of how other people, and particularly how we ourselves, work. Judgment will intervene to limit the accuracy and the subtlety of our perception. And similarly, if we believe that others are Not OK, then that will interfere with our learning of how we, and particularly how other people, work.

So if reflective learning is a crucial mechanism for developing our emotional intelligence, what are the mechanisms for developing our practice of reflective learning? Different people will practice reflective learning differently. Some will do it consciously and formally and some will do it intuitively and en passant. Some will do it regularly and some will do it at irregular intervals.



If, however, you are seeking to develop an undeveloped habit of reflective learning, then there is a great deal to be said for doing it both formally and regularly. After all, as with most other forms of emotional intelligence development we are progressing through this developmental process:

The highly emotionally intelligent may practise their reflective learning with unconscious competence but as beginners we need first to develop our conscious competence.

Here are a few practical suggestions, some of which you may find useful:

1. Keep a journal or a learning log, recording in a special book (or a special folder in your computer) your learnings about how you and other people work. Review your experience and the potential learnings in it daily.
2. Review your performance regularly, e.g. after you have done anything significant such as a presentation, a meeting (maybe at work, maybe with family or friends), perhaps a party. Use these questions to help you draw out the learning available:
What worked, and went well, and why?
What didn't go so well, and why not?
What will I do different another time?
What have I learned from this experience and from reflecting on it?
3. It is sometimes difficult to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, so you could use a professional, such as a psychotherapist, counsellor or coach, to help you in the process. A cheaper alternative is to do this mutually with an individual colleague (as in "co-counselling"), or with fellow members of a learning set.

Pilot Version of Reflective Learning Scale

As this is a new scale, it may be helpful to close with a list of the questions in the pilot version we are currently trialling. (R = negative item, Reverse scored)

1. I review each day, my successes and failures, and identify what I have learned.
2. (R) I go through my life so busily that I don't find time much to stop and think about what I do and how I do it, and why.
3. I often ask myself Why? about my own behaviour and that of other people.
4. I notice what works and what doesn't, both for me internally and in my interactions with others, and change my patterns accordingly.
5. I develop my self-knowledge by regular conscious reflection.
6. I keep a diary or journal, which is more than just a record of my appointments or activities.
7. I plan my life ahead, and in so doing make use of what I have learned from reflecting on my past outcomes.
8. After any chunk of experience, I notice what has gone well, identify what I have learned, and decide what I will do differently in the future.
9. I am able to review what I, and other people, have done in a non-judgmental way so that I can get the full learning out of it.
10. (R) I am a doer rather than a thinker or a feeler: I don't see the point of mulling over the past rather than moving on to do the next thing.
11. I measure my achievements against my goals and work out why I did or didn't get what I wanted, and what I can learn from that
12. There are times when I reflect deeply about myself and change my patterns accordingly.
13. I regularly use a professional (e.g. a coach or a counsellor) to help me in my personal development, and to facilitate my learning from my experience.

If you would like to help us in the development process by completing this pilot version, please e-mail tim@appliedei.co.uk or jo@jca.biz for a response sheet.

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