EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: WHAT IS IT?

3 HIGH EQ EQUALS HIGH EFFECTIVENESS?

6 MANAGING EMOTIONS WHEN MAKING DECISIONS

10 CHURCHILL, HITLER AND THE BLACK DOG
IN THEIR SHOES
LETS CUT EACH OTHER SOME SLACK

By LOUISA DEVDASDON
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ENTAL health is a phrase that gets thrown around a lot. It’s defined as a few things but it basically refers to one’s ability to enjoy life, be well-adjusted and achieve psychological resilience. Someone struggling with mental health may suffer varying degrees of stress, anxiety, depression, grief, addiction, learning disabilities, relationship issues and in more chronic, severe cases mood and other psychological disorders.

I was a psychology student at HELP University a few years ago. On one of my first days there, the dean, Goh Chee Leong, said something that has stayed with me. Reality is in the eye of the beholder. It resonated with me more powerfully than the original phrase. It has become the foundation for which I stand on when listening to others and empathising with their stories as they see them.

It’s human nature to seek to simplify each other — to make it seem easier to predict each other’s next move or to just feel like we get each other. However, we are highly complex beings. Inside each and every one of us are experiences and memories that we have made sense of in our own unique way. We have values, views and beliefs that were nurtured in us and/or reinforced by the unpredictable things that have happened in our lives. Suffice to say, we’re intricate, messy and mysterious to one another.

WHO, HOW, WHAT, WHY

If you’ve ever been counselled, you might have observed that the counsellor does two things: 1) ask a lot of non-judgemental open-ended questions and 2) summarise the content back to the sender. What does this do? It provides the sender room to articulate his or her processes and intentions. Summarising the content back gives the receiver an opportunity to hear what he or she said and it gives the receiver an opportunity to confirm that he or she understood correctly.

I know, I know. We’re not counsellors. However, I think the essence of this, asking more questions and seeking to understand where each other is coming from is the first step to giving each other meaningful support and turning good intentions into functional actions. These are two of the most important things you can do for someone going through a hard time.

OPENING DOORS TO EMPATHY

It’s daunting to see someone you love or anyone really, suffering or going through a rough patch. Opening ourselves to finding out more about what’s going on with them can replace stigma with empathy and hopefully show you that we are all not so different and that at the heart of it we’re just people trying to make the best of our lives and situations.

“Nothing is more important than empathy for another human being’s suffering. Nothing. Not career, not wealth, not intelligence, certainly not status. We have to feel for one another if we’re going to survive with dignity.” — Audrey Hepburn

Louisa can talk all day, all night about all things. She’s working on being a better listener and giving her jaw a break. Share your words and experiences with her at louisa.albyan@leaderonomics.com.
VERVONE is familiar with the term “intelligence quotient” or IQ as a measure of intelligence. However, is it the best predictor of success especially as a leader? There is another level of intelligence that is viewed equally, if not more importantly, as a measure of potential leadership success and ultimately organisational performance. And that is emotional intelligence or EQ.

EQ is our ability to identify and manage our own emotions as well as recognise the emotions of others. It requires effective communication between the rational and emotive centres of our brain – it represents the path between feeling and reason.

The brain science surrounding EQ is quite powerful and compelling. As reported by Daniel Goleman in his book, Primal Leadership, Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence, the four skills that together make up EQ include self-awareness and self-management, and social awareness and relationship management, which are about social competence.

Goleman states, “Gifted leadership occurs where heart and head – feeling and thought – meet.”

Studies have found:
- EQ is a required competency for effective leaders
- EQ is the No. 1 predictor of professional success and personal excellence
- EQ affects organisational profitability and performance

EQ IN LEADERSHIP

A leader’s intelligence has to have a strong emotional component. He/she has to have high levels of self-awareness, maturity and self-control. He/she must be able to withstand the heat, handle setbacks and when those lucky moments arise, enjoy success with equal parts of joy and humility. No doubt emotional intelligence is rarer than book smarts, but my experience says it is actually more important in the making of a leader. You just can’t ignore it.

— Jack Welch, Former chairman of General Electric speaking to WSJ

Leadership begins and ends with inner strength requiring the ability to understand ourselves very well while consistently learning, growing and developing.

In addition to enhancing self-awareness, strong leaders are adaptable to their surroundings, transparent, exhibit positive energy and practise emotional self-control. Effective leaders are empathetic, service-oriented and organisationally aware of their surroundings, reading people and cues well. Lastly, they are relationship builders, effective influencers, coaches, people developers, team collaborators, conflict managers, as well as change managers. All of these are dimensions of emotional intelligence.

AAWARENESS OF YOUR EMOTIONS AND OF OTHERS’

Our perceptions can differ from person to person and these perceptions influence our thoughts as well as our decision-making. How are we of what we see, think and feel? Do we practise empathy to understand what others see, think and feel? Do we perceive similarities as well as differences? Not only understanding but also embracing these differences. Ultimately, how well do we see and understand the impact of our thoughts on others and take into consideration others’ thoughts and needs?

We all have beliefs, biases and assumptions that can interfere with our rational thinking at times and cause us to over-react to situations. How well do we know what they are and are we able to contain or manage them appropriately?

In order to manage our emotions effectively, we have to identify them, be able to assess them accurately, understand the root cause, and ultimately control them appropriately.

Knowing what the triggers are that drive our emotions as well as understanding triggers of those around us can truly heighten our ability to communicate more effectively.

Conflict is inevitable and actually a positive because it usually leads to progress when handled well. Being able to read the people dynamics, assess the needs involved and manage the situation effectively requires high levels of EQ.

THE NO.1 PREDICTOR OF PROFESSIONAL TRIUMPH

By RITA B. ALLEN
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There are a number of compelling findings included in Goleman’s book. According to the Centre for Creative Leadership, the three most significant causes of career derailment for executives involve deficits in emotional competence:
1) Difficulty in handling change
2) Inability to work well in a team
3) Poor interpersonal relations

According to Tony Simons in Harvard Business Review, the more associates feel a sense of trust towards their bosses (an emotional response), the higher the profits for the organisation.

In a study, a 2.7% point improvement on a survey of employees’ perceptions of how much managers earned their confidence increased profitability by 2.5%. That increase in profitability meant a quarter million-dollar profit increase per business unit per year. The business case is strong for building emotionally intelligent leaders for positive impact on profitability and performance.

Leaders are lifelong learners always looking to further develop their knowledge and skills. In fact, there are a number of assessments that help us to determine our level of emotional intelligence by allowing us to identify elements of strength as well as areas for improvement. This includes the highly regarded BAR-ON EQ-i self-assessment and 360 tool.

There are also several resources available on this topic including the book, Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves. Developing our EQ is an on-going effort that requires us to push ourselves of our comfort zone.

Here are some tips to help build out EQ as we continue to build our leadership capabilities:
- Learn what your triggers are and how they impact your emotions
- Ask for feedback from others often and openly
- Be an active listener, step back and look at things objectively
- Practise deep breathing, relax the body, keep a clear mind
- Focus on other people’s perspectives and show interest in others
- Take time to learn the norms of the organisational culture
- Carefully read the dynamics of each situation, the people and your surroundings
- Nurture relationships; acknowledge others’ needs and feelings
- Manage expectations appropriately
- Welcome the difficult conversations and give direct, constructive feedback

IN A NUTSHELL

Building EQ is not only a strong predictor of effective leadership but can contribute to greater productivity, performance and ultimately profitability for all.

What level of EQ do you and your leaders possess?
Invest in developing your staff and your leadership potential at all levels of your organisation. Remember, individuals do not have to be in a leadership role to be a leader. Unleash leadership skills in all!
WAYS TO REVIVE PERFORMANCE

1. Help a person who needs help
   Don’t wait to be asked. Pick someone who is struggling and offer to help. Be specific: Offer to help with a specific task, or to take over a task for a few days, or to work side-by-side. A general offer is easy to brush aside. A specific offer not only shows you want to help; it also shows you care.

2. Help a person who doesn’t seem to need help
   Think about it. Compared with others, the best-performing people don’t need help. That’s because they rarely get help. And as a result, they’re often lonely, at least in a professional sense. So offer to help with a specific task. Not only will you build a nice interpersonal bridge, but some of their better skills or qualities might rub off on you as well.

3. Help anyone
   Few things feel better than helping someone in need. Take a quick look around; people less fortunate than you are everywhere. For example, I conducted an interview skills seminar for prison inmates (after all, who needs to know how to deal with tough interview questions more than a convicted felon?). It took only an hour of my time and was extremely rewarding.

4. Don’t try to change who you are
   Be a better version of who you already are. I would like to ride a motorcycle like this guy. Or climb like this guy. Or run as the guy. But the cool thing is, they can’t be you.

5. Let other people be who they really are
   Your customers, vendors, suppliers, they aren’t going to change. Don’t expect them to.

6. Change the way you measure tasks
   Sometimes small adjustments can make a big difference. Take a close look at the people who are successful in your field: What do they do differently, including, possibly, walking away. When you stop focusing on negatives, you may start to notice the positive qualities you missed. Rarely are people as bad as you make them out to be – and if they are, it’s up to you to make whatever changes are necessary.

7. Change the goals you strive for
   If you develop accounting software, it’s fun to benchmark against, say, the success of QuickBooks. Setting an incredible goal is fine – if you don’t aim high, you won’t reach high – but failing to hit a lofty goal can also kill your motivation. So choose a different benchmark. Look for companies or people with similar assets, backgrounds, etc., and try to beat their results. Then, after you do, choose another, higher target.

8. Do the opposite of what you normally do
   Think of this as the George Costanza approach. If you haven’t reached a goal, then what you’re currently doing isn’t working. Instead of tweaking your approach, take an entirely different tack. Pick one goal you’re struggling to achieve and try a completely different approach. If you’re hoping to finish a marathon and endless long runs aren’t paying off, try interval training instead. Sometimes small adjustments eventually pay off, but occasionally you just need to blow things up and start over.

9. Eliminate one goal
   We all have goals. Often, we have too many goals; it’s impossible to do 10 things incredibly well. Take a look at your goals and pick at least one that you’ll set aside, at least for now. (Don’t feel bad about it. You weren’t reaching your goals anyway, so what’s the harm in dropping a few?) Then put the time you were spending on that goal into your highest priority.

10. Rework your workday
    Get up earlier. Get up later. Take care of e-mails an hour after you start work. Eat at your desk. Pick one thing you do on a regular basis, preferably something you do for no better reason than that is the way you always do it (which makes it comfortable), and do that one thing in a different way or at a different time.

11. Adopt someone else’s habit
    Successful people are often successful because of the habits they create and maintain. Take a close look at the people who are successful in your field. What do they do on a regular basis? Then adopt one of their habits and make it your own. Never reinvent a wheel when a perfect wheel already exists.

12. Teach another person something you want to do better
    When I teach, I learn more than the people I’m trying to teach. (Hopefully that says more about the process of teaching than it does about my teaching abilities.) When you mentor another person, you accomplish more than just helping someone else.

You can’t have it all, but you can have a lot – especially when you narrow your focus to one or two key goals.
CANCEROUS THOUGHTS
SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE
QUARANTINE

By TRAVIS BRADBERRY
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YOUR self-talk (the thoughts you have about your feelings) can make or break your career. When you make a mistake, they either magnify the negativity or help you turn that misstep into something productive.

Negative self-talk is unrealistic, unnecessary, and self-defeating. It sends you into a downward emotional spiral that is difficult to pull out of.

All self-talk is driven by important beliefs that you hold about yourself. It plays an understated but powerful role in success because it can both spur you forward to achieve your goals and hold you back.

“he who believes he can and he who believes he cannot are both correct.”
—Henry Ford

TalentSmart has tested the emotional intelligence (EQ) of more than a million people and found that 90% of top performers are high in EQ. These successful, high EQ individuals possess an important skill—the ability to recognise and control negative self-talk so that it doesn’t prevent them from reaching their full potential.

These successful people earn an average of US$18,000 more annually than their low EQ peers, get promoted more often, and receive higher marks on performance evaluations. The link between EQ and earnings is so direct that every point increase in EQ adds US$1,300 to an annual salary.

When it comes to self-talk, we’ve discovered some common thoughts that hold people back more than any others. Be mindful of your tendencies to succumb to these thoughts, so that they don’t derail your career.

Perfection equals success

Human beings, by our very nature, are fallible. When perfection is your goal, you’re always left with a nagging sense of failure, and end up spending your time lamenting what you failed to accomplish, instead of enjoying what you were able to achieve.

My destiny is predetermined

Far too many people succumb to the highly irrational idea that they are destined to succeed or fail. Make no mistake about it, your destiny is in your own hands, and blaming multiple successes or failures on forces beyond your control is nothing more than a cop out. Sometimes life will deal you difficult cards to play, and other times you’ll be holding aces. Your willingness to give all in playing any hand you’re holding determines your ultimate success or failure in life.

I ‘always’ or ‘never’ do that

There isn’t anything in life that you always or never do. You may do something a lot or not do something enough, but framing your behaviour in terms of “always” or “never” is a form of self-pity. It makes you believe that you have no control of yourself and will never change. Don’t succumb to it.

I succeed when others approve of me

Regardless of what people think of you at any particular moment, one thing is certain, you’re never as good or bad as they say you are. It’s impossible to turn off your reactions to what others think of you, but you can take people’s opinions with a grain of salt. That way, no matter what people think about you, your self-worth comes only from within.

My past equals my future

Repeated failures can erode your self-confidence and make it hard to believe you’ll achieve a better outcome in the future. Most of the time, these failures result from taking risks and trying to achieve something that isn’t easy. Just remember that success lies in your ability to rise in the face of failure. Anything worth achieving is going to require you to take some risks, and you can’t allow failure to stop you from believing in your ability to succeed.

My emotions equal my reality

If you’ve read Emotional Intelligence 2.0, you know how to take an objective look at your feelings and separate fact from fiction. If not, you might want to read it. Otherwise, your emotions will continue to skew your sense of reality, making you vulnerable to the negative self-talk that can hold you back from achieving your full potential.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

I hope these lessons are as useful to you as they have been to me over the years. As I write them, I’m reminded of their power and my desire to use them every day.

What other toxic thoughts do successful people quarantine? Please share your thoughts with me, as I learn just as much from you as you do from me.
EMOTIONS SHADE SO MANY OF OUR DECISIONS AND JUDGEMENTS THAT WE OFTEN IRRIGATE INFLUENTIAL IF THEY ARE IN OUR JOBS.

By EUGENE Y.J. TEE

BE RATIONAL ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL AND BE AWARE OF ITS INFLUENCE

To some extent, emotions do interrupt decision-making. It’s their very essence. Once they are there, we are unable to do, or delay our thoughts and drain our attention to eliminate them. Could we all be like Spock – completely unemotional, reason-driven without being emotionally influenced for logging logic and data when faced with decision-making challenges? Definitely not! Should we? Probably not. For the simple reason that we need emotion to make decisions, eliminating emotions from decision-making is not merely impractical – it is impossible.

Moreover, we have to rely on emotions when making decisions. However, is within our conscious mind to understand the emotional dimension in decision-making?

THE CURIOUS CASE OF PHINNEX CAGE

In 1848, a tragic event occurred in the town of kamloops, british columbia, when a fire broke out in the town. The fire quickly spread, and within hours, the town was completely destroyed. The town's mayor, phinnox cage, was in charge of the efforts to save the town. Unfortunately, cage was not able to save the town, and the consequences were catastrophic. Cage's decision was a significant factor in the town's destruction.

The fact that Cage was still making decisions – albeit poor on the basis of emotional impulses – shows that we rely on emotion to help us reason. Damage to this part inhibits our ability to be reasonable about emotions.

Emotions shade so many of our decisions and judgements that we are often unconscious of our influence. They are in our jobs.

Appropriate selection and the many cognitive biases associated with this – the halo and anchoring effects (making snap judgments about candidates based on the basis of a few positive/negative qualities), contrast effect (making negative rather than objective assessments of applications are just two ways in which emotions affect our decision making).

For the simple reason that emotions are a part of decision-making, we are important. Important decisions – ones that have an impact on the organization – should not be made without consideration of the emotions of the masses; multiple individuals, even the emotions of a single individual can have a significant influence on the organization.

Emotions fill in the gaps in our understanding to make decisions. Emotions are the imperfect necessity for making decisions in a world flooded with information.

By EUGENE Y.J. TEE

5 POINTERS IN MANAGING EMOTIONS

1. EMOTIONS ARE PART OF DECISION-MAKING

2. RECOGNIZE WHEN YOUR EMOTIONS BIASE YOUR JUDGEMENTS AND DECISIONS

3. OR MAKE INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONS

4. EMOTIONS INFLUENCE FUTURE BEHAVIORS, AS WELL AS CURRENT BEHAVIORS

5. ELIMINATING EMOTION FROM DECISION-MAKING IS NOT TO BE HELPFUL, OR POSSIBLE

EMOTIONS SHADE SO MANY OF OUR DECISIONS AND JUDGEMENTS THAT WE OFTEN IRRIGATE INFLUENTIAL IF THEY ARE IN OUR JOBS.
STUDYING ART MAKES YOU A BETTER LEADER?

By GENEVIEVE GAMACHE

An the study of culture and the arts really make one a better person and leader? Promoting it seems to be a strange endeavor. On one hand, most people would most likely agree that art is an important part of society, especially when it comes to protecting cultural traditions of one’s community when confronted with globalization.

Yet, it is also obvious that at least at first glance, a lot of people, including parents, are dubious of education in art. When it comes to going to college, most people would probably say that to get a degree in arts and humanities is something you do out of pure personal interest, rather than employability. This, I strongly believe, is where people are mistaken.

WHAT IS ART ALL ABOUT?

Art, of course, at its very core, is a mode of expression. Throughout history, artists have given shape to intangible feelings and ideas, making order out of chaos. Great works of art can stimulate us and make us think, but they can also disturb us, sometimes pushing boundaries we didn’t know existed. But this has been true of the arts for generations. So what of today? Can art and most importantly, studying art, be relevant today? More so than ever, I believe the answer is yes.

Let’s face it, we live in a world where social and cultural relations baffle most of us for their increasing complexities. The concept of community, for example, is no longer fixed and homogeneous, nor is it still based on particular geographical boundaries.

Today, members of a community can be in different cities, countries, or even continents. And while people often acknowledge that the concept of culture is important to them, with the advance of Social and New Media, we sometimes realise that what we took for our own cultural specificities might not be unique to us and many others. But most importantly, it makes us realise that we have never really practised only “one” culture, but many.

Artistic productions, either large theatrical plays or small visual art exhibits are taught how to approach a concept or someone else’s arguments, and how to assess and argue them all. But interestingly, a degree in arts and humanities provides leadership skills that make you “marketable” beyond cultural and artistic institutions. Because today, being able to think outside the proverbial box makes the difference between success and failure...

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Why is education in art not just for a career in the arts? Well, because art is about communication, indeed it is about finding new ways to communicate. Artists take existing objects or tools, reformatting them to create something new. And while everyone else is trying to find the right answer to a problem, we acknowledge that there is more than one correct answer, but we can critique, assess and argue them all.

When taking courses in art, you are assessed on how well you understand someone else’s arguments, and how well you can counter argue them. You are taught how to approach a concept or product from different perspectives, situating the creator, the viewer and indeed the product in different environments, be they physical or theoretical. In other words, being artistic is to be fluent in both logic and aesthetic knowledge, leading you to think differently, not because you “want” to be different, but because you can’t keep yourself from being creative.

The UM Cultural Centre is one of the rare places in this country where artistic interests are encouraged, nurtured and perfected to create the type of “outside the box” thinking this global world is looking for.

Having worked across the globe, I am excited to see UM’s Cultural Centre expand and grow. We are already looking to hire more faculty members and it is great to work among renowned art historians Emelia Ong and Simon Soon as well as painter and multimedia artist Ruzaiqah Omar Basaree.

Our research interest includes Malaysian art, Asian modernities, Islamic art, art theory, globalisation and culture, urban art and the representation of national and ethnic identity formation to name a few. So, if you want to lead better, communicate better and think better, equip yourself with an art education. You just may end up becoming a better and holistic leader.

CREATIVITY AND HISTORY MAY BE KEY TO SUCCESS IN MANAGEMENT

I strongly believe, is where people are mistaken.

Indeed, in an IBM 2010 global chief executive officer (CEO) study, more than 1,500 CEOs were interviewed from over 60 different countries and they identified creativity as the most important skill in a leader. In a world changing often faster than most people can cope with, creativity is the skill that will help institutions, not to “keep-up” with the changes, but to drive them. And an education in art forces you to think outside the box.

Case in point, aren’t you reading this article partly because you think art lies outside the norms? Isn’t that why getting a degree in art scared you to begin with?

A degree in arts and humanities provides leadership skills that make you ‘marketable’ beyond cultural and artistic institutions. Because today, being able to think outside the proverbial box makes the difference between success and failure...
THE BUCK HAS TO STOP WITH THE BOSS

IT IS THE EASIEST THING TO PLACE THE BLAME ELSEWHERE WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

By TOMMY WEIR
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W HILE he had made some aggressive moves building the company into a global industry leader, he had also made some equally large blunders, the kind that make the market question his abilities. So, I wanted to know what he had learnt, especially from the more challenging days.

The words that came next make most people cringe, but I’ll tell you from experience, they’re what separate results-driven leaders from those practising theory. “The biggest mistakes I made were when I trusted my leaders too much!” he shared as one of the top lessons he had learnt.

Perhaps these words are creating dissonance in your mind. Surely you’ve been taught that leaders should trust their people. And that is true, you should trust them. But you can’t trust blindly – trust builds after they’ve been tried.

He went on to explain that when he handed over the reins, there were decisions made that had led to less than desirable results and some that were downright harmful and for which the company is still bleeding money.

“I hired CEOs who were experts in their fields and assumed they knew what they were doing. I looked to their fields and assumed they knew what to do,” he explained. “What we’ve come to realize is that the CEO’s ability to resolve problems is not just about what you can do, but also about what you can’t do.”

That’s why he had to be the one who took responsibility. “I knew they were experts in their fields, but I understood that the market would come around to understand that there was a problem.”

It’s clear that he has worked hard to become great! To engage with him, e-mail us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

THE BOSS

THE MARK OF A GREAT LEADER

Blame resides with the one who, in the end, must take responsibility.

It’s disturbing that some leaders blame their employees for failing to deliver. If you blame others, it’s a clear indication that you’re a LINO (Leader in Name Only). Leaders never blame.

It’s irritating and unacceptable when a boss blames others for a lack of results. For sure there will be times when your team doesn’t produce as expected. The question is: “What do you do next?”

Take responsibility or blame somebody else? You’re responsible for your team’s performance. You chose them, you assigned the work, and you were the one to support and coach — so if they don’t perform it’s your responsibility to figure out what you should do differently next time.

Be like the chairman who looked back and identified what he could have done differently. Raise your hand and take responsibility. It’s unbecoming when you don’t, as you effectively pass the leadership to somebody else by allowing their lack of performance to control what you are able to do.

You may be tempted to blame an individual who can chose not to perform and that there’s nothing you can do about it. That’s partially true — as the leader you must do something, after all you’re responsible.

If you’re ever tempted to blame your team, turn the mirror around because you would be the one shirking your responsibility.
Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler and the Black Dog

By LOUISA DEVARASON
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SOMEONE who is depressed is often painted as a pessimistic soul, glued to their bed and avoidant of the world. While yes, depression is categorised as a loss of interest in things that once gave you pleasure, rumination over thoughts and feelings of worthlessness and restlessness as well as fatigue – it is a huge misconception that people suffering from depression do not try to live to their fullest. While there are days when they may be overwhelmed with hopelessness and are unable to function, there are days where that feeling might subside just enough for them to get up and move. This is a common struggle for many people whether it is due to illness, grief, or the aftermath of something bad that has happened to them. The well wrestle with this at times to varying degrees of severity. However, no matter what battle you may be struggling with, you can still be powerful, funny, and inventive – even if that sound impossible – there are many people out there, like Winston Churchill who proved it is possible.

WINSTON CHURCHILL
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, army officer, historian and artist, Churchill is regarded as one of the most influential people in British history and whose quick, sharp witted remarks are often quoted by many today. Churchill popularised the phrase, “the black dog,” as a metaphor for depression—black as it symbolises melancholy, disease and darkness and dog because of their close bond with man. The black dog was sitting on his lap and following him everywhere he went. It was the burden and strain of leading a country in the midst of World War II that left Churchill drained and in a dark place—leading many to suggest that he may even have had bipolar disorder.

Those close to him have said that it was his low moods of desolation coupled with his care for his country that made him able to see things in a way others could not. The resilience that came from battling his black dog built him up to lead in the desperate struggle against Adolf Hitler and his forces. A special type of mind, one open to intense emotions and perceptive to dangers others were not so attuned to.

THE FÜHRER AND THE NATIONALSOZIALISTISCHE DEUTSCHE ARBEITSPARTIE
To Hitler and the Nazis, racism was a clear science. They alleged that some parts of the human race were inferior and—as the weakest links—should be exterminated. A hideous ideology that, had it been achieved, would make our present very different.

As Churchill said in a speech in the House of Commons in June 1940: “If we fail, then the whole world will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age, made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science.” At the time, Churchill was one of the very few who stepped on some toes by recognising Nazism as more than aggressive German nationalism. Rather, he saw the rise of radical Hitler as unprecedented with great potential for destruction and terror.

However, none of this foresight and wisdom would have amounted to anything if Churchill had not become Prime Minister in May of 1940.

BEHIND EVERY MAN...
A man not many history books mention, Brendan Bracken, was an eccentric Financial Minister, was an eccentric and successful publisher of The Financial Times and The Economist. He was also Churchill’s minister of information during the war and his confidant. He was Churchill’s friend and loudest advocate, standing by him when others had written him off. However, he was instrumental in paving the way for Churchill to lead the United Kingdom through tumultuous times.

It has been noted that Churchill, succeeding Neville Chamberlain as prime minister, was a highly improbable turn of events and truthfully, not many wanted Churchill as leader. The press baron Lord Beaverbrook, who also played a role in securing Churchill the premiership, wrote: “Chamberlain wanted Halifax, Labour wanted Halifax. The lords wanted Halifax. The King wanted Halifax. And Halifax wanted Halifax...” Perhaps Beaverbrook was exaggerating a little but there was no doubt many influential people favoured Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, first Earl of Halifax (the foreign minister at the time). Even Churchill himself believed Halifax would be Chamberlain’s successor.

According to Bracken’s biographers, Bracken was determined to prevent this from happening and went with Beaverbrook to talk to a brooding Churchill—advising him to be silent should he be asked to serve under Halifax.

Long story short, Halifax was unsure himself and the next morning, Hitler invaded Belgium and Holland. That afternoon, Churchill told the King he was forming a government.

THE FALL OF A LEAF
In May 1940, the world’s fate took a very different turn and we know that there were many moments leading up to what happened. Many also know Halifax wouldn’t have used the same strategies Churchill did and this war may have drawn out longer than it did.

What I think is the pivotal lesson to be taken from Churchill’s life as a leader and about depression is this: You can overcome it and you can still be great even if you feel like you have a black dog on your lap.

Moreover, we all need a Bracken and/or a Beaverbrook in our life and we all need to try to be a Bracken and/or a Beaverbrook in the life of someone else. Championing their strengths and seeing deeper into them beyond the misery and pessimism into their potential and their strengths.

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND
No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.

And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.
HOW SELF-AWARENESS IMPACTS YOUR WORK

While we can’t control when we feel anger or fear—or how strongly—we can gain some control over what we do while in its grip. If we can develop inner radar for emotional danger, we can gain a choice point.

To find this inner choice point, start by questioning destructive mental habits. Even though there may be a bit of legitimacy to our grievances, are the disturbing emotions we feel way out of proportion? Are such feelings familiar? Are you rummaging? If so, we would do well to gain more control over those self-defeating habits of the mind.

THE STUDY OF HAPPY VS SAD

This approach takes advantage of an effect studied by Kevin Ochsner, a neuroscientist at Columbia University. Volunteers’ brains were scanned as they saw photos of people’s faces showing emotions ranging from a woman in tears to a baby laughing. Their emotional centres immediately activated the circuitry for whichever feeling those faces expressed.

But then Ochsner asked the volunteers to rethink what might be going on in the more disturbing photos in a less alarming way. Perhaps that woman was crying at a wedding, not a funeral. With that rethink, there was a striking shift in the brain: The emotional centres lost energy, as circuits higher in the prefrontal cortex—those for pondering—activated. As the Columbia research showed, this strategy seems to reduce circuitry in the prefrontal areas that can resist more primal limbic signals for strong negative emotions. That circuitry appears to be at play in a wide variety of methods, including reasoning with yourself about negative impulses and feelings.

Not everyone takes to reasoning to handle rocky feelings. Bad habits are usually all too quick to step in to lend a not-so-helpful hand. But there is a vast range of approaches we might try—ranging from mindfulness to various psychotherapies.

One method that can be particularly helpful is noticing emotional stirrings that signal destructive emotions, then thinking about what those stirrings might indicate—particularly fresh perspectives on our feelings rather than the same old rote thoughts that usually go with them.

This approach combines an awareness of our feelings with reasoning about their causes—a method popularized in the West by “mindfulness-based cognitive therapy.”

When handling our turbulent feelings, it helps to understand what happens in the build up to them. This typically goes by unnoticed. But if we can bring the build-up into our awareness, we gain a mental foothold that allows us to short-circuit what otherwise would become a destructive emotional hijack.

At the very least we can notice how we feel during the hijack itself and note the negative consequences of our impulses. And with luck (or practice), we can catch ourselves in the future and change what we say or do for the better.

For this, it helps to become aware of the gap between the provocation of an emotion, like anger, and our response. The same goes for our more mundane tensions, the ones we all face when whim and impulse contend with obligation and responsibility. A pause can help us sort out when those impulses and whims are just fine to act on and when obligation and responsibility matter more.

One of the four masteries that Leaderonomics often focuses on is the personal mastery. And one of the areas that is important for the self is one’s self-awareness. We provide unique programmes such as “Outward-looking Leadership” and “Strengths-based Leadership” that can empower you to grow your leadership capacity. That includes quarantining those cancerous thoughts. Write in to training@leaderonomics.com for more information.

By DANIEL GOLEMAN
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If our mindfulness has become very strong, the emotion gets nipped in the bud the moment we become aware of what’s stirring—we halt the impulse even before it takes hold.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It can help to tune in to the ways our destructive emotions feel as they build in the body. When we’re getting annoyed, for instance, do we clench our jaw? Do we have certain familiar thoughts? Whatever the signals might be, we can use them in a kind of mental radar.

As we get more familiarity with bringing our attention to the chain that leads to emotional hijacks, we should gradually get better at catching ourselves. And quite often, the simple act of noticing what’s stirring and then naming it helps to make it easier to hold onto.

If our mindfulness has become very strong, the emotion gets nipped in the bud the moment we become aware of what’s stirring—we halt the impulse even before it takes hold. One test of this progression comes when you confront someone who is hostile but remain calm yourself, able to use your discernment to understand why they might feel that way—rather than launching an angry rebuttal.

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