THINKING FROM THE HEART

Paula Derrow, *AMERICAN HEALTH,* April 1996

Why Johnny Can't Read was the title of the 1955 best-seller that blamed children's plummeting reading scores on teachers' neglect of basic skills. These days such a book might be more aptly titled *Why Johnny Can't Empathize* or *Why Sally's Such a Pessimist.*

"It's clearly no longer enough simply to consider cognitive abilities-the analytic thinking skills gauged by IQ tests-as the *ultimate* measure of a person's prospects in life," says psychologist Daniel Goleman whose best-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam, 1995), aims to shake up traditional notions of what it means to be smart. "You have to consider how we handle other people and our own emotions, because that has far-reaching consequences for our destiny, over and above IQ."

Emotional intelligence, in essence, is the ability to know oneself: to recognize feelings of rage and anxiety, sadness and joy, and to empathize with these feelings in others. The idea was developed six years ago by Yale University psychologist Peter Salovey and University of New Hampshire psychologist John Mayer. But Dr. Goleman, who covers health and psychology for *The New York Times,* has thrust emotional intelligence or IQ into the spotlight.

According to Goleman, IQ encompasses traits such as self-awareness, empathy, optimism, impulse control and the ability to manage anger and anxiety. Folks who lack these traits not only are more likely to be unpopular, say Goleman, but they may also have difficulty learning. "Our emotional state has a direct impact on our capacity to take in and act on information," he explains. In other words, if you're chronically anxious, frustrated or upset, you can't think as well. In fact, there's powerful evidence that strengths or deficiencies in individual aspects of emotional intelligence can seriously affect academic performance.

In a landmark study in the 1960s, for instance, Stanford University psychologist Walter Mischel posed a challenge to a group of four-year-olds: If the preschoolers could wait, they would get one marshmallow, but they would get it immediately. Twelve years, later, those who had held out for the two-marshmallow reward-who were capable, in other words, of delaying gratification-not only were better adjusted than the marshmallow grabbers, but also scored an average of 210 point higher on their Scholastic Aptitude Tests, of SAT's.

Perhaps more important, kids who have poor impulse control seem to encounter increasingly serious difficulties as they get older. Studies suggest that grade school kids who are disruptive in the classroom and at home may be more likely to become delinquents as teenagers. And a study of fourth-grade girls described as unruly by teachers showed that these girls were three times likelier to get pregnant by the end of high school than those who behaved.

Emotional intelligence also has impact on how we function in the workplace, where "people skills" often matter as much as talent and hard work. Goleman points to a study of the top performers at Bell Laboratories, a science and engineering think tank in Naperville, Ill. What set the real achievers apart, the researchers discovered was not IQ or academic genius, but their "rapport with a network of key people." Simply put, the Bell Labs stars had good relationships with their coworkers, so when they hit a snag in a project, they were able to call on others for advice and get solutions faster. They were also more adept at building consensus, being persuasive and looking at things from another person's perspective. Conversely, says Goleman, "petty office tyrant may be high on expertise, but so few people trust him that his ability to manage in undermined."

How do we develop a high IQ? Goleman believes the roots of emotional intelligence take hold within the home and family. Studies show, for instance, that three-month-old babies of depressed mothers display more anger and sadness and much less spontaneous curiosity and interest than infants whose mothers are not depressed. As children grow, they continue to be influenced by these sometimes subtle emotional exchanges, "The little girl who finds a puzzle frustrating and asks her busy mother to help gets one message if the reply is clear pleasure at the request and quite another if it's a curt, "don't bother me," says Goleman.

Of course, inborn qualities of temperament also affect how youngsters respond to the world. But by acknowledging their children's feelings, and further, by teaching them to handle the frustrations of life, parents (and schools) are more likely to produce emotionally adept kids. "Kids who are taught to calm down and manage their anger do better on achievement tests, because they can learn better," says Goleman.

Does emotional intelligence, then, equal success in work and life-not to mention in love? "There are few endeavors," says Goleman, "that don't rely on the ability to be self-motivated, interact effectively and manage one's internal state." If you don't have these abilities "the core of emotional intelligence" you may not do as well, no matter how high your IQ."