

Emotional IQ in the Workplace

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I want to talk to you about the subject of emotional intelligence, but before I start I want to make a few comments. I've had some extraordinary life experiences. One of them is taking place right here, right now, and I pinch myself every once in a while and say, "How did this all happen? How did I actually get here? And how do I have the privilege of standing in front of you?" I've had several chapters in my life experience that I'll touch on briefly as a beginning.

The first is the opportunity to grow up in a wonderful family that took me all over the world, five of those years spent in India when I was a young boy. I learned a lot from my father about emotional intelligence, although at the time we didn't call it that. But certainly those experiences influenced me and have influenced the work I've done the rest of my life. The second is that I've had the opportunity, in a variety of settings, to observe and work with leaders as they grow and develop. Based on these experiences, I'm going to talk with you about both leadership and relationships, because so much of what makes leadership successful is about relationships.

I also use this word in the context of what all of you are facing, because I think that leadership is evidenced in so many ways and in so many places that it doesn't have to be me standing here in front of you as Chair of the Board, but it's what all of you evidence daily in your classes. It's you leading a team of students. It's you on the playing field. It's all of those things that we think of when we think of leadership. In the complex world we live in today, everybody has to be a leader, in every context in which we have an opportunity to do that.

I've experienced and observed leaders over the years, and I've had the opportunity to learn from some good ones and from some not-so-good ones. Part of what I'm going to share with you tonight really comes from that. During my years at Coopers & Lybrand I got to work with some extraordinary people, both inside and outside the firm. Being among the top professional services firms in the world, we worked with people I might never have had exposure to otherwise. One of them was Richard Boyatzis. Another was Annie McKee— people who were pioneers in this whole thing that we first called competency development. It was their colleague Dan Goleman who wrote the book that popularized the term

emotional intelligence to describe this comprehensive set of personal and relationship competencies. For the past twenty-five years I've been a student and practitioner of this concept.

Also during that time, and my lovely wife Ruth is here tonight, I had a wife and family who supported me in taking advantage of all of the opportunities that were presented to me. I dragged her from her home in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, all over the country, and the things I experienced along the way really gave me the opportunity to do what I do now.

Then, in the more recent period of my professional life, I've been working a lot with senior executives doing one-on-one coaching. These are mostly extraordinary people who are really good at what they do. What they have demonstrated for me is that it's a myth that it's good enough just to be smart. What we have learned is that being smart and having good cognitive skills is what gets you in the game. What will separate you and help you excel in your relationship and as a leader is developing and practicing the set of competencies we now recognize as emotional intelligence.

I am very much an adherent of the philosophy that leaders are made; they're not just born. The good news about that is that you can develop leadership ability. It's not something that you either have or don't have. So some of you may not get this, given where you are in your lives. But for me, who has been around this planet for a few years, it's incredible how much the complexity and the speed of change have really accelerated recently. And this simply adds to the challenge in developing as an effective leader. Perhaps some of that complexity has always been there, but part of it is that we are just more aware of it. I don't know if any of you saw the *Huntingdon Daily News* today, but there was a picture on the front of somebody working out in our fitness room with the T.V. and the constant news broadcast on air. With the kind of connectedness we experience in our lives today, we are inundated with things that many years ago we just simply didn't know. But the fact is, we do now. And the fact is, we have a different responsibility because of that. Whether it's ISIS or Ukraine or Ebola, whatever it is, that information overload that we're experiencing affects us and our ability to always be at our best, in relationships or in leading others. So let's talk about it.

I've alluded to this already. We need to think about what leadership is really about and the problem is that most of us focus on the how of leadership: how we execute, how we get things done, what strategies we will pursue. I can't tell you how many organizations and people I've worked with that are really good at this part. Yet nothing happens. The reason nothing happens is because we pay a lot less attention to why things get done or don't get done in organizations. Things like how leaders paint a compelling picture for people, how they engage people's emotions and so forth—really critical elements in this whole dynamic of leadership and in our relationships with each other.

What makes the whole equation even more complex is that when I grew up we still operated on a notion that was a product of the Industrial Revolution, an idea that one size fits all. We treated everybody,

at least in blocks of things, as kind of the same. I had a chance to work with many of the senior executives of Merrill Lynch in Florida earlier this year and Danny Meyer was there. I don't know if any of you have been to or live in New York City, but if so you may have been to one of Danny's restaurants like The Union Square Cafe. One of the things Danny said is that today is about mass customization. It's not about one size fits all, it's about one size fits one. When you think of leading organizations, what gets one of you engaged is going to be about strategy. What gets another person engaged is going to be about vision or a mission that relates to something that he or she is passionate about. What gets somebody else going is the opportunity to work on something and create and do something in a context that he or she loves. But it's not the same for everybody. So when you think about providing leadership in that context, it becomes much, much more of a challenge. But this is really what the exercise of successful leadership is all about.

There are several really important aspects about leadership and about relationships that I'm going to share with you this evening. I'm going to spend most of my time on the area of social and emotional intelligence. The effective use of power, what I call the key to influential relationships, is another aspect of leadership. There are all kinds of power. I'm not going to talk about all of those tonight because we don't have enough time. One aspect of power is that of the organizational role a person is in. So, for example, a professor has certain power over your lives. I have certain power that comes with being a chair of the Board of Trustees, and so forth and so on. Jim Troha has certain power as the president of the college. Lauren Bowen has certain power as the provost. So all of that is what we call legitimate power that comes with that role. Another element is the power of expertise. So one of the ways that we exercise power is by being an expert at something.

The one that we're all striving for when we think about applying power in a leadership context is what I call referent power. This is when you look at somebody whom you admire, and who is in a position of leadership and recognize that this is a person that you want to be like or emulate when you become a leader. As we think of the importance of power as part of this leadership equation I want to encourage each of you to focus on those aspects of power that are personal and more permanent. The thing that no one can take away from you is the ability to be the kind of person that others look at and say, "That's who I want to be like some day." I encourage you to build a set of skills that will help you become that sort of person.

The last is equally important, and that is the issue of responsible relationships and ethics. If you've studied it in your classes you've probably seen all kinds of examples of when ethics go bad and hopefully, of when it goes well. It is an important aspect of relationships and of your development as a leader. It's the question, "What do you stand for?" In other words: What are the things that really matter to you? What are the values that you hold that are unshakeable, and how do you express them in any kind of leadership role in which you might find yourself?

So what does the construct of social and emotional intelligence look like? The beginning point is self-awareness, because all of us, including me, are able to benefit from better understanding ourselves. All of this stuff about relationships we're talking about begins right here with a focus on self understanding. You can't ignore or skip this part and go to the next part.

The second part of this construct is the ability to understand the world from other people's points of view. I often say it's like being able to walk in somebody else's shoes. I have a client right now who has been number one in everything he's done in life since the beginning: number one in grade school, number one on his football team, number one in class all the way through, number one surgical resident, number one surgical team leader. I mean, you name it, probably one of the leading transplant surgeons in the country, and now what? He's finding himself in a context where he's not in the operating room any longer, and can't tell everyone what to do. And he says, "I don't have a clue as to how to do what I now need to do." So he says, "I've got to start focusing on this part of leadership."

Social awareness is a big part of it. I had one of the doctors I work with draw a picture on the board the first time I went to see him. He drew himself rolling down from the top with lots of little stick figures down below him. He said, "This is me, coming downhill, and it's not pretty for these people down below." I sat for a minute and looked at him, and said, "How do you think they feel?" He sat there for about five minutes, and wrote a few lines on his pad, and after a time looked up and said, "I don't have a clue." My response was that understanding how they feel would be a good starting point. I could tell you hundreds of similar stories, but these make the point. The ability to genuinely appreciate and understand other people is tremendous. I was a history major, so I still read a lot of history. If you ever read Doris Kearns Goodwin's book about Lincoln, *Team of Rivals*, you get a sense that a part of Lincoln's unique capability was an ability to understand what was going on for the other people in the room. That is so hard. One of the things I'm going to challenge you to do is to start to get mindful about not just what's going on for you when you walk into a room, but what is happening for everybody else. Self-management is the ability to control your own emotions and feelings and engage them when you need to in a productive way.

Finally, relationship management is the extension of all three: self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. These four skills begin with self-awareness. If you don't possess a comprehensive and grounded awareness of self, becoming competent in the three remaining spheres is simply not possible. If you master two of the three, your overall ability will be better. And if you know yourself, master self control, and develop your skills of understanding and awareness of others, you will be able to bring all of these to bear in developing and nurturing positive relationships and in being a leader who gets results. As I introduce these concepts I encourage you to go beyond listening to me at this moment and let a little part of your brain think about yourself in relation to some of these things. Part of what I'm

encouraging you to do is to engage with yourself and reflect on some of these skills. Ask yourself the following questions: What am I feeling and how are those feelings not only affecting me, but others? What values are important to me and how do they affect the decisions I make? Do I see myself as powerful? Do I see myself as someone who makes a difference? And if I do, great, but why do I? If I don't, what can I do to enhance those capabilities?

I'll start with self-awareness. I've talked about this a little bit, but this is really about how we develop a realistic understanding of who we are, what our capabilities are, what our limitations are. One of the reasons why really good leaders attract a team around them—people who have very diverse skill sets and very different capabilities—is because they're secure in themselves and they also understand what they're missing. They surround themselves with people who complement those strengths and weaknesses. The lucky thing is that you don't have to do everything really well. In other words, there are some things that are more important than others, and some things you can do instead of others. When we consider all four of those quadrants, we don't have to have equal competency in all of them. There are some things that you can't skip. For example, self-awareness, the accurate understanding of who we are, is at the foundation of strong emotional intelligence skills.

We can then progress to self-management. If I come into a meeting and I'm not happy and I don't even say hello to you or I grumble or complain to you, how do you feel? How long does it take you to get to where I am? Approximately thirty seconds. Why is that? The reason is because we're emotionally wired to perceive feelings in each other. We are built as human beings to read each other. We don't always understand what we experience. We don't always pay attention to it. We don't always know what it is that's going on, but we are built to react to each other. This becomes an even deeper reaction when it involves a person of authority in our lives. So the extent to which you have, in the context of any relationship, a dominant kind of relationship to someone else, the effect of that is that your emotions are completely contagious.

The other thing that I would like to talk about here is about what you say. Part of the problem we have as human beings is we often open our mouths without engaging our brains. All of the ways we have to do that these days, beginning with our email communications and then the instant opportunities to respond like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest, make the problem even worse. One of the things that I encourage people to think about in this context is to pause and reflect on this question: Is what I'm about to do or what I'm about to say right now going to have the effect that I want? Hard thing to do, but because we're in this place where we act before we engage this front part of our brain, it is really important.

Now that you have good self-control and self-understanding, you progress to more sophisticated areas of social development where you start looking at others and learning to deal effectively with conflict—difficult and complex situations affecting those around you—in a productive way.

Even with a mastery of these emotional intelligence competences, what often gets in the way of our ability to be effective in our relationships and as leaders? We recognized earlier the complexity of the world in which we live and the stress that complexity creates in our lives. If we are to sustain our effectiveness personally and as leaders we must learn to deal with this stress. We must have effective ways of stepping back and diminishing the stress in our lives through some period of personal renewal. People do this in different ways, but one of the aspects of this, and it's a very conscious kind of thing, is the ability to extend ourselves to other people. Just the act of caring and compassion is something that is renewing for most people.

When you put these skills together and really work on the continued development of your emotional competencies, you are going to have a huge impact on your organization as a leader. But how do you get there? You begin with being mindful and then extend those skills to relationships with others. Part of how we learn about ourselves, part of how we learn about our relationships, is by being attuned to what's going on around us. It's interesting, and often hard because when we enter a relationship, we enter some place where we have to extend ourselves as a leader. We get lost in thinking about our own performance and reacting to the stress that it brings with it and we miss the things that are going on around us.

We've talked throughout about the stress that comes with our everyday lives and with the responsibility of leadership, whether in personal relationships or in the context of the organizations we run. The cumulative effect of stress causes even those leaders who have exceptional skills to lose the ability to exercise them. Stress affects our ability to think creatively and to act as we know best.

What we know from years and years of research is that leaders who recognize the effects of this stress and who find ways to effectively manage it have an extraordinarily greater capacity to think clearly, to solve problems, and to be effective in their roles. I coached a very senior guy who was managing a global, highly-competitive part of an organization. He was perpetually stressed and also under that impression that the more stress he was under, the better he would get at dealing with it. As we progressed with our work, we had an opportunity to talk about the ways in which he took time for himself and focused on relieving some of the stress. Knowing his tendency to seek this through physical activity I asked if he had ever considered any form of meditation as a way to relieve stress and at the same time increase his ability to be mindful. His initial response was "That stuff is not for me." Then about six months later he said to me, "Bob, you know what's happened to me? I hired a yoga instructor about six months ago and he comes to my house three days a week and it has been incredible for me. By allowing

me to get rid of all the stuff that I live with every day, the enormity of running the business, it has allowed me to get in tune with myself. It has allowed me to renew myself. In the process of doing that, of becoming more mindful of what's going on for me, I have gotten a whole lot better at my job. I am finding clarity in better understanding the problems that I've had with this team and in leading this team. I mean, all of a sudden solutions are coming to me that I never saw before."

So in addition to dealing with a stressful world, what else gets in the way? If being an emotionally intelligent leader were that easy we'd all be experts at it, right? Let's talk a little bit about the brain, and how it gets in our way. Imagine that your arm is your brain stem. The palm of your hand would be your limbic system. It takes care of all those normal functions that we don't have to think about every day, and that you don't want to think about, like breathing and stuff like that. Your thumb represents a part of the brain called the amygdala. Tuck it in next to your palm and then when you fold your four fingers over it, you have a brain. The reason your amygdala gets you in trouble is because when you're under stress it triggers your feelings before your frontal cortex is able to think. So, you do what? You flip your lid. Humans do this in different ways. Some of us get angry. Others just withdraw. Others get moody and mopey. This little guy, the amygdala, served us very well when we were out hunting on the plains and it was the old flight-or-fight response. If our ancestors hadn't had it, we wouldn't be sitting here in this room. Well, that's the good news. The bad news is that ten thousand years or so of evolution hasn't gotten rid of it. It's still there and it still does serve us well, but when you think about becoming more emotionally intelligent, this guy gets in the way.

When something frightens you or something scares you, where do you feel it first? Where do you experience fear first, when the ball is coming at you? Most of us feel it physically in our gut. There are times in our lives when acting before we think is good for us and protects us. When it doesn't work is when we're trying to be the best we can be with each other, and as leaders. Learn to create spaces between feeling and acting. What we can do is begin to become much more conscious about the feeling and about not opening our mouth or writing that email right away. Every time something happens and you feel like jumping to a response, we all have this tiny little space where we can choose to do or say something else. Practice controlling that space. It'll serve you well because you will find yourself in situations where you'll get angry and you'll say things that you wish you hadn't.

We've also talked about the cumulative effect of stress adding to what gets us in trouble as leaders. In the beginning of my talk this evening we started with the poor guy at the gym watching the video screen while he's trying to get himself in shape. We live in a context and in a world where the stress is constant. When we were on the plains and we were hunting lions and buffalo and things like that, when we got done we'd drag our food back to the cave and we could then sit for three or four months and paint

pictures on the wall and recover. Today we don't have the luxury of getting away any longer. Anybody feel stressed right now? I could give you stress meters and you would all probably be off the charts.

So you can't be an emotionally intelligent and effective leader if you're stressed all the time. In our better understanding of stress today, we know that we can't prepare for it. It's not like lifting weights at the gym and bulking up. It doesn't work that way. The only way to deal with it is to find ways of reducing it. Each of us deals with stress in different ways, but the important thing to keep in mind as you consider dealing with the stress in your own life is the need to find the place for you that works to bring that stress level down. If you have any hope of being the kind of leader that I know you want to be, of having the kind of relationships that I know you want to have, then you need to also find ways to enable self-renewal.

A lot of us do this physically. A lot of us do this in more intellectual ways. Some of us do it through our relationships and families. Whatever way it is that you have your own escape and place of renewal, it's important that you understand that and that you find it. It's a conscious process; it doesn't just happen. It's both physiological and psychological. It happens in both of those dimensions.

I didn't talk a lot about hope and compassion. I talked a little about mindfulness, but hope and compassion really work for people, because hope is about creating a context in which you and others around you see the things that are possible in this world. To the extent that we can do that, it's rejuvenating for us. And compassion arises from the expression of empathy. Any time you can reach out a hand to someone else, it makes a difference for you as well.

Here are some things to practice. I'm going to give you a few things that are more personal and inward focused and a couple things that are in relationship to others. The only person you're accountable to for this is yourself.

The first of these is keeping a journal. This does a couple things for you. One, it forces you to stop everything else and to sit back and reflect. It's a way to disengage and purposefully think about what's going on in your life. Second, it provides a record. It's something you can look back to as you grow and develop. It's a way of checking in with that.

The second idea is to develop your own board of directors. Why do I say that? Because I want you to think consciously about having people around you and in your life who can be the kind of people whom you can open up to about who you are, whom you can be transparent with, whom you can share your dreams and aspirations with, whom you can tell what it is you are trying to achieve in this life. These are the people who will call you on it when you aren't as effective as you want to be, who will give you a kick in the tail or pat on the back when you need it, and who will refuse to be confluent with you and say, "That's okay. I understand."

To tell you a quick story, years ago I was working with the CEO of a \$400 million company and he said to me that he had to grow the company to three billion or it wouldn't survive. So we were sitting talking one day and he had been the CFO before and now he was the CEO and he looked at me and said, "Bob, I don't have a clue what I'm supposed to do as a CEO of a \$400 million company, much less a \$3 billion company." I said to him, "Do you have anybody in your life that you trust and have the confidence in to whom you could call and say exactly what you said to me?" He thought about it for a while and then shook his head and replied, "I don't have anybody I would be willing to do that with." I pushed him to think about it a little more. Finally he said, "I think I do. I think there's one person that I might be able to reach out to." Fast-forward about ten or twelve years. I saw him at breakfast one morning and he called me over and said, "I called that guy, and he and I have talked at least once a week every single week for the last twelve years. I now have a three billion dollar company and his is about two and a half, and the support we were able to give each other was so important to both of us."

The challenge in some leadership positions is that when you look behind you, who's there? Nobody. It's not an easy place to be. All of us, at different stages of life, experience being in a place that is not easy for us, where it's hard to find the answer. Having people that you can call on to be on your personal board of directors is really a great gift to yourself, and it'll be a great gift to them as well.

Here's another one I like. If I say, "Isaiah, that was a really good idea you gave me, but..." What happens? Well, if you're Isaiah of course you don't really like my idea. We all use the word "but," right? When you think about being sensitive to where other people are coming from, one of the simple things you can do is, instead of "but" say "and." For example, "That's great, and let me add some other things to that too." So every time you want to say "but," try to find a way to say "and," and see what happens to the people that you're communicating with.

Last one: one of the things when I was in graduate school that really impressed me, that I've certainly tried to work on and I'll never get as good as I hope to, is listening. Few people listen to understand; most listen to respond. Think about the conversations you have. You are in conversation with somebody and they are talking to you, and what's going on in your head? You're thinking, "What am I going to say next?" Whenever you're doing that, you're not really hearing what's going on. So one of the things when you're trying to work on this whole social awareness thing, this awareness of others, is to really tune in to listening and make sure you understand, because all of us forget stuff. I-we-you project from our own experiences and our own expectations and our own values, and so automatically we are looking to respond to things in ways that are more about us than about the person who is talking. So try to get more listening-to-understand skills here. It's hard to do, because we're more used to thinking about ways to respond.

As I leave you this evening I wish all of you a great journey of leadership wherever that takes you, and a great journey in the relationships you have, and I encourage you to stand for what you believe in and to make a difference in this world. You have a great opportunity here to leave this place and really do great things, as others who have gone before you, and this world desperately needs your leadership.