

Emotional Intelligence - The Missing Link to Unity for Mankind
by Johanna Vanderpol

If we are truly to enjoy the benefits of being human, the most basic challenge facing us now is unity of mankind. With unity, other goals can be achieved. As we reduce human suffering, we will be able to manifest and enjoy our true potential. We are currently caught up in maintenance activities and “fighting fires”. The path to unity for mankind is the most important of the many quests for mankind and one of the basic quests yet to be accomplished. Emotional Intelligence is part of that path.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to recognize, honour, understand, manage and express our emotions in ways that are respectful of self and others. The reward for developing these attributes in ourselves ranges from the basics to higher level joys: freedom from a host of physical illnesses (migraines, ulcers, high blood pressure, even heart disease) and addictions (eating disorders, substance abuse, self-abuse) and violence. Be sure that shootings at schools like Columbine would not happen with a higher level of emotional intelligence in individuals and organizational climates. The higher level rewards include harmonious and joyous relationships with other people on the planet from intrapersonal to family to friends to community to nation. After pouring over the current exciting research for the last four years, the implications of focusing on developing our emotional intelligence are exciting and staggering in its positive affects for mankind. We were built to experience the emotions of joy and happiness. 'Abdul-Bahá always asked people, “Are you happy?” It is our pleasant task to find out what it will take for us to experience these emotions as an overall state of being rather than the exception.

The word “emotion” is from Latin “emovere” and French which means ‘to be moved by’. Emotions are what move us to action. The emotion of anger at injustice can move us to positive action of creating justice where none exists. The emotion of fear can move us to protect ourselves. The emotions of joy “gives us wings”. In the Bahá’í writings we are encouraged to take the steps of ‘knowledge, volition and action’ in our endeavours. Volition is the emotional element that moves us to action. Think about it. Everything we undertake is motivated by some underlying emotional state.

It's OK to have Emotions

To ignore a large facet of our fundamental nature is to bring fragmentation to the individual and hence to the well-being of society. It will also limit us in developing and expressing our full capacity as a human being and, therefore, limit the potential contributions we can give in service to the Cause or any other endeavour. Emotions are part of being human in a physical world and in a spiritual world.

This is acknowledged in the Bahá’í writings:

“In this world we are influenced by two sentiments, Joy and Pain. Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness. But when sadness visits us we become weak, our

strength leaves us, our comprehension is dim and our intelligence veiled. The actualities of life seem to elude our grasp, the eyes of our spirits fail to discover the sacred mysteries, and we become even as dead beings. There is no human being untouched by these two influences; but all the sorrow and the grief that exist come from the world of matter - the spiritual world bestows only the joy!”
(Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, Pages: 109-110)

Emotions are not bad. They just are. Nowhere in the Bahá'í Writings does it say that we should judge ourselves negatively when we have an unpleasant emotion. It does, however, give us guidance on how to manage emotions and the framework for them. That is part of emotional management.

What is important is the attitude we have towards our emotions and the way we manage them. With improper attitude and management of emotions comes results that promote ill-health in all its various forms - spiritual, physical, psychological.

Emotions used in the way for which they were created are the driving force that brings innovation and creativity out of the individual in all areas of human endeavour including progress and problem-solving. Emotions that are denied or not accepted drive us to behaviours that are unhealthy.

Emotions are theopathic in nature. Kevin Ryerson in his article, *Emotions that Heal* says: “Theopathy constitutes the use of feeling in relationship to our knowledge or sense of the divine. Our emotions are the fibers that lead us to the direct experience of the soul. They are part of our human expression. We cannot be completely devoid of our emotions; they are not a source of defeat. Emotions should not be repressed or denied, but rather observed and allowed to serve us in perspective. We can learn to trust our feelings and emotions, particularly when we come to understand them from a spiritual perspective.”

Research shows that one of the prime ingredients of Emotional Intelligence is Self Awareness. Yet many of the Bahá'í writings advise us to forget about self and to be constantly of service to others. This may lead us to believe that we should not take a look at ourselves or that to do so would be selfish. This is not a contradiction. If we look closer, we will see that we are also told to observe our self which is made evident by the following passages from Bahá'u'lláh:

“True loss is for him whose days have been spent in utter ignorance of his self.”

and

“... man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty.”

Part of knowing ourselves includes the process of recognizing, understanding and honouring our emotions as well as managing and expressing them in a way that is respectful of ourselves and others. This is an essential skill set that anyone can develop. This is emotional literacy. Without it, we cannot manifest our God-given potential that is unique to every one of us. This implies a knowledge of ourselves, an area in which the writings are clear:

“O my Servants! Could ye apprehend with what wonders of My munificence and bounty I have willed to entrust your souls, ye would, of a truth, rid yourselves of attachment to all created things, and would gain a true knowledge of your own selves—a knowledge which is the same as the comprehension of Mine own Being.” (Bahá’u’lláh *Gleanings* pp. 326-327.)

I encourage you to find out more about this new evolutionary development of emotional intelligence. The research is bearing exciting results and revealing a path already confirmed by religion.

So, what can you do to become aware of and honour your emotions? A systematic approach is the best way to have new learning become an automatic part of your enhanced self through coaching or other programs. However, for the purposes of this article, here are a few of what I believe to be the most useful and crucial things you can do to start honouring your emotions and through that bring more harmony and unity into your life and to the lives of other people:

1. Treat yourself with compassion as you would treat another soul. No negative self-dialogue.
2. Feel in your body what is going on so that you may become aware of how you truly feel. The body is a wonderfully designed instrument to give us accurate information about what is going on with ourselves.
3. Say a prayer for spiritual qualities.
4. Ask yourself the question during various parts of your day in regards to specific events you are experiencing: How am I feeling about this? What does my body say about how am I feeling? This question will bring the answers forth to gain more clarity about how you are responding and will allow you to make better decision about how to respond – more conscious choice.
5. Explore further resources. Read a book on what it means to be emotionally intelligent and visit a few websites. Look at the links on my website for this information.

The writings make it clear that we should make every effort to know ourselves. A large part of that knowing begins with recognizing and understanding our emotions. Let’s take action and develop this area of ourselves so that we may make our unique contributions to the well being of mankind and so that you may live a happier life.

Enjoy your explorations!

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