

Daniel Goleman – Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence is a concept based on how well an individual or group deals with emotions. Daniel Goleman's approach to emotional intelligence has five basic competencies: *self-awareness*, *self-regulation*, *motivation*, *empathy*, and *social skills*: This paper demonstrates how many of these competencies are linked to conflict resolution and how an individual's emotional intelligence may be an indicator as to their effectiveness as a conflict management practitioner.

Daniel Goleman – Emotional Intelligence

“All societies, communities, organizations, and interpersonal relationships experience conflict at one time or another in the process of day-to-day interactions” (Moore 2003, xi). Conflicts can be an emotional situation for the involved parties. By that same logic, conflict resolution must deal with these emotions. How an individual handles emotions, both in themselves and in others, is partly determined by their emotional intelligence. Many of the five competencies that Daniel Goleman states comprise emotional intelligence are also traits desired in conflict management practitioners.

Background

Emotional intelligence (EI), also expressed as EQ (emotional quotient), is not new. Publications containing the basic concepts or constructs of the theory existed as early as the 1930's. People like Edward Thorndike, Abraham Maslow, and Howard Gardner have introduced or dealt with various portions of the theory throughout the 20th century. In 1985, Wayne Payne introduced the world to the term *emotional intelligence* and in 1987, Keith Beasley used the term *emotional quotient* in an article published in *Mensa Magazine* (Cherry n.d.). In 1990, “Psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer publish their landmark article, ‘Emotional Intelligence,’ in the journal *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*” (Cherry n.d.). Daniel Goleman based his work on many of these earlier pioneers.

About Daniel Goleman

According to danielgoleman.info, "Daniel Goleman is an internationally known psychologist who lectures frequently to professional groups, business audiences, and on college campuses." He is also the author of the bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence*, among other well-known titles¹. Born in California in 1946, Daniel Goleman attended Amhurst College, the University of California - Berkley, and Harvard, where he did his doctoral research on meditation.

Besides the many book titles Daniel Goleman has penned, he also worked for the *New York Times*, writing about psychology and related fields: Goleman's work as a science journalist has been recognized with many awards, including the Washburn Award for science journalism, a Lifetime Career Award from the American Psychological Association, and he was made a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in recognition of his communicating science to the general public (danielgoleman.info n.d.).

Additionally, he published an article in the Harvard Business Review. This article, "What Makes a Leader?", "became the Review's most-requested reprint to that point" (danielgoleman.info n.d.). As is evidenced, Daniel Goleman did not originally conceive the concept of EI. However, in 1995 he brought the term to mainstream America (and the world) with the publication of his book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More than*

IQ and has spent a significant portion of his career, expanding these ideas and connecting his theory to practical applications.

Emotional Intelligence

In defining EI, Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade (2008, 511) state, "Emotional intelligence concerns the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought." Daniel Goleman (2008, 317) further defines it as, "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships." Both definitions are similar but Mayer et-al focus on linking emotions to cognitive thought where Goleman alludes to identifying and harnessing emotions for dealing with relationships and motivation.

There are several models of emotional intelligence. This paper focuses on Daniel Goleman's approach. His adaptation of emotional intelligence has five basic competencies: *self-awareness*, *self-regulation*, *motivation*, *empathy*, and *social skills* (Goleman 2006, 318). These competencies are essential components in managing social interactions.

"*Self-awareness* – recognizing a feeling as it happens – is the keystone of emotional intelligence" (Goleman 1995, 43). It is the comprehension of our own emotional state. "A part of this self-awareness is the ability to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate expressions of emotions, and

honest and dishonest expressions of emotions” (Jordan and Troth 2002, 64), to understand the nature of one’s emotions.

Self-regulation is the managing of emotions, or “an individual’s ability to connect or disconnect from an emotion depending on its usefulness in any given situation” (Jordan and Troth 2002, 64). This is not suggesting that a person should be an unfeeling robot. “The notion of self-control does not mean denying or repressing true feelings” (Goleman 2006, 81). It only means that the person makes a conscious decision to allow or deny the emotion’s influence on the situation; they respond, logically with cognitive thought in opposed to reacting emotionally, without forethought.

Motivation “is basic to our survival. It is the natural human process for directing energy to accomplish a goal” (Wlodkowski 2008, 2). Goleman (2006, 106) states that “the most powerful motivators in internal, not external.” While outside incentives – money, power, prestige – are beneficial, they are not what make work enjoyable. “To get to the top rung, people must love what they do and find pleasure in doing it” (Goleman 2006, 106). An emotionally intelligent person strives to satisfy internal motivation in work and other activities regardless of external incentives.

Empathy: “the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another” (Merriam-Webster). An empathetic individual is able to recognize emotions in others. While it may not be possible to *know* what they are

experiencing, an empathetic soul has compassion for how they are feeling. Daniel Goleman (2006, 183) does note that “Empathy need not lead to sympathetically giving in to the other side’s demands – knowing how someone feels does not mean agreeing with them.”

Social Skills are those interpersonal communication aptitudes that allow an individual to interact smoothly with others. Goleman (1999, 113) states, “These social abilities allow one to shape an encounter, to mobilize and inspire others, to thrive in intimate relationships, to persuade and influence, to put others at ease.” Interpersonal communication is a dynamic system that requires the participants to interact and react/respond to each other and changes in the system. The ability to communicate well with others is the culmination of Goleman’s other four competencies.

Practical Understanding

The practical application of emotional intelligence regarding conflict management requires the prevention of emotional reactions through emotional self-awareness and self-regulation, employing empathy to realize that emotions exist in even the most illogical places, and understanding how your emotions affect others’.

Overcoming Amygdala Hijack

When looking at emotional reactions versus cognitive responses, the term *amygdala hijack* comes up. In a talk given by Dr. Leeno Karumanchery (2011), he noted that the amygdala supersedes the higher functions of the

brain in the flight, fight, or freeze reaction. He explains that the amygdala is a relatively small portion of the brain that is responsible for rapid determination of “do I eat it, or does it eat me?” The hijack comes in when the senses detect a threat and direct our bodies to act on it without the higher brain engaging fully.

While “we rely on emotional input in order to make decisions and prioritize information” (Bjerknes and Paranica 2002), at times it can be quite necessary to react without thinking; a person must react to threats against their physical wellbeing without hesitation. The eat or be eaten response may be a bit outdated as we no longer find ourselves in nearly as many life threatening situations as our ancestors may have. We therefore require less intervention from the amygdala than in the past.

The first two competencies of Daniel Goleman’s emotional intelligence theory – self-awareness and self-regulation – allude to overcoming this amygdala hijack. In order to prevent the amygdala from overriding rational thought, a person must identify an emotional response (at the time of it happening) and manage its control over the situation.

A highly emotionally intelligent person will recognize when a hijack is occurring and attempt to prevent an undesired reaction. If a very large person insults your significant other, one reaction might be to punch the person. Delaying this reaction and thinking about the consequences might prevent you from being pummeled into oblivion. Rather than react and incur

the wrath of the offender, you might respond by ignoring the insult and walking away.

Emotions in Conflicts

Mr. Spock, from Star Trek, would like us to believe that emotions are illogical and therefore immaterial. While Mr. Spock's extreme aversion to emotions is fictional, numerous people take a similar attitude towards them. "Many conflict resolution professionals believe that emotion hinders the process" (Bjerknes and Paronica 2002). Contrary to this aversion, emotions are a valuable asset in many situations. "[They] serve at least three functions: they monitor our inner world, our relationships with the outer world, and help us act" (Lindner 2014, 289). Emotions do not operate independent of cognitive thought; they work in conjunction with it.

Daniel Goleman (1995, 289) defines an emotion as, "a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and range of propensities to act." Whether extreme emotional states beget conflict or conflict begets emotional responses, the fact remains that emotions are an integral part of conflict.

The idea of isolating emotions and dealing only with the tangibles in a conflict sounds useful, in theory. In practice however, nothing is that clear cut. Evelin Lindner (2014, 286) notes, "Today we know that thought, behavior, and feeling are closely connected." This interconnection makes emotions and their effect over positions in conflict difficult to separate. She

further addresses the state of humanity and emotions with, "All of this is occurring at a time when humankind remains blind to the fact that it is emotionally unprepared. We have to learn to move back and forth, get into the others' perspectives and feelings, and then step back in our own perspective" (Lindner 2014, 304). Daniel Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence and its application aligns with this need to work with emotions instead of trying to ignore them.

EI and Conflict Resolution

"The ways of dealing with human conflict around the world are legion" (Bartos and Wehr 202, 1). There are as many ways to resolve conflicts as there are conflicts needing resolution. Morton Deutsch (2014, 15), in writing about his cooperation-competition theory states, "A cooperative or win-win orientation to resolving a conflict enormously facilitates constructive resolution, while a competitive or win-lose orientation hinders it." As such, collaborative methods tend to be the preferred option many attempt to utilize for managing conflict. "Goleman (1998) suggested that individuals with high emotional intelligence will have superior conflict resolution skills, engaging in greater collaboration" (Jordan and Troth 2002, 67). By that reasoning, individuals capable of maintaining their own emotions while empathizing with another and utilizing effective communication should collaborate well.

In situations where collaboration is not a viable option, where incompatible goals may prevent a collaborative approach, alternate methods may be employed. Jordon and Troth (2002, 67) note that, "The emotionally intelligent individual may adopt a range of conflict resolution styles depending on the situation." Where an individual with a lower EQ may fixate on a single style of solution, the advanced EI person may be able to adapt to different scenarios.

As noted earlier, emotionally intelligent people also exhibit empathy. This recognition of others' emotions can be decisive in assisting the resolution of conflicts. Goleman (2006, 170) supports this with, "Empathy is crucial for wielding influence; it is difficult to have a positive impact on others without first sensing how they feel and understanding their position." The empathetic conflict resolution practitioner senses the others' emotions and works to utilize this information for positive results, promoting *good* emotions while avoiding inflaming *bad* ones. "As rage fuels aggression, so empathy inspires understanding, sharing, helping, and cooperation" (Sandy 2014, 440).

Not only does the conflict resolution practitioner need to be aware of the party's emotional state, he or she must be conscious of his or her own emotional state. Daniel Goleman (2006, 164 and 165) states, "Emotions are contagious," and "We influence each other's moods." Understanding that the emotions we project affect others' emotional states can have a distinct

impact on conflict resolution. Gross, Halperin, and Porat (2013, 424) use hope as an example. They wrote, "Hope ... has been found to play a constructive role in reducing hostility, increasing problem-solving in negotiations, and promoting support for conciliatory policies (Carnevale & Isen, 1986; Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, in press)." An optimistic attitude by the practitioner may elicit an optimistic view from the participants.

Employing effective social skills by promoting a positive emotional outlook may be the nudge that moves the parties off their positions and into a more collaborative state of mind. Gross, Halperin, and Porat (2013, 424) point to the inverse of this with, "Research suggests that negative emotions lead to the rejection of positive information about the opponent and lead people to oppose renewal of negotiations, compromise, and reconciliation" (citations omitted). Conversely, positive emotions would promote a spirit of collaboration.

Emotions can adversely affect otherwise rational situations and otherwise rational individuals in situations of conflict.

Conflict resolution is a human process where communication and trust are important ingredients to success, regardless of how you define it. If a mediator, facilitator, or trainer is unaware of the effect that his/her behavior, thoughts, or beliefs can have on clients, the result can be detrimental and disempowering (Bjerknes and Paranica 2002).

The success or failure to resolve a conflict might very well lay in the ability of the parties or the neutral to read and manage emotions and communicate effectively.

Conclusion

Emotions and conflict go hand in hand. One begets the other.

Therefore, when dealing with conflict, one cannot ignore emotion's influence and significance. Bjerknes and Paronka (2002) comment that, "Goleman's work makes a ... compelling case for the importance of emotion in what we believe to be 'rational' decision-making processes." Emotions do exist in conflicts of all kinds. Goleman's efforts highlight this and the need for conflict management practitioners to cope with emotions.

Daniel Goleman (2006, 315) states, "The good news is that emotional intelligence can be learned. Individually, we can add these skills to our tool kit." In a study performed by Jordan and Troth (2002, 74) they surmised, "Emotional intelligence improvement programs may be a means by which human resource development practitioners can provide employees with additional skills to address conflict." Training can be an effective method to bolster emotional intelligence in individuals, enabling people to better prepare for dealing with emotions in conflict, in life.

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1) See <http://www.danielgoleman.info/purchase/> for a list of Daniel Goleman's works.