THE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT WORKPLACE

How to Select for, Measure, and Improve Emotional Intelligence in Individuals, Groups, and Organizations

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Foreword by Warren Bennis

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CHAPTER TEN

HOW AND WHY INDIVIDUALS ARE ABLE TO DEVELOP EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Richard E. Boyatzis

Beyond the benefit of understanding oneself, the appeal of the concept of emotional intelligence is the hope for development. Many researchers of this concept contend that a person can develop the characteristics that constitute emotional intelligence. But few have taken the time to rigorously evaluate change efforts. This chapter presents a model of individual change that draws on years of research on individuals' development of the sets of characteristics now called emotional intelligence. This evidence offers hope that emotional intelligence competencies can be developed. It has emerged from multiple sources, but three in particular: first, the research of David McClelland, David Winter, and their colleagues from the 1960s and 1970s on developing achievement and power motivation; second, the work of David Kolb and his colleagues from the 1960s and early 1970s on self-directed behavioral change; third, the work of numerous doctoral students and my colleagues at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s in competency development. This research is reviewed as evidence of a model, or theory, of individual, sustainable change in emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence Can Be Developed

In this chapter, as in all the chapters in this volume, emotional intelligence is defined as the composite set of capabilities that enables a person to manage herself and others (Goleman, 1995a, 1998b). This definition can be made more accurate if we add that the frequency with which a person demonstrates or uses the constituent capabilities, or competencies, inherent in emotional intelligence determines the ways in which she deals with herself, her life and work, and others (Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000). Although the specific labels and conceptualizations of these competencies may vary, they address (1) Self-Awareness, including Emotional Self-Awareness, Accurate Self-Assessment, and Self-Confidence; (2) Self-Management, including Achievement Orientation, Adaptability, Initiative, Trustworthiness, Conscientiousness, and Self-Control; (3) Social Awareness, including Empathy, Service Orientation, and Organizational Awareness; and (4) Social Skills, including Leadership, Influence, Communication, Developing Others, Change Catalyst, Conflict Management, Building Bonds, and Teamwork and Collaboration (Goleman, 1998b; Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000).

Can a Person Improve on EI Competencies?

Decades of research on the effects of psychotherapy (Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999), self-help programs (Kanfer & Goldstein, 1991), cognitive behavior therapy (Barlow, 1985), training programs (Morrow, Jarrett, & Rupinski, 1997), and education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Winter, McClelland, & Stewart, 1981) have shown that people can change their behavior, moods, and self-image. But most of the studies have focused on a single characteristic (such as maintenance of sobriety or reduction of a specific anxiety) or a set of characteristics determined by the assessment instrument, such as the scales of the MMPI. For example, the impact of Achievement Motivation training was a dramatic increase in small business success, with trainees creating more new jobs, starting more new businesses, and paying more taxes than individuals in comparison groups did (McClelland & Winter, 1969; Miron & McClelland, 1979). The impact of Power Motivation training was improved maintenance of sobriety (Cutter, Boyatzis, & Clancy, 1977).

The current conceptualization of emotional intelligence (EI) poses a challenging question: Can a person change her abilities in the set of competencies that constitute emotional intelligence that have been shown to determine outstanding job performance in many occupations, including management and professional jobs?

A series of longitudinal studies under way at the Weatherhead School of Management (WSOM) of Case Western Reserve University has shown that over two to five years, people can change on these competencies. MBA students, averaging twenty-seven years old at entry into the program, showed dramatic changes on videotaped and audiotaped behavioral samples and questionnaire measures of these competencies, as summarized in Tables 10.1 and 10.2, as a result of the competency-based, outcome-oriented MBA program implemented at the school in 1990 (Boyatzis, Baker, Leonard, Rhee, & Thompson, 1995; Boyatzis, Leonard, Rhee, & Wheeler, 1996; Boyatzis, Wheeler, & Wright, 1997).

Four cadres of full-time MBA students, graduating in 1992, 1993, 1994, and 1995, showed *strong evidence* of improvement (that is, statistically significant improvement in multiple years with multiple measures of the competency) on 71 percent (five out of seven) of the competencies in the Self-Management cluster (Efficiency Orientation, Planning, Initiative, Flexibility, Self-Confidence), 100 percent (two) of the competencies in the Social Awareness cluster (Empathy and Social Objectivity), and 50 percent (three out of six) of the competencies in the Social Skills cluster (Networking, Oral Communication, and Group Management). Meanwhile the part-time MBA students graduating in 1994, 1995, and 1996 showed strong improvement on 71 percent of the competencies in the Self-Management cluster (Efficiency Orientation, Initiative, Flexibility, Attention to Detail, and Self-Confidence), 50 percent of the competencies in the Social Awareness cluster (Social Objectivity), and 83 percent of the competencies in the Social Skills cluster. In a follow-up study of two of these graduating classes of part-time students, Wheeler (1999) demonstrated that during the two years following graduation, they showed statistically significant improvement on an audiotaped, behavioral measure of the competencies in the Social Awareness and Social Skills clusters (Empathy and Persuasiveness) in which they had not shown strong improvement during the MBA program.

These students contrast with the WSOM graduates of the 1988 and 1989 traditional MBA program, who showed strong improvement in only one competency in the Self-Management cluster (in both the 1988 and 1989 cadres, full-time students showed improvement in Self-Confidence and part-time students showed improvement in Flexibility). It is also worth noting that full-time students graduating from the competency-based MBA program showed *strong evidence* or *some evidence* of improvement in 100 percent or all of the emotional intelligence competencies assessed, and part-time students showed strong or some evidence of improvement in 93 percent of the competencies assessed (some evidence is defined as statistically significant improvement in one year or with one measure). In a longitudinal study of four classes completing the WSOM Professional Fellows Program (an executive education program), Ballou, Bowers, Boyatzis, and Kolb (1999) showed that forty-five- to fifty-five-year-old professionals and executives had

TABLE 10.1. EI IMPROVEMENT AMONG FULL-TIME STUDENTS IN OLD PROGRAM AND IN NEW PROGRAM.

Evidence of Improvement	Old Program			New Program		
	Goal and Action Management	People Management	Analytic Reasoning	Goal and Action Management	People Management	Analytic Reasoning
Strong evidence		Self-Confidence	Use of Concepts Systems Thinking Quantitative Analysis Use of Technology Written Communication	Efficiency Orientation Planning Initiative Flexibility	Self-Confidence Networking Oral Communication Empathy Group Management	Use of Concepts Systems Thinking Pattern Recognition Social Objectivity Quantitative Analysis Use of Technology Written Communication
Some evidence	Efficiency Orientation Initiative Flexibility	Empathy Networking	Social Objectivity	Self-Control Attention to Detail	Developing Others Persuasiveness Negotiating	
No evidence	Planning (Attention to Detail and Self-Control were not coded)	Persuasiveness Negotiating Group Management Developing Others Oral Communication				
Negative evidence			Pattern Recognition (verbal)			

TABLE 10.2. EI IMPROVEMENT AMONG PART-TIME STUDENTS IN OLD PROGRAM AND IN NEW PROGRAM.

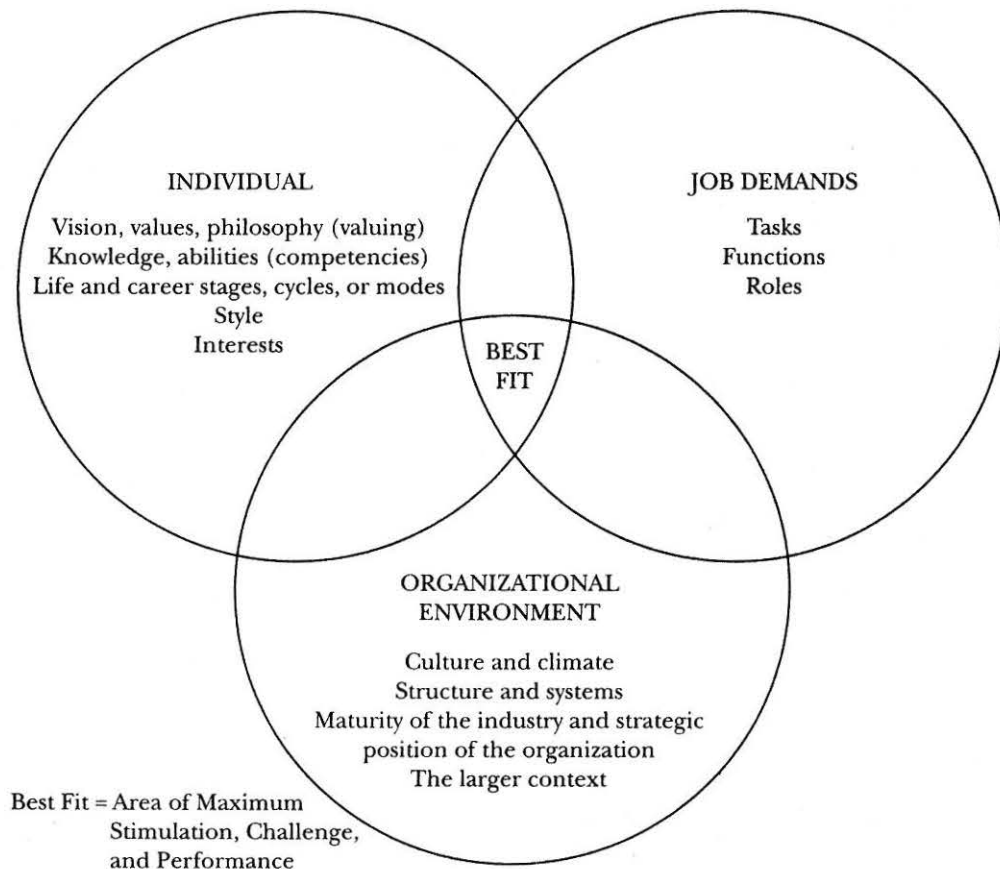| Evidence of Improvement	Old Program			New Program		
	Goal and Action Management	People Management	Analytic Reasoning	Goal and Action Management	People Management	Analytic Reasoning
Strong evidence	Flexibility		Systems Thinking Quantitative Analysis	Efficiency Orientation Initiative Flexibility Attention to Detail	Group Management Self-Confidence Networking Oral Communication Developing Others Negotiating	Use of Concepts Social Objectivity Use of Technology Pattern Recognition Quantitative Analysis Systems Thinking Written Communication
Some evidence	Efficiency Orientation	Negotiating	Written Communication Social Objectivity	Planning	Empathy Persuasiveness	
No evidence	Planning Initiative (Attention to Detail and Self-Control were not coded)	Persuasiveness Self-Confidence Networking Group Management Oral Communication Developing Others	Use of Concepts Pattern Recognition	Self-Control		
Negative evidence		Empathy	Use of Technology			

statistically significant improvement in Self-Confidence, Leadership, Helping, Goal-Setting, and Action Skills. These were 67 percent of the emotional intelligence competencies assessed in this study.

Why Would People Want to Change?

There are three reasons why a person might want to develop his emotional intelligence. First, a person might want to increase his effectiveness at work or increase his potential for promotion. This could be called a career or professional development objective. Second, a person might want to become a better person. This can be called a personal growth objective. Third, a person might want to help others develop emotional intelligence or to pursue either of the objectives just mentioned.

Effectiveness and success, which are not synonymous, require a good *fit* between the person (that is, his capability or competencies, values, interests, and so forth), the demands of a specific job or role, and the organizational environment, as shown in Figure 10.1 (Boyatzis, 1982). In human resource management, common practice is to identify the competencies needed for effective job performance and then either find people with these competencies and hire them for the job or develop these competencies in people already in the organization (Boyatzis, 1996). The link between the emotional intelligence competencies and performance has been reviewed and summarized in Goleman (1998b). Unfortunately, competencies, even those empirically determined to lead or relate to outstanding job performance and also emotional intelligence competencies are *necessary but not sufficient* to predict performance (Goleman, 1998b). They help us understand *what* a person is capable of doing and what he has done in the past but not what he will do. Competencies explain and describe *how* we perform but not *why* we perform or not. We need to know more about the person's motivation and values to ascertain how his commitment to the organization and his compatibility with the vision and culture of the organization will affect his desire to use the competencies he has. It will also affect his desire to develop or enhance other competencies. In some approaches to competency research, such as those of Boyatzis (1982), Spencer and Spencer (1993), and McClelland (1973), researchers incorporate *intent* in the definition. Although this makes the competency profile for maximum job performance more comprehensive, it still does not address the *will or desire* to use one's capabilities to develop and to enhance others. Looking at competency needs for superior performance in jobs and in roles in life, we are continually drawn back to the need for intentionality; what is the person's intention or reason for using the behavior and ability?

It is the same with behavioral change. Adults change themselves; this is especially true for sustainable behavioral change. In other words, adults decide what

FIGURE 10.1. CONTINGENCY THEORY OF ACTION AND JOB PERFORMANCE.

INDIVIDUAL

Vision, values, philosophy (valuing)
Knowledge, abilities (competencies)
Life and career stages, cycles, or modes
Style
Interests

JOB DEMANDS

Tasks
Functions
Roles

BEST
FIT

ORGANIZATIONAL
ENVIRONMENT

Culture and climate
Structure and systems
Maturity of the industry and strategic
position of the organization
The larger context

Best Fit = Area of Maximum
Stimulation, Challenge,
and Performance

Source: Adapted from Boyatzis, 1982.

or how they will change. This is also evident in learning. People learn what they want to learn. Ideas and behaviors that they are not interested in learning may be acquired temporarily (that is, for a test) but are then soon forgotten (Specht & Sandlin, 1991). Students, children, patients, clients, and subordinates may act as if they care about learning something and go through the motions of learning it, but they will then proceed to disregard it or forget it—unless it is something that they want to learn. Even in situations where a person is under threat or coercion to make a behavioral change, the behavior will typically be extinguished or revert to its original form once the threat is removed. Chemical or hormonal changes in a person's body are not subject to this disregarding or forgetting. But even in such

situations, the interpretation of a change and the behavioral comportment following upon it will be affected by the person's will, values, and motivations.

It appears that most, if not all, sustainable behavioral change is intentional. *Self-directed change is an intentional change in an aspect of who you are (that is, your Real Self) or who you want to be (that is, your Ideal Self) or both. Self-directed learning is self-directed change in which you are aware of the change and understand the process of change.* The process of self-directed change and learning is illustrated graphically in Figure 10.2 (Boyatzis, 1999a). This model is an enhancement of the earlier models developed by Kolb, Winter, and Berlew (1968), Boyatzis and Kolb (1969), Kolb and Boyatzis (1970a, 1970b), and Kolb (1971). The remainder of this chapter describes and explains the process, looking at four points of discontinuity and offering learning points for engaging the process. A discontinuity is a part of the process that may not and often does not occur as a smooth, linear event. It is accompanied by surprise. A person's behavior may seem persistent for long periods of time and then it may change quite suddenly. This is a discontinuity. Throughout this chapter, concepts from complexity theory are used to describe the model of self-directed change and learning. A person may begin the process of self-directed change and learning at any point in the process, but it often begins when the person experiences a discontinuity, an epiphany or moment of awareness associated with a sense of urgency. This model describes the process as it has been designed into a required course and into the elements of revised MBA and executive programs implemented in 1990 at the Weatherhead School of Management. Experimentation and research into the various program and course components have resulted in refinement of these components and of the model. For a detailed description of the course, see Boyatzis (1995, 1994).

The First Discontinuity:
Deciding Who I Am and Who I Want to Be

The first discontinuity and potential starting point for the process of self-directed change and learning is the discovery of who you are and who you want to be. This may occur as a decision you make among your choices for your Real Self (Who am I?) and your Ideal Self (Who do I want to be?).

Catching Your Dreams, Energizing Your Passion

Our Ideal Self is an image of the person we want to be. It emerges from our ego ideal, dreams, and aspirations. Research over the last twenty years has revealed the power of positive imaging or visioning in sports, appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, 1990), meditation and biofeedback, and other psychophysiological

FIGURE 10.2. SELF-DIRECTED CHANGE AND LEARNING PROCESS.
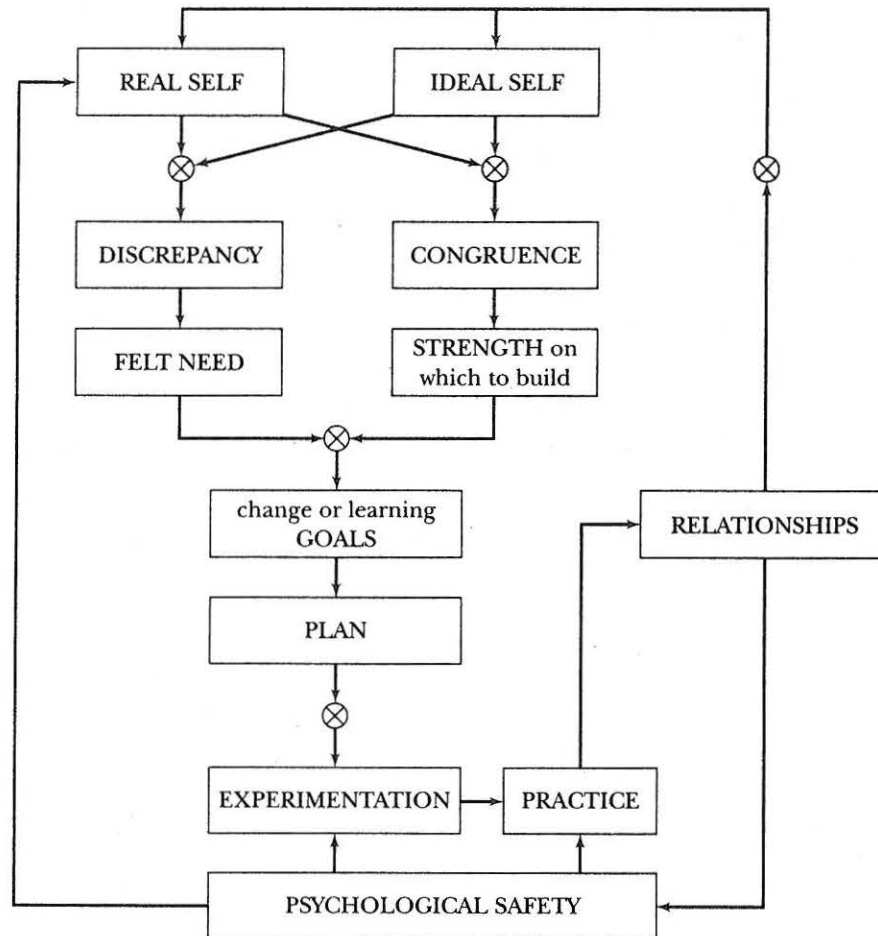
Source: Boyatzis, 1999a.

situations. It is believed that the potency of focusing one's thoughts on the desired end state of one's condition is driven by the emotional components of the brain (Goleman, 1995a). Following in the path of earlier research on approach versus avoidance drives (Miller, 1951) and the power of conscious volition (James, 1892), it has been thought that dreams and aspirations carry with them unconscious drives that are more powerful than conscious thought. The Ideal Self is a reflection of a person's intrinsic drives. Numerous studies have shown that intrinsic motives have more enduring impact on a person's behavior than extrinsic mo-

tives (Deci & Ryan, 1994). Our aspirations, dreams, and desired states are shaped by our values, philosophy (Boyatzis, Murphy, & Wheeler, 2000), life and career stages (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1999), motives (McClelland, 1985), role models, and other factors. Research indicates that we can access and engage deep emotional commitment and psychic energy if we engage our passions and conceptually catch our dreams in our Ideal Self image.

It is an anomaly that we know the importance of considering the Ideal Self and yet, when we engage in a change or learning process, we often skip over the clear formulation or articulation of our Ideal Self image. If a parent, spouse, boss, or teacher tells us that something about us should be different, she is giving us *her* version of our Ideal Self. She is telling us about the person *she* wants us to be. The extent to which we believe or accept this image determines the extent to which it becomes part of our Ideal Self. Our reluctance to accept others' expectations or wishes for us to change is one of many reasons why we may not live up to others' expectations or wishes and not change or learn according to their agenda! In current psychology, others' version of what our Ideal Self should be is referred to as the *Ought Self.*

We may be victims of the expectations of others and the seductive power of popular images from the media, celebrities, and our reference groups. In his book *The Hungry Spirit: Beyond Capitalism, A Quest for Purpose in the Modern World* (1997), Charles Handy describes the difficulty of determining his own ideal:

> I spent the early part of my life trying hard to be someone else. At school I wanted to be a great athlete, at university an admired socialite, afterwards a businessman and, later, the head of a great institution. It did not take me long to discover that I was not destined to be successful in any of these guises, but that did not prevent me from trying, and being perpetually disappointed with myself. The problem was that in trying to be someone else I neglected to concentrate on the person I could be. That idea was too frightening to contemplate at the time. I was happier going along with the conventions of the time, measuring success in terms of money and position, climbing ladders which others placed in my way, collecting things and contacts rather than giving expression to my own beliefs and personality [p. 86].

In this and similar ways, we often allow ourselves to be anesthetized to our dreams and lose sight of our deeply felt Ideal Self.

Awareness of the Real: Am I a Boiling Frog?

Our awareness of our current self, the person that others see and with whom they interact, is elusive. It is normal for our human psyches to protect themselves from the automatic intake and conscious realization of all information about ourselves.

These ego-defense mechanisms serve to protect us. They also conspire to delude us into constructing an image of who we are that feeds on itself, becomes self-perpetuating, and eventually may become dysfunctional (Goleman, 1985).

How does this happen in reasonably intelligent, sensitive people? One reason is the slow, gradual development of individuals' perception of their self-image.

The *boiling frog syndrome* applies here. It is said that if one drops a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will jump out due to its instinctive defense mechanism. But if one places a frog in a pot of cool water and gradually increases the temperature, the frog will sit in the water until it is boiled! Slow adjustments are acceptable on the way to a major change, but the same change made dramatically is not tolerated. For a more direct example, consider how people gaining weight or losing their sense of humor often do not see the change in their current Real Self because it has developed through small steps and iterative adjustments. In the recent action-adventure film, *Fire Down Below,* the hero asks a local resident in the hills of West Virginia about smoke pouring out of the ground from an abandoned coal mine. When she tells him that it has been that way for twelve and a half years, he asks if that bothers anyone. She tells him that it does not matter—give it long enough, and anything seems normal.

The greatest challenge to an accurate current self-image (that is, seeing yourself as others see you and in a way consistent with your other internal states, beliefs, emotions, and so forth) is the boiling frog syndrome. Several factors contribute to this syndrome. First, people around you may not let you see a change. They may not give you feedback or information about how they see it. Also, they may be victims of the boiling frog syndrome themselves, adjusting their perception daily. For example, if you haven't seen a friend's child for two years, when you do see him you may gasp over how fast he has grown. Meanwhile, the parent is aware of the child's growth only when she has to buy new shoes or clothes or when a sudden change in the child's hormonal balance leads to previously unlikely behavior.

Second, enablers—those who forgive the change, are frightened of it, or do not care about it—may allow it to pass unnoticed. Our relationships and interpersonal contexts mediate and interpret cues from the environment. They help us interpret what things mean. You ask a friend, "Am I getting fat?" And she responds, "No, you look great!" Whether this is reassuring to the listener or not, it is confusing for your self-image and may not be providing feedback to the question you asked. Of course, if she had said, "No, it's just the spread of age," or "No, it's just the normal effects of gravity," you may not have any more useful information either.

Third, likely in an attempt to be nice or to defend themselves against similar information about themselves, others may foster or perpetuate a delusion about

your current Real Self image. Here is a test: Is there something about yourself that you once said you would never let happen but that has? Do you find yourself, for example, gradually taking on more characteristics and mannerisms of one of your parents? Transitions in life or careers may lead to changes in your behavior that may go unnoticed until they abruptly interfere with daily functioning.

In counseling sessions with effective CEOs and managing directors of not-for-profits, I have often been surprised to learn that they do not see themselves as leaders. Others may see them as leaders. Sometimes humility blocks this perception for themselves. Sometimes the interpersonal or cultural context does. When you are just one of the gods on Olympus, you do not stand out because everyone has the same super powers. On the planet Krypton, Superman was just another citizen. Not admitting to yourself that which is obvious to others can also occur when you have prolonged spiritual blackouts, losing sight of your core values and your philosophy.

Challenges and Paths to Awareness of Your Real Self and Your Ideal Self

This point of discontinuity offers two major *learning points* that are helpful in engaging the self-directed change and learning process:

1. Engage your passion and create your dreams.
2. Know thyself!

You put both these learning points into practice by finding and using multiple sources for feedback about your Real and Ideal Selves. The sources of insight into your Real Self may include systematically collected information from others, such as the 360-degree feedback currently considered fashionable in organizations. This source offers construct validity. That is, through listening to the information you collect about how you act and appear to many others (supervisor, peers, subordinates, clients and customers, family and spouse, and so forth), you are forming a consensually validated image of yourself. The degree to which this consensus is an image of *the real you* depends on the degree to which (1) these others see, observe, and interact with you and (2) you reveal yourself to them. Another possible source of insight into your Real Self may be behavioral feedback from videotaped or audiotaped interactions, such as collected in assessment centers. Various psychological tests may also help you determine or make explicit such inner aspects of your Real Self as values, philosophy, traits, and motives.

Sources for insight into your Ideal Self are more personal and more elusive than are those for the Real Self. Various exercises and tests can help by making explicit various dreams or aspirations you have for the future. Talking with close

friends or mentors can help. Allowing yourself to think about your desired future, not merely your prediction of your most likely future, is the source of insight that is most difficult to tap into. These conversations and explorations must take place in psychologically safe surroundings. Often the implicit norms of our immediate social groups and work groups do not allow nor encourage such discussion. You may want to search for groups of people who are considering changing their lives; these groups may take the form of academic programs, career development work-shops, or programs for personal growth experiences.

The Second Discontinuity: The Balance Between Preservation and Adaptation

The second discontinuity and potential start of self-directed change and learning may occur when you determine the balance between the aspects of yourself you want to preserve, keep, and relish and the aspects you would like to change, stimulate to grow, or adapt to your environment and situation. Your awareness, or re-alization, of these components and the balance between them is your readiness to change.

Strange Attractors of Continuity and Change (Preservation and Adaptation)

The strange attractors of preservation and adaptation, or continuity and change, constitute a yin/yang balance and interaction within ourselves. That is, before you can truly consider changing a part of yourself, you must have a sense of what you value and want to keep. Likewise, considering what you want to preserve about yourself involves admitting aspects of yourself that you wish to change or adapt in some manner. Awareness and exploration of each these parts of your-self exists in the context of awareness and exploration of the other.

All too often, people explore growth or development by focusing on their "gaps," or deficiencies. Organizational training programs and managers conduct-ing annual *reviews* often commit the same mistake. There is an assumption that we can leave well enough alone and get to the areas that need work. It is no wonder that many of these programs or procedures intended to help a person develop re-sult in the individual's feeling battered, beleaguered, and bruised, not helped, en-couraged, motivated, or guided. The gaps may get your attention, however, because they disrupt progress or flow (R. Fry, personal communication, April 1998).

Exploration of yourself in the context of your environment (How am I fit-ting into this setting? How am I doing in the view of others? Am I part of this

group or organization or family?) and examination of your Real Self in the context of your Ideal Self involve both comparative and evaluative judgments. A comprehensive view includes both strengths and weaknesses. That is, to contemplate change, one must contemplate stability. To identify and commit to changing parts of yourself, you must identify those parts you want to keep and possibly enhance. Adaptation does not imply or require "death" but evolution of the self.

Your willingness to change, or readiness to change, relies on your articulation of this balance of preservation and adaptation and your understanding of *both* of these factors. In various conceptualizations of readiness to change, Guglielmino (1978) and Guglielmino, Guglielmino, and Long (1987) focus on personal characteristics that precede change and appear to help move the process along. But in the model presented in this chapter, one's readiness to change, and even the desirability of and commitment to the change, is affected by the articulation and balancing of the elements of preservation and of adaptation. This model describes the change process. The subject of the model is not *change*. Change itself is not the object. The ideal or desired end result is the object. This desired end result of the change process may include aspects of the current Real Self as well as aspects of the Ideal Self not as yet achieved.

This result involves juggling the present and future at the same time. That is, preservation and adaptation are present oriented and future oriented, respectively. Preservation requires preserving the core, the stability or, in Fry's term, the *continuity* (Fry & Srivastva, 1992). This is the part of ourselves that we value, enjoy, want to keep; it is often built into our identity, self-image (self-schema), persona, and possibly even our public image. It is in this sense the present. A *continuity story* tells you about your core. You can use a life history or autobiography to generate your core. Meanwhile, adaptation is "stimulating change," or growth, and in aspiring toward some Ideal Self is pursuing something in the future. This personal adaptation is analogous to the forces of adaptation and preservation that Collins and Porras (1994) documented as critical to the change and survival of organizations.

Challenges and Paths to Your Readiness to Change

This point of discontinuity offers two major learning points helpful in engaging the self-directed change and learning process:

1. Identify and articulate both the strengths (those aspects of yourself you want to preserve) and the gaps or discrepancies in your Real and Ideal Selves (those aspects of yourself you want to keep and those that you want to adapt or change).
2. Keep your attention on both sets of factors—do not let either preservation or adaptation become your preoccupation!

Some organizational cultures, as mentioned earlier, encourage a preoccupation with the gaps. Some individuals have philosophies, or value orientations, that push them to focus on areas of improvement (a pragmatic value orientation, Boyatzis, Murphy, & Wheeler, 2000, for example, or a dominant underlying need for achievement, McClelland, 1985). Some individuals have such a low level of self-confidence or self-esteem that they assume they are unworthy; distrusting positive feedback they focus on the negative issues.

To carry out these learning points, build your strengths into any development or learning plan on which you are working. At the same time, do not use a strength as a reason to deny or avoid adaptation and change. Seek a balance.

The Third Discontinuity: The Decision to Change

The third discontinuity and potential start of the process of self-directed change and learning is the decision to change. Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross (1992) called this a movement from *contemplation* to *preparation* for change (see Chapter Nine). It is the emotional or intellectual next step once you have achieved awareness of your strengths and weaknesses and of the discrepancies and congruencies between your Real and Ideal Selves, that which you want to preserve and that which you want to adapt. It is during this part of the process that the direction and intention of the change effort is articulated and made explicit (that is, conscious). A major part of this process is setting goals.

Setting Goals

The setting of goals and creating of plans to achieve those goals has been an integral part of models and theories of change processes, and in particular self-directed change processes, for several centuries (Kolb & Boyatzis, 1970b). William James described the importance of conscious volition in personal change. Of course, even earlier, Benjamin Franklin outlined a process for becoming a virtuous person by setting daily and weekly goals to increase one's virtuous behavior. In recent years, McClelland (1965) formulated a motive acquisition process that included goal-setting and planning, and then proceeded to establish the effectiveness of these steps in motive change studies among entrepreneurs (McClelland & Winter, 1969; Miron & McClelland, 1979; McClelland, Davis, Kalin, & Wanner, 1972). Kolb, Winter, and Berlew (1968), Kolb and Boyatzis (1970a, 1970b), Boyatzis and Kolb (1969), and Kolb (1971) began to elaborate the points in the process at which goal-setting and planning are essential for change to occur. Integration of McClelland's steps in motive acquisition and the Kolb and Boyatzis models resulted in a model for the *competency acquisition process* (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

As part of one of the longitudinal studies at the Weatherhead School of Management, Leonard (1996) showed that MBAs who desired to change on certain competencies and set goals to do so, changed significantly on those competencies as compared to other MBAs. Previous literature had shown how goals affected certain changes on specific competencies (Locke & Latham, 1990) but had not established evidence of behavioral change on a comprehensive set of competencies constituting emotional intelligence.

Challenges to Deciding to Change

The third discontinuity offers one major learning point helpful in engaging the self-directed change and learning process:

1. Create your personal learning agenda!

Others cannot tell you how you should change—that is, they may tell you but it will not help you engage in the change process. Parents, teachers, spouses, bosses, and sometimes even your children will try to impose goals for change or learning on you. However, people learn only what they want to learn!

The late 1960s and early 1970s were witness to a widespread program in organizations called *management by objectives*. It was so popular that it spread to other arenas—you could find books and workshops on learning by objectives, teaching by objectives, and so on and so forth. In all these programs, there was one and only one approach to goal-setting and planning taught. It specified development of specific, observable, time-phased, and challenging (that is, involving moderate risk) behavioral goals. Unfortunately, this one-size-fits-all approach lacked a credible alternative until McCaskey (1974) suggested that some people plan by "domain, and direction setting." Later, as part of the Weatherhead longitudinal studies, McKee (then London) (1991) studied how MBA graduates planned personal improvement. She discovered four different styles of planning: objectives-oriented planning; domain and direction planning; task- (or activity-) oriented planning; and present-oriented planning. The latter appeared as an existential orientation to one's involvement in developmental activities and could be considered a nonplanning style.

The major barrier to engaging in goal-setting and planning is that people are already busy and cannot add anything else to their lives. In such cases success with self-directed change and learning occurs only when people can determine what to say no to and how to stop some current activities in their lives to make room for new ones. Another potential threat to success is the development of a plan that calls for a person to engage in activities calling for a learning style different from their preferred learning style or beyond their learning flexibility (Kolb, 1984;

Boyatzis, 1994). When this occurs the person is likely to become demotivated and often stops the activities or becomes impatient and decides that the goals are not worth the effort.

The Fourth Discontinuity: The Decision to Act

The fourth discontinuity and potential start of self-directed change and learning is to experiment with and practice desired changes. Acting on the plan and toward the goals involves numerous activities. People often engage in these activities in the context of experimenting with new behavior. Typically, following a period of experimentation, the person practices the new behaviors in the actual work and other settings in which he wishes to use them. During this part of the process, self-directed change and learning begins to look like a *continuous improvement* process.

Experimentation and Practice

To develop or learn new behavior, a person must find ways to learn more from ongoing experiences. That is, experimentation and practice does not always require attending courses or a new activity. It may involve trying something different in a current setting, reflecting on what occurs, and experimenting further in this same setting. Sometimes, this part of the process requires finding and using opportunities to learn and change. People may not even think they have changed until they have tried new behavior in a work or real-world setting. Rhee (1997) studied full-time MBA students in one of the Weatherhead cadres over a two-year period. He interviewed, tested, and video- and audiotaped them about every six to eight weeks. Even though he found evidence of significant improvements on numerous interpersonal abilities by the end of the second semester of their program, the students did not perceive that they had changed or improved in these abilities until they had returned from their summer internships.

Dreyfus (1990) studied managers of scientists and engineers who were considered superior performers. Once she documented that they used considerably more of certain abilities than their less effective counterparts, she pursued how they had developed some of those abilities. One of the distinguishing abilities was Group Management, also called Team Building. She found that many of these middle-aged managers had first experimented with Team-Building skills in high school and college and in sports, clubs, and living groups. Later, when they became "bench scientists and engineers" working on problems in relative isolation, they still used and practiced team building and group management in social and

community organizations, such as 4-H Clubs, and in professional associations by planning conferences and such.

The experimentation and practice are most effective when they occur in conditions in which the person feels safe (Kolb & Boyatzis, 1970b). This sense of psychological safety creates an atmosphere in which the person can try new behavior, perceptions, and thoughts with relatively less risk of shame or embarrassment and of serious consequences of failure.

Our relationships are an essential part of our environment. Our most crucial relationships are often in groups that have particular importance to us. These relationships and groups give us a sense of identity, guide us as to appropriate and "good" behavior, and provide feedback on our behavior. In sociology, they are called *reference groups*. They create a context in which we can interpret our progress on desired changes and the utility of new learning, and even contribute significant input to formulation of our Ideal Self image (Kram, 1996). In this way our relationships are mediators, moderators, interpreters, sources of feedback, sources of support, and givers of permission for change and learning! They may also be our most important source of protection against relapses to our earlier forms of behavior. Wheeler (1999) analyzed the extent to which the MBA graduates worked on their goals in multiple *life spheres* (work, family, recreational groups, and so forth). In a two-year follow-up study of two of the graduating classes of part-time MBA students, she found those who worked on their goals and plans in multiple sets of relationships improved the most, more than those working on goals in only one setting, such as work or one relationship.

In a study of the impact of the yearlong executive development program for doctors, lawyers, professors, engineers, and other professionals, mentioned earlier, Ballou et. al. (1999) found that participants gained in Self-Confidence during the program. Observers would have said these participants were very high in Self-Confidence even at the beginning of the program, so this was a curious finding! The best explanation came from program graduates' answers to follow-up questions. They explained the evident increase in Self-Confidence as an increase in their confidence that they could change. Their existing reference groups (family, groups at work, professional groups, community groups) all had an investment in their staying the same even though they wanted to change. The Professional Fellows Program allowed them to develop a new reference group that encouraged change.

According to theories of social identity and reference groups and now relational theories, our relationships both mediate and moderate our sense of who we are and who we want to be. We develop or elaborate our Ideal Self from these contexts. We label and interpret our Real Self from these contexts. We interpret and value strengths (aspects we consider our core that we wish to preserve) from

these contexts. We interpret and value gaps (aspects we consider weaknesses or things we wish to change) from these contexts.

Challenges to the Decision to Act

This discontinuity offers three major learning points helpful in engaging the self-directed change and learning process:

1. Experiment and practice and try to learn more from your experiences!
2. Find settings in which you feel psychologically safe in which to experiment and practice!
3. Develop and use your relationships as part of your change and learning process!

Comparison to Other Models of Individual Change

The proposed model of self-directed change is consistent with other theories for understanding how people change. There are not many theories of individual change in the professional literature that are based on empirical research or conceptual meta-analysis. In Table 10.3, this model is compared to McClelland's twelve propositions for motive acquisition and change, Prochaska's model, and the model of best practices for developing emotional intelligence compiled by the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations. The latter model is a synthesis of the practices in fourteen model programs studied by members of the consortium and found to have published evidence of positive impact on emotional intelligence.

Conclusion

Our future may not be entirely within our control, but most of what we become is within our power to create. It is my intention that the self-directed change and learning process described in this chapter will provide a road map and guidance for increasing the effectiveness of your change and learning efforts. As a concluding thought, I offer a few lines from the 1835 John Anster translation of Goethe's *Faustus: A Dramatic Mystery*. In the Prologue to the Theater, one character declares:

What you can do, or dream you can, begin it,

Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.

TABLE 10.3. COMPARISON OF INDIVIDUAL CHANGE MODELS.

Elements of SDC Process	McClelland's Motive Acquisition[a]	EI Consortium Best Practices[b]	Prochaska's Model[c]
Become aware of Real Self	Improvement in self-image	Gauge readiness of learners Conduct ongoing evaluation research	Precontemplation
Become aware of Ideal Self	Belief that change can, will, should occur Consistent with demands of external reality Improvement on prevailing cultural values	Build positive expectations	Precontemplation
Realize discrepancies or gaps Realize congruencies or strengths		Assess individuals and deliver results with care	Contemplation Contemplation
Identify goals	Clearly conceptualizes changes as improvement in self-image Commits self to achieving goals	Make learning self-directed Set clear, meaningful, manageable goals	Preparation
Articulate a plan	Link desired change to actions Link to events in everyday life		Preparation
Experiment and practice	Keeps a record of progress Setting dramatizes self-study and lifts it from everyday life	Provide practice and feedback Rely on experiential methods Use "live" models	Action
In context of relationships and psychological safety	In an interpersonal atmosphere of warmth, honest support, and respect Persistence of change if new behavior is a sign of membership in a new reference group	Foster a positive relationship between trainer and learner Inoculate against setbacks Create an encouraging environment Build in support	Maintenance

[a]McClelland, 1965.

[b]Cherniss & Adler, 2000 (also includes a number of guidelines addressing assessment and preparation of the organization for the development program or effort).

[c]Prochaska et al., 1992.