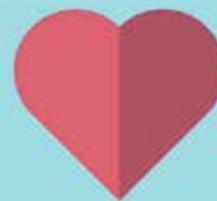
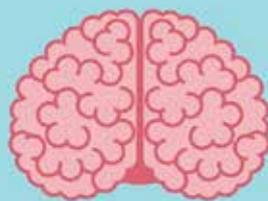


Emotional Intelligence -

The Critical Edge



By Clare Erasmus



Educational institutions around the world are beginning to acknowledge the importance of emotional intelligence and integrating the teaching emotional intelligence in their day-to-day teaching. Researcher, Littlejohn (2012), suggested emotional intelligence is the missing link in driving success. Others have argued that it provides students with a critical edge (MacCann, 2020). Historically, intelligence quotient (IQ) has been considered the primary determinant of success. Recent trends, however, have shifted this paradigm and some would argue that emotional intelligence is just as important, if not more. Emotional intelligence has gained momentum not only in educational institutions but in the greater workforce, too, for it considered to be the gateway to enhancing life in diverse ways.

A review of the literature suggests that this gateway may lead to:

- Better learning
- Improved friendships
- Academic success
- Positive interactions
- Solving challenges
- Key to high performance at all levels



What is emotional intelligence?

The term 'emotional intelligence' was coined by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990. It was later popularized by Daniel Goleman (1996) in his book, 'Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ.'

"Emotional Intelligence includes the ability to engage in sophisticated information processing about one's own and others' emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking and behaviour. That is, individuals high in emotional intelligence pay attention to, use, understand, and manage emotions, and these skills serve adaptive functions that potentially benefit themselves and others".

(In "Emotional Intelligence: New Ability or Eclectic Traits?" John D. Mayer, Peter Salovey and David R. Caruso. American Psychologist, September 2008, Vol. 63, No. 6, pages 503 - 517.)

Professor Con Stough from Swinburne University in Australia highlights that emotional intelligence in children and adolescents generally involves five main building blocks or competencies:

- recognising emotions
- expressing emotions
- understanding the emotions of others
- managing and controlling emotions
- distinguishing emotions and thoughts

Why are educational institutions driving emotional intelligence initiatives?

I spoke to Mr Ian Macpherson, the Headmaster of Medbury School in Christchurch, a leading Australasian private preparatory school for the education of boys from Years 1 to 8.

Medbury has partnered with the Swinburne University of Technology to provide professional development for the staff of the school and support to their learning programmes.

How has your school decided to lead the way with emotional intelligence?

'Medbury's strategic alliance with Swinburne University of Technology's Aristotle Emotional Intelligence (EI) Programme is a strong example of staff consultation to identify world leading research into how best to support primary-aged boys in their emotional development. Over an extended period of environmental scanning of what was happening in the area of emotional intelligence, Medbury could not look past the Aristotle programme that had a decade of data and a collection of foundation schools eager to progress research in this vital area, behind it.

The programme is not 'off the shelf', instead encouraging foundation schools to take up the opportunity to custom build programmes that fit in with existing programmes to further strengthen support for all students. At the 2018 International Boys' Schools Coalition (IBSC) Annual Conference at the Southport School, Gold Coast, Australia, one packed workshop heard speakers from four foundation schools reflect upon their partnership journeys and how their unique programmes have aided in a growing understanding within their communities around Emotional Intelligence. Medbury is the only Aristotle EI school on New Zealand's South Island, aiming to better understand the Emotional Intelligence of primary-aged boys, both day students and boarding students. Data collected here will benefit Medbury students, whilst also adding to the growing body of EI data. Medbury has recently undertaken benchmarking in Years 5, 6, 7 and 8, with this data being compared against an Australian boys' sample. Future testing will be advantageous in monitoring changes over time.

'I believe Medbury's Aristotle EI partnership is vital, not only to assist boys in their journey throughout the primary years of education, but into secondary education and beyond. It is the School's gift that will continue to give well beyond the boys' primary years.' **Mr Ian Macpherson, Headmaster Medbury School, Christchurch.**

What gifts does emotional intelligence offer?

Developing these 'emotional navigating' skills in formative years can lead to better habits later in life. How children identify, understand and manage emotions can have a vast impact on a child's life from his/her relationships with family and friends to how he/she performs in the classroom.



Mr Ian Macpherson, Headmaster Medbury School, Christchurch.

Emotional intelligence help students:

- Better manage themselves
- Relate positively to others
- To solve social challenges
- Create an understanding of others - empathy
- To guide better decision making
- Develop pro-social behaviour
- Enable efficient and effective communication.
- Encourage 'thinking before acting'
- Improve self-motivation
- To self-regulate

How can parents help at home?

Parents are equally eager to develop the emotional intelligence of their children. Here are some practical ways to help at home:

- Stop and identify emotions - name the emotions (angry, frustrated, excited etc)
- Listen to children when they express their feelings
- Show empathy
- Acknowledge that you know how he/she is feeling.
- Problem solve
- Teaching how to problem solve
- Lead from the front
- Be an example - clearly communicating your emotions

It is an exciting time in education, with schools beginning to acknowledge, embrace and implement strategies and learning opportunities for children to gain and develop their emotional intelligence. Schools and universities, along with parents, are partnering to offer their children great futures.

'Educating the mind without educating the heart is not educating at all'. Aristotle.

About the Author:

Clare is an author and educator, living locally in Christchurch. She has written books for both educators and children. She has a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Legal Studies), Bachelor of Arts Honours (Sociology), Masters of Social Science, Bachelor of Education, Certificates in both TEFL and TESOL and is currently undertaking her PhD in Education).

