

# THE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT TEAM

Understanding and  
Developing the Behaviors  
of Success

Marcia Hughes

James Bradford Terrell

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# THE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT TEAM

*We dedicate this book to the teams and individual team members throughout the world whose commitment to their work and the work of their organizations help to create sustainable ways to live together on this planet, ways that reduce human suffering and expand our care for the precious diversity of life. We fervently advocate for the application of all tools and methods that can advance humanity's development of emotional and social intelligence.*

# INTRODUCTION

*Everyone has inside of him a piece of good news.  
The good news is that you don't know how great  
you can be! How much you can love! What you can  
accomplish! And what your potential is!*

ANNE FRANK

Forget about the “flavor of the month” management strategy fraught with consultants and catchy programs: this isn’t that book. This is about how to thrive in this nutty world and nuttier business environment by intentionally evolving, albeit quickly, because you can’t even afford to wait a year, let alone a couple of hundred millennia. Your organization is on the edge of obsolescence if it’s not evolving its emotional and social intelligence (ESI). You’ve heard the bottom line before: IQ is important, but emotional intelligence is the true brain trust of the organization. Using emotional intelligence effectively is the next evolution of human enterprise.

The world has changed. Once we thought it was flat. It wasn’t. Once we thought it was run by monolithic factories and assembly lines built to last. It’s not. Once we thought that an M.B.A. and wireless technology would secure the future. They won’t. Reams of research all point to a single golden ticket. The passport to sustained viability is emotional intelligence.

There is great news for teams. The fields of neurology and organizational development are advancing so quickly that a body of evidence has emerged that demonstrates which emotionally and socially intelligent behaviors have a direct correlation with

organizational success. We're talking about measurable success, not simply an improvement on the "feel-good meter." There are practical steps to take as an individual, a team member, and a leader that yield tangible results such as improved productivity, higher profits, lower turnover, fewer errors, greater innovation, and better efficiency—the Holy Grail of successful organizations. Our focus on team emotional and social intelligence is truly a practical opportunity to evolve and prosper.

The purpose of this book is to clarify the systematic process that will enable you to reduce the unproductive conflict, uncertainty, and delays all teams encounter. It will help teams of all shapes and sizes respond more resiliently to the continuous onslaught of change they must tame and transform into successful projects and productive results.

Every team—whether it's a permanent work team, a committee, a project team, or a family—needs better ESI. If you are involved in a team, that team has deep and significant emotional interactions, guaranteed. Furthermore, by virtue of being on a team, you are in a social environment. Because these emotional and social implications for your team are enormous, it is imperative that you care, if you care to succeed. *The Emotionally Intelligent Team* applies to all kinds of teams—at work, at play, at church, on the diamond, on the gridiron, or anywhere else. Because so much research and attention is focused on teams in the workplace, we drew most of our examples from there. Our research and examples span a wide spectrum of team types, from industry to government to nonprofits. You'll encounter a rich diversity of executive teams, departmental teams, IT teams, construction teams, nonprofit boards, and many more. The list is long and colorful. The principles that affect team dynamics are true, regardless of whether it is an interdisciplinary medical team, a group of high school cheerleaders, or contenders for the Super Bowl. Sports teams epitomize the profound role that emotions have in the workplace—it's the same as on the field. Nervous energy, jubilation, panic, anxiety as the momentum shifts, utter despair, supreme joy. How teams manage the extreme range of emotions that are packed into a game often determines the outcome.

One of the beauties of sports is the unabashed role and importance accorded to emotional intelligence. Its presence is considered a huge competitive advantage, while its absence is often

criticized as the hallmark of an undisciplined team. Corporations and nonprofits would do well to recognize the same.

## KEY CONCEPTS

*The real act of discovery consists not in finding new lands but in seeing with new eyes.*

MARCEL PROUST

Emotional and social intelligence is all about seeing with new eyes, hearing with new ears, and acting with new awareness and sensitivity. The key concepts that frame this book are the following:

- **Emotional and Social Intelligence (ESI).** Because it is impossible for a group of people to interact and not have social implications, we use the concept of emotional and social intelligence to help teams understand and master the behaviors of success. We have developed one of the first tools designed for determining team ESI, not just individual ESI. The Collaborative Growth Team Emotional and Social Intelligence Survey (TESI™) is a self-assessment tool used to help team members recognize and develop specific skills for success. (The survey will be published in 2008; you can contact us if you'd like more information.)
- **Collaborative Intelligence.** Collaboration is a composite skill that emerges from the masterful use of your ESI skills. The members of a football team collaborate when they huddle and agree that they will each do their part to execute a particular play. In the middle of the play, except in the face of an unexpected opportunity, the fullback won't decide to change the play because he'd prefer to run the ball rather than block! Team loyalty is unquestioned. When your team collaborates, you take time to explore alternative answers and find a solution that integrates the wisdom of the team. It takes more time up front, because you invest in listening to one another, to thinking things through, and to coordinating the execution of your response with genuine respect for one another. Collaboration pays off big time as you and your team progress.

Your self-discipline and collective intuition will make the future much easier to navigate because teams that coordinate their ESI skills naturally act with collaborative intelligence.

This set of coordinated competencies is the birthplace of synergy. Teams tap into their shared memory and individual capacities to maximize their knowledge, problem-solving capabilities, and resilience. They respond with agility to the fluctuating emotional and social contexts of the team and the organizational dynamics. The correct blend of ESI skills is the rocket fuel that propels your team to achieve its full collaborative capacity.

- **Emotional Literacy for Your Team.** Team smarts are the powerful result of learning to read. Read between the lines, read the writing on the wall, read people's lips! Team smarts call for:
  - Reading one another to understand how you feel and why, to determine the most effective response given the situation.
  - Reading the group as a whole to determine what is needed to keep your team highly energized and effective.
  - Reading the environment and accurately discerning and responding to the organization and leadership dynamics, politics, and shifting winds.

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT TEAM

Jeremy Irons won the 2007 Golden Globe award for best supporting actor for his role in *Elizabeth I*. In his acceptance speech, he said, "Why is it that the jobs that are the most fun are the ones for which you get the rewards?" His big smile indicated the honesty of this powerful reflection. The three parts of this book, and the explanations, wisdom, and tips packed inside, are designed to help your team gain rewards—both intrinsic and extrinsic—while you have fun with your work and with one another.

Part One explains what constitutes an ESI team, why it is valuable, and how to understand emotional intelligence.

Part Two is the heart of the book. It covers the seven skills that make up ESI. It explores the intricacies of each skill and provides

examples of the skill in action and ways to incorporate the skill into your repertoire. It's not rocket science; it's brain chemistry. Much of ESI is rooted in how the brain works and responds to stimuli. Seven skills are essential to an emotionally intelligent team: identity, motivation, emotional awareness, communication, stress tolerance, conflict resolution, and positive mood. These competencies are like the Seven Wonders of the World. They are powerful abilities that can redefine the landscape in which your team operates. Undoubtedly, as you apply them to your team, you'll discover unique ways to incorporate these behaviors to maximize your team's success.

Part Three completes your discovery by identifying what the individual team player needs to bring to the table, what the ESI leader needs to add, and values and ethics central to the integrity required of an ESI team. All of this leads to the extraordinary results you are seeking. Believe it or not, teams seek trust, loyalty, and effectiveness above all, and those drive performance.

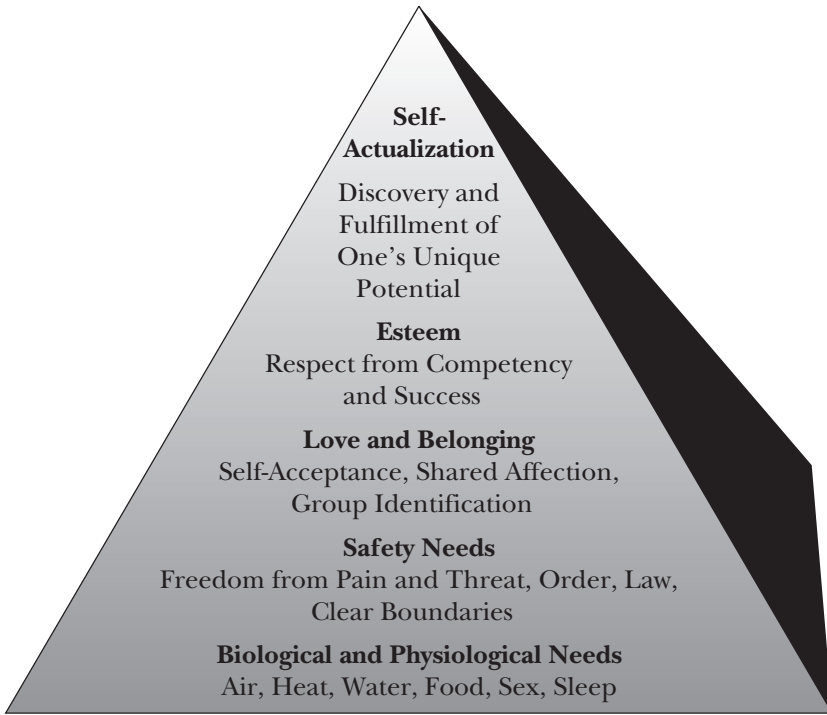
## WHAT MOTIVATES BEHAVIOR?

To be an ESI team, you need to understand what makes teams work together well and how they can become even more productive and rewarding to their members. Building that understanding is a core purpose of this book.

We assert that human behavior is motivated by the desire to improve the quality of life and that teams exist because the tasks that improve the quality of life are often too complex for one individual to accomplish alone. Improving the quality of life means achieving the progressive satisfaction of the needs identified in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy (1943), as depicted in Figure I.1.

Whether you realize it or not, teams strive to satisfy this inherent sequence of needs, just as individuals do. Human beings, and the teams they constitute, naturally move toward satisfying these successive needs and attempt to overcome whatever blocks their satisfaction. So our brief definition of a team is a group of two or more people who interdependently seek to solve problems in order to improve the quality of life. We'll go into much more depth in Chapter One.

FIGURE 1.1. MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS.



Adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

## PERFECTION NOT REQUIRED

*These most brisk and giddy-paced times.*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Hanging out on Planet Earth as a human invites the opportunity to learn and grow. every day is chock-full of chances. We invite you to approach each day with the willingness to notice and take advantage of those moments when you can practice the seven ESI skills. practice does make perfect; no individual and no team does it flawlessly the first time or all the time. Practice will create new habits that will gradually begin to change your team's entire experience of itself and the work it performs.



As you continue building your skills, your team will begin to reach a critical mass of competency, at which point there will be a powerful convergence. You will suddenly notice that you move together more gracefully, effortlessly, powerfully.

Along the way, you and your teammates will discover what it takes to be successful at each particular juncture. You may be better at communication than you are at positive mood. Or you may be quite good at aspects of a skill and yet find more room for improvement. Discovery is what it's all about—enjoy the journey.

You and your team have the opportunity to create together a rich and colorful tapestry. This book provides weaving lessons. Get the loom out and get to it!

*Note:* In order to protect the privacy of the many organizations and individuals we work with, all names are changed in the book.



PART ONE

THE VALUE OF  
EMOTIONAL AND  
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE  
FOR YOUR TEAM



## CHAPTER ONE

# WHY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IS SO VALUABLE FOR TEAMS

*All the forces in the world are not as powerful as an  
idea whose time has come.*

VICTOR HUGO

In a compelling *Grey's Anatomy* vignette, Dr. Addison Shepherd, a renowned obstetrician, led multiple teams of doctors as she performed a C-section to deliver premature quintuplets. High-risk pregnancy was putting it mildly, so teams of surgeons were lined up before the births. When it was time, pagers went off all over the hospital, in doctors' homes, on the freeway, wherever the surgical teams were. Many complications were identified before the births. One baby had heart trouble, so Dr. Preston Burke, the heart specialist, was present with his team, whose members were ready to receive the baby immediately and begin what they hoped would be lifesaving work. One had a brain injury, so Dr. Derek Shepherd, the brain surgeon, and his team were ready to roll the minute the tiny infant was handed over. They all worked as a powerfully synchronous team. The whole Surgery Department worked on keeping those babies alive. It looked like most might make it; one didn't.

As intern Meredith Grey was seeking to comfort the new mother, she had a revelation. She hurried to the babies, with the

mother trailing her. Meredith picked up an infant who was failing to thrive and put her in the incubator with a sibling, snuggling them right up tight. She told the mother that twins were often put together in an incubator to promote survival: after all, they'd been close together for nine months, and they still needed each other.

Teams abound in this story—the parents, ready to take on and raise these blessed beings, and their siblings ready to welcome them home. The surgery department as a whole was a team at its best, and each specialist team in the Surgery Department was its own impressive team. The most profound team of all was the quintuplets, helping keep one another alive.

When someone you love is having surgery, you want the highest-performing team you can find. Nothing else matters to you but getting the best outcome. Though you may not realize it, you want more than state-of-the-art equipment, evidenced-based best practices, and the most highly trained and clinically competent surgical team you can access. You want a team that hums along like a well-oiled machine. You want a team that can handle pressure. You want a team that can adapt to a rapidly changing environment. You want a team that is abundantly resourceful and resilient. You want a team that is emotionally and socially intelligent.

It's not just surgical teams that need to possess emotional and social intelligence (ESI); all the teams you're on need it if they want to make it anywhere beyond mediocre performance in this global economy, where information travels at the speed of light. In fact, the entire world could use more of it! Almost every part of our daily experience is related to how well teams function. Whether a product is available online or on a shelf is contingent on a host of teams operating well. That backlog in the checkout line at the grocery store is related to team functionality. Getting projects completed on time and on budget, leading innovation in your industry, being perceived as an organizational thought leader, and offering top-notch products and services that meet the demands of your particular marketplace all come down to team functionality.

Fortunately, ESI is based on skills that any team can develop and refine. This creates an enormous opportunity to improve team functioning. No matter how well or poorly your team is

operating, there's more potential. There is no glass ceiling on team performance—the sky's the limit!

## SIGNIFICANT PERKS FOR TEAMS AND THEIR MEMBERS

A team that functions with healthy emotional and social intelligence experiences a multitude of benefits. Decades of work with organizations and teams repeatedly demonstrate that the relationships between team members affect everyone's productivity and happiness. There's an old saying that you may have heard: "If Mama ain't happy, nobody's happy." Well, the same is true for team members: if one team member isn't happy, everyone is negatively affected. A team with high ESI is happier all around. We make these observations based on our decades of work with teams and the organizational environments they live in. Furthermore, a growing body of research has demonstrated the value of ESI teams. These are some of the benefits:

- Individuals on the team are happier, more satisfied, more creative, and more productive.
- They enjoy working with their team, which reduces defensiveness, opens their thinking capacity, and facilitates creativity. In short, the creative grow even more creative. That's powerful—more solutions drive more innovation!
- They persevere when tackling challenging tasks and complete them when other teams fail. Nothing breeds success like success.
- All of this yields better productivity. That's money in the bank. Return on investment. Bang for the buck.
- For the individuals on such teams, these benefits result in improved emotional well-being and better odds that they'll maintain a good work-life balance.
- The coworkers, friends, and families of people working on ESI teams get an added perk: they have more relaxed, playful, productive, and enjoyable relationships with that team member.
- Organizations also clearly benefit when individuals and teams are happier and more creative. Retention, engagement, and productivity all rise.