

Personal Power by Tim Sparrow and Jo Maddocks

This series looks one by one at the various scales of the *ie*[™], measuring the different elements which go to make up the overall concept of Emotional Intelligence. We started by looking at the basic scales of Regard (1 and 2) and Awareness (3 and 4) and the new scale of Reflective Learning (to be No.17), and then started on the aspects of Self Management by looking at Emotional Resilience (5). The scales of Self Management are arranged in order of decreasing correlation with Self Regard (Scale 1), so the next one for us to look at is Scale 6, Personal Power.

Personal Power is defined as “the degree to which you believe that you are in charge of, and take responsibility for, your outcomes in life, rather than seeing yourself as the victim of circumstances and/or of other people.” This is the same thing that psychologists sometimes refer to as “locus of control”: I have the largest effect on my own outcomes, not you or anyone else, and not “the situation” or “the environment”. It is so important because there is a self-fulfilling prophecy here: if we believe that we are in charge of our destiny, then, lo and behold!, we are: we are powerful and effective. If, however, we see ourselves as passive victims of others or of circumstances, then that comes about too: we do become powerless victims. Personal power is therefore highly correlated with effective performance. This is the core of the connection between EI and performance, whether specifically job performance or more generally life outcomes.

Of course, it is true that often, indeed usually, we are not omnipotent: we are constrained in our choices and our outcomes are determined not just by ourselves but also by powerful others and/or by elements of the situation. But, as with the other aspects of EI, what is being tapped into here is an attitude, not the details of an actual situation. So one of the important elements in expanding our sense of personal power is to increase the recognition of the amount of our personal power even when it is limited by others' power or constrained by the situation. Particularly if you tend to underestimate your personal power, you need to register those occasions when you display it. So at the end of every day run over in your mind the ways in which during the day you have been effective physically (manual dexterity, sport), mentally, socially, personally (handling your feelings and managing yourself) and organisationally. In the process you will probably learn how to be even more effective, but that is not the point. The point is to register how effective you already are. Also, get recognition from others. Ask for praise and acknowledgement of your achievements, your impact and effectiveness.

A particular way to increase our sense of personal power is to follow the practice of recognising it and exercising it especially when it is limited. Sometimes it is true that we have little power: we are constrained by regulations, by circumstances, by authority, or by other powerful people. But there are always corners, however small, where we are free to exercise our power. So when you are feeling powerless, make sure that you identify the power you do have in the situation, exercise that and pay full attention to your impact when you do so. Even when you are forced to do something, you can choose when and how to do it.

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

The concept of choice will often arise when discussing the Personal Power scale on 'ie'. To what extent an individual believes they have choice and control over their behaviour is obviously fundamental to any personal development process. This is why our first mindset attitude that underpins the 'ie' scales and in particular Personal Power is "we are each of us in control and responsible for our actions". People with strong religious beliefs for example may believe that their behaviour is determined by the will of their God. We are not suggesting that the 'ie' has a monopoly on truth, but in such an example, we think it is necessary to understand what attitudes may be blocking the application of a person's choicefulness in determining her/his life i.e. her/his personal power.

We have already noted the high degree of correlation between levels of Self Regard (Scale 1) and Personal Power (Scale 6), but actually the relation between the two is even more intimate than the fact that they tend to co-vary.

In the *ie*™ Self Regard is treated as a single variable, effectively a unitary concept, but it may also be regarded as having three elements:

- A sense of unique, acceptable self
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of personal power.

We need to be high in all three of these to have truly high Self Regard. A sense of personal power, as measured in Scale 6, is therefore part of the overall sense of personal value, or Self Regard, as measured in Scale 1. It is also sometimes described, if you will forgive a bit of psychobabble, as our "sense of self-efficacy", which is generated by our perception of (and feedback from others about) how well we use our minds, how well we use our bodies, how adept we are socially, and how well we handle our feelings. It therefore is very close to the concept of "Self Confidence." Our sense of Personal Power is the point where our Self Esteem or Self Regard (which is about our being) overlaps with our Self Confidence (which is about our doing).

We hope that we have made clear how crucial our sense of personal power is to our overall life effectiveness. So let us give one further suggestion of how to augment it. Sometimes people's internal dialogue has the effect of undermining their sense of personal power, and we need to be careful to avoid that. A particularly critical area is the level of expectations we have of ourselves: we need to calibrate them appropriately. If you tend to set your sights low, to expect too little of yourself, you will seldom be stretched and have the experience of achievement against the odds, which would reinforce your sense of personal power. If you tend to set your sights too high, to expect too much of yourself, you will be setting yourself up to fail, and regular failure will undermine your sense of personal power. So you need to ensure that your goals are high enough to stretch you, not too easy to achieve, and yet low enough (below perfection!) to ensure that you more or less succeed most of the time.

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