

# Emotional intelligence for leaders

Margaret Haffenden



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# **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FOR LEADERS**

Emotional intelligence for leaders

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# LEADING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

*We tend to think of leadership as something you do externally. The good leaders are the ones who are comfortable in their own skins. They understand what they are about – they understand their purpose in life and their strengths. They have a level of comfort with themselves that leads to a level of comfort with others.*

*– Dan Pink*

# INTRODUCTION

Many years ago I worked in publishing in Holland, then in IT and finance in Belgium and the UK. I followed this by jumping off a cliff into the unknown. That unknown began in the field of 'self-mastery', a somewhat awkward label that rapidly morphed into what is now known as Emotional Intelligence, or Emotional Quotient, or sometimes Emotional Capacity or Capital, depending on the circumstances.

First, I focused on myself. I learned about being emotionally intelligent at work, at home and on my own. Like many British people brought up in the '60s, I saw emotions as something uncomfortable and possibly embarrassing. If they weren't batted down, they threatened to erupt – there was no middle ground. My eyes were well and truly opened as I understood that intellect, logic and reasoning were part of a much broader picture, one that of necessity included both my own emotions and those of people around me.

Second, as I trained to become an executive coach, I saw with great clarity what a difference it made to my business clients when we focused not simply on strategic goals but also on the human interactions that enabled those goals to be achieved.

Since jumping off that cliff 15 years ago, I have coached many individuals and teams at all levels in the private and public sectors. I have worked with more than 20 nationalities in several quite different countries. Throughout those years, I used a number of tools to help my clients strengthen their ability to behave with emotional intelligence. These ranged from 360-degree assessments focused specifically on emotionally intelligent behaviours, to team-development models that included notions such as trust and healthy confrontation as a means to better results.

In almost all cases one of the biggest challenges I came across was translating the notion of emotional intelligence – being intelligent about emotion – from the abstract and somewhat esoteric, to the practical and tangible in a business context. I found that people were generally less interested in a lengthy description of the theories of emotional intelligence and far more interested in how they could actually become more emotionally intelligent.

That is why, in this e-book, I use a simple theoretical model of emotional intelligence and illustrate the key concepts through (disguised) examples from my coaching practice. Each chapter provides tools and further reading to help you develop your emotional intelligence in practical ways, and you can choose to read the book chapter by chapter or simply dip in and out as you please.

# WHY READ THIS BOOK?

*You manage things; you lead people.*

*– Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper*

## **Please consider yourself a leader**

You may or may not have people working for you. You may or may not be formulating strategy for your company's next move in a challenging market. You may or may not be responsible for a large budget and sit on the executive management team. At some point in your life you will have led someone or something. You lead others every day if you are a parent. You lead yourself every day in your own life. From the perspective of a corporate organisation chart, this may not be classed as leadership. From the perspective of emotional intelligence, leading yourself well will help you lead others better, whether that means creating alignment on the board, influencing your manager or gaining commitment from those over whom you have no authority.

As a leader, what is it you wanted? Perhaps you wanted to enthuse and inspire people with your vision and character. Maybe you wanted to get people behind you, working together as a team: happy, engaged, motivated, performing well, delivering results and getting recognition. Or you might have wanted to take your corporation through a process of significant change.

It sounds good on paper – and as we all know, it's not that easy. When you lead, you are under the spotlight; you are observed and how you behave is noticed. People make their mind up about you based on what they see, hear and sense – and crucially how they feel around you. You may have the clearest vision in the world; you may have read all the leadership literature or have taken the latest courses, yet if people don't want to follow you – for whatever reason – you will find yourself in an uphill battle.

## **Please consider yourself a follower**

Sometimes it's easier to understand leadership from the perspective of a follower and we have all followed something or someone, even if it was as simple as following our own advice.



As a follower, what is it you wanted? If you're anything like my clients, you didn't just want someone with vision, intellect, authority and drive. You wanted a leader who was aware of the impact their behaviour and attitude had on the people around them: someone who understood and acknowledged their strengths and weaknesses; someone who knew how to manage themselves well under stress and strain and during the good times; someone who refused to let conflict go underground and fester; someone who recognised and valued your contribution and who helped you see your own potential; someone who retained their humanity while in pursuit of results; someone who created trust even under adverse conditions; someone who combined leading from the head with leading from the heart.

The list is much longer than these few examples, but all are underpinned by the notion of emotional intelligence, our ability to recognise and manage our own emotions and those of others. As the saying goes, 'You manage things; you lead people'.

### **10 situations where Emotional Intelligence is needed more than ever**

- During change of any kind
- When restructuring a team or organisation
- When you become the leader of a new team
- When you become the leader of an established team
- When you are promoted
- When people are under pressure to deliver
- When conveying unpopular decisions or news
- When you need to deal with conflict
- When you need to manage upwards effectively
- When you need to extend your influence without formal authority

# 1 DEFINING LEADERSHIP AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

*It is very important to understand that emotional intelligence is not the opposite of intelligence, it is not the triumph of heart over head – it is the unique intersection of both.*

– David Caruso

## 1.1 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LEADERSHIP?

I have seen and used many definitions of leadership over the last 15 years and the one I come back to regularly is Stephen M.R. Covey's:

*'Leadership is getting results in a way that inspires trust.'*

As Covey says, the way you go about achieving results is as important as the results themselves. If you do so in a way that establishes trust, you increase your chances of achieving results next time.

## 1.2 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)?

Type Emotional Intelligence into Google and it will present you with an array of definitions, some of which are closely related and some of which use different terminology and a broader area of focus. I like the following definition because it is clear and comprehensive:

*'Emotional intelligence involves a combination of competencies that allow you to be aware of, understand and be in control of your own emotions; to recognize and understand the emotions of others; and to use this knowledge to manage your behaviour and relationships.'*

## 1.3 WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN THE TWO?

In 2001, The Harvard Business Review published an article called 'Why should anyone be led by you?' Authors Goffee and Jones recognised that to lead is to engage hearts, as well as minds, and that executives who were asked to reflect on how they engaged hearts found it an uncomfortable experience.

Even today, at least 20 years after Emotional Intelligence emerged as a differentiator in leadership capability and potential, we are still largely judged on our intellect. We still find the idea of dealing with emotions fraught with anxiety and possible pitfalls. Some would state that there is no place for emotions in the office. ‘Let’s look at this logically’, or ‘let’s focus on the facts’ may often be heard in the workplace. Ironically, these phrases can come loaded with frustration, irritation and resentment and may provoke the same feelings in the listener.

Covey’s definition of leadership – ‘the ability to get results in a way that inspires trust’ – is an emotional affair. While we may respect intellect, vision and drive, this is not necessarily what invites others to follow us or gets us behind others. Even Steve Jobs, known for his IQ rather than his emotional intelligence, not only pushed the boundaries of what was possible technologically, he also moved and inspired people to make things happen. If you have ever been moved or inspired by someone, you will know that this is something you feel not something you think.

This is where Emotional Intelligence and leadership come together. Leadership requires followership. Both leaders and followers are people, human beings with emotions that affect their attitudes, behaviours and interactions with others all day long. If, as a leader, you are unaware of or dismiss this dynamic, it will have an impact on those around you. Later on in this e-book I share examples from my coaching practice of how this shows up in the workplace. I don’t advocate that you become some kind of workplace counselor endlessly listening to people’s complaints, but I do encourage you to become more finely aware of yourself, your impact on others, and their impact on you.

## **1.4 LEADING UP, OUT AND DOWN**

Ironically, in order to lead others well, one of your key jobs may be managing upwards with high levels of emotional intelligence. Even if you are the CEO, you need to manage your relationship with your chair and he or she with you.

You may also need to manage outwards with high levels of emotional intelligence, particularly if you are leading across ‘functional silos’. Here the inevitable shortfall between talk of working together and skill at doing so may well push your buttons if you are not careful.

And finally, those who work directly for you will be eternally grateful if you handle yourself and interactions with them in an emotionally intelligent manner. This kind of gratitude tends to show up in people wanting to engage and commit, wanting to go the extra mile, wanting to give you their best thinking, wanting to live up to your expectations of their performance as individuals and teams, wanting to deliver on ‘mission impossible’...

Unlike I.Q., Emotional Intelligence is not fixed and unchangeable. Some say we become more emotionally intelligent as we grow older and go through the vicissitudes of life. I would say it depends on the individual: some people become more entrenched in their patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour, unwilling or afraid to make the slightest change; others are determined not to repeat mistakes of the past and thus develop and grow. What I know for sure is that if you **want** to increase, enhance, improve your emotional intelligence – in this case as a leader – then you can, and you will.

## 1.5 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

### A brief history

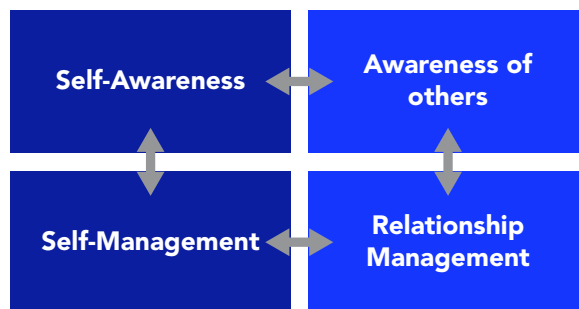
Way back in the 1930s, reference was already being made to the concept of social intelligence, or the ability to get along with others. In 1985, Wayne Payne introduced the term emotional intelligence in his doctoral dissertation and in 1990, psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer published their article ‘Emotional Intelligence’ in the journal *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*. Five years later, Daniel Goleman, a psychologist and science writer, wrote the book ‘Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ’ and in doing so brought the concept to the attention of millions. In October of the same year, EQ appeared on the cover of TIME magazine.

### So many models...

Since that time, the field of emotional intelligence has been awash with different models and theories, all of which take a slightly different approach both conceptually and in terms of what gets measured. The links between emotional intelligence and performance have been questioned and corroborated, disproved and proved again. If you like data, the internet offers a host of scientific and popular articles that make for interesting reading. Personally and empirically, on a daily basis I see the difference emotionally intelligent leadership makes to those who lead and those who follow.

In terms of models, I have used a number of well-regarded ones, ranging from those that focus purely on core emotional competencies to those that include a broader focus on elements such as self-confidence or service orientation, for example. While these models have played a vital role in choosing an assessment mechanism for a number of clients, I have found that the model itself is not actually that important. What is far more important is ‘what does it actually mean for me?’

In this book, we will use a simple 4-quadrant model of emotional intelligence shown below.



Working in each of the quadrants we will look at what each concept, for example (emotional) self-awareness, actually means and why it is important for leaders.

We will look at what happens when you are **not**, (emotionally) self-aware or aware of others at work, and when you **do not** manage yourself and your relationships well. The examples I share from my coaching practice will illustrate this and connect the concept to real life.

We will look at what changes when you **are** (emotionally) self-aware or aware of others at work, and when you **do** manage yourself and your relationships well. Again, I will share examples that bring these concepts to life.

Finally, in each chapter I will provide a number of tools and exercises for reflection and development. These will help you to build your capability to behave and lead in an emotionally intelligent manner, irrespective of whether you are new in role or a veteran.

*Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.*

*– Søren Kierkegaard*

### **Personal reflection exercise: Best Boss-Worst Boss**

- Think about the **best boss** you ever had.
- What did they do that made them the best boss?
- What was the impact on you? How did you feel and why?
- Think about the **worst boss** you ever had.
- What did they do that made them the worst boss?
- What was the impact on you? How did you feel and why?
- What is your key learning from this exercise?

### Food for thought

Being an emotionally intelligent boss (or leader) doesn't mean you have to go about 'making nice', asking people how they feel all the time or chatting when you really want to get on. But you do need to know your audience and how to get results while building trust.

Sometimes this will mean being tough: making difficult decisions, having crucial conversations, saying and holding to no, being bold, decisive and uncompromising. Sometimes it will mean being gentle: listening hard to what is happening, demonstrating awareness and understanding of people's feelings and perceptions, being delicate, compassionate and empathetic. And sometimes it will simply mean doing nothing at all. Your job is to understand what is needed and when.

### Recommended link

Why Should Anyone Be Led By You? – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npCokAAOmHs>



Discover the truth at [www.deloitte.ca/careers](http://www.deloitte.ca/careers)

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## 1.6 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

This emotional intelligence questionnaire is designed to get you thinking. It is not a validated psychometric test. It helps to take emotional intelligence out of the realms of an abstract concept and into a more practical arena. The model it is based on is slightly different from the one I am using but it's close enough to be helpful. The four areas referred to in the questionnaire are as follows:

- **Emotional self-awareness:**  
The ability to recognise what you are feeling, to understand your habitual emotional responses to events and to recognise how your emotions affect your behaviour and performance.
- **Emotional self-management**  
The ability to stay focused and think clearly even when experiencing powerful emotions.
- **Empathy**  
The ability to sense, understand and respond to what other people are feeling.
- **Social skill**  
The ability to manage, influence and inspire emotions in others.

### What to do

**Assess and score** each of the questionnaire's statements using a scale of 1 to 5 where:

- **1** indicates that the statement does not apply at all
- **3** indicates that the statement applies about half the time
- **5** indicates that the statement always applies to you

### Total and interpret your results

- Transfer your scores to the calculation table and total your results

### Consider your results

- What are one or two actions you can take immediately?

## Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

	How much does each statement apply to you?	Mark your Score				
	<p>Read each statement and decide how strongly it relates to YOU.</p> <p>Score yourself 1–5 based on the following guide: 1 – Does not apply. 3 – Applies half the time. 5 – Always applies</p>					
1	I realise immediately when I lose my temper	1	2	3	4	5
2	I can 'reframe' bad situations quickly	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am always able to see things from the other person's viewpoint	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am an excellent listener	1	2	3	4	5
5	I know when I am happy	1	2	3	4	5
6	I do not wear my 'heart on my sleeve'	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am excellent at empathising with someone else's problem	1	2	3	4	5
8	I never interrupt other people's conversations	1	2	3	4	5
9	I usually recognise when I am stressed	1	2	3	4	5
10	Others can rarely tell what kind of mood I am in	1	2	3	4	5
11	I can tell if someone is not happy with me	1	2	3	4	5
12	I am good at adapting and mixing with a variety of people	1	2	3	4	5
13	When I am being 'emotional' I am aware of this	1	2	3	4	5
14	I rarely 'fly off the handle' at other people	1	2	3	4	5
15	I can tell if a team of people are not getting along with each other	1	2	3	4	5
16	People are the most interesting thing in life for me	1	2	3	4	5
17	When I feel anxious I usually can account for the reason(s)	1	2	3	4	5
18	Difficult people do not annoy me	1	2	3	4	5



	How much does each statement apply to you?	Mark your Score				
19	I can usually understand why people are being difficult towards me	1	2	3	4	5
20	I love to meet new people and get to know what makes them tick	1	2	3	4	5
21	I always know when I am being unreasonable	1	2	3	4	5
22	I can consciously alter my frame of mind or mood	1	2	3	4	5
23	Other individuals are not 'difficult' just 'different'	1	2	3	4	5
24	I need a variety of work colleagues to make my job interesting	1	2	3	4	5
25	Awareness of my own emotions is very important to me at all times	1	2	3	4	5
26	I do not let stressful situations or people affect me once I have left work	1	2	3	4	5
27	I can understand if I am being unreasonable	1	2	3	4	5
28	I like to ask questions to find out what is important to people	1	2	3	4	5
29	I can tell if someone has upset or annoyed me	1	2	3	4	5
30	I rarely worry about work or life in general	1	2	3	4	5
31	I can understand why my actions sometimes offend others	1	2	3	4	5
32	I see working with difficult people as simply a challenge to win them over	1	2	3	4	5
33	I can let anger 'go' quickly so that it no longer affects me	1	2	3	4	5
34	I can suppress my emotions when I need to	1	2	3	4	5
35	I can sometimes see things from others' points of view	1	2	3	4	5
36	I am good at reconciling differences with other people	1	2	3	4	5
37	I know what makes me happy	1	2	3	4	5

	How much does each statement apply to you?	Mark your Score				
38	Others often do not know how I am feeling about things	1	2	3	4	5
39	Reasons for disagreements are always clear to me	1	2	3	4	5
40	I generally build solid relationships with those I work with	1	2	3	4	5

### Total and interpret your results

**Record** your 1,2,3,4,5 scores for the questionnaire statements in the grid below.

Self awareness		Managing emotions		Empathy		Social Skill	
1		2		3		4	
5		6		7		8	
9		10		11		12	
13		14		15		16	
17		18		19		20	
21		22		23		24	
25		26		27		28	
29		30		31		32	
33		34		35		36	
37		38		39		40	

**Calculate** a total for each of the 4 emotional competencies.

**Total =**  
(SA)

**Total =**  
(ME)

**Total =**  
(E)

**Total =**  
(SS)

**Interpret** your totals for each area of competency using the following guide:

35–50	This area is a <b>strength</b> for you
18–34	Give this area some <b>focus and attention</b>
10–17	Make this area a <b>development priority</b>

**Record** your result for each of the emotional competencies.

<b>EI Competence</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Needs Attention</b>	<b>Development Priority</b>
<b>Self-awareness</b>			
<b>Managing emotions</b>			
<b>Empathy</b>			
<b>Social skill</b>			

## 2 EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS

*That which I am unaware of controls me. That which I am aware of I can control. Awareness empowers me.*

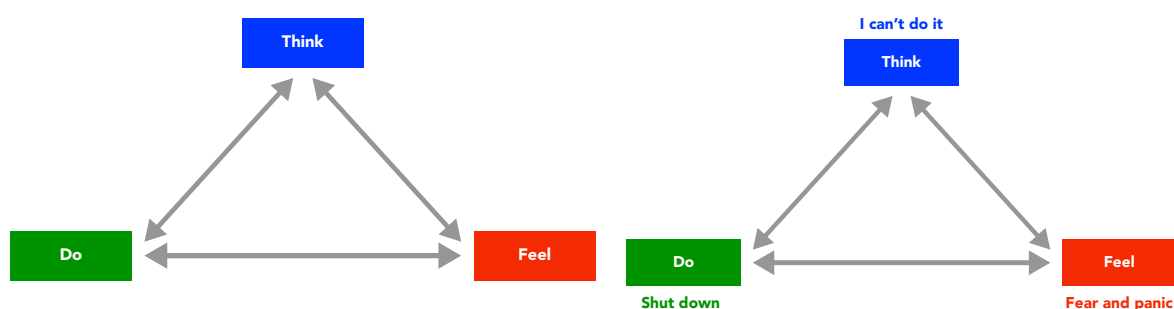
*– Sir John Whitmore*

### 2.1 WHAT DOES SELF-AWARENESS ACTUALLY MEAN?

Generally speaking, being self-aware means that we have a clear view of who we are. When we are self-aware we have a conscious understanding of ourselves. We know what drives us; what frustrates us; the behaviours that typify us; and the personality traits that help and hinder us. We can identify our strengths and weaknesses and see ourselves as others see us. When we move into the world of Emotional Intelligence self-awareness also means:

- Being aware of what we are feeling.
- Understanding the causes of our feelings.
- Recognising how our feelings affect our thoughts (and vice versa), decisions and behaviour.
- Understanding how these influence our performance and results and impact those around us both at home and in the workplace.

At it's most simple, it looks like the diagram below. You can start at any point in the triangle and go round it clockwise and anti-clockwise.



It would be nice to be in a good mood all the time – to be happy, excited, delighted, joyful – because things tend to flow more easily when we are. Minor irritations bother us less, our buttons don't get pushed so often, we deal more effectively with 'difficult' people, decision-making is easier and less stressful. We are probably easier to deal with ourselves. Most of us are not constantly in a good mood, however, (although many are relatively even tempered until they blow a fuse), and this is why self-awareness becomes even more important.

## 2.2 A BRIEF EXAMPLE

You wake up in a good mood. On the way to work, this starts to evaporate. You are thinking about the 9 a.m. meeting and how much you dread it. You feel anxious and irritated. As you get out of the car, you spill coffee on your newly dry-cleaned jacket. Irritation wins out and you take this into the meeting with you. Unaware of what you are feeling and why, your irritation seeps into your communication and makes you come across as someone who is impatient, inflexible and unwilling to listen. People push back strongly and you are not able to influence or contribute in the way you intended. You leave the meeting feeling even more irritated and now the anxiety is back as well. It's their fault of course. Lacking in self-awareness as you are, you make all kinds of assumptions about the unsavoury intentions behind other people's behaviour. After all, the poor result of the meeting has nothing to do with you.

### The week after

Just before the dreaded meeting the week after, you find yourself thinking 'please don't let it be a repeat of last week'. You feel the anxiety churning away in your stomach and you know it will soon be eclipsed by irritation if you're not careful. Luckily, someone has waved a magic wand, and you find that you are aware enough to know that these feelings can push you off course if you let them. They can shut you down or make you aggressive and unreasonable. You don't want the same result as last week so you decide on a different strategy. This time you will *ask questions*, rather than angrily advocating your own position. You will *express interest* in the position and views of others and in doing so you will reduce the need for them to forcefully advocate their own position. As you think this through your anxiety starts to fade. You go into the meeting feeling *more open and optimistic*. This comes through in your communication and people are less wary and defensive towards you. Some of the barriers to communication start dissolving and trust starts to build...

Apart from the waving of the magic wand, this is a real-life example of how self-awareness can make a significant difference not just to the individual, but also to the people, teams and environment in which they work.

## 2.3 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LEADERS ARE NOT EMOTIONALLY SELF-AWARE?

*Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.*

– C.G. Jung

### Three examples of unaware leaders

Have you ever worked for someone who is not self-aware? If you've been in the workplace for more than five years it's highly likely. Lack of self-awareness shows up in many ways and my aim with the following three examples is to illustrate what it *can* look like and the impact it *can* have. There is an upside to working for an unaware leader, however. It teaches you to be more aware of your own emotions and behaviours and to become resilient and creative in your own role.

#### 2.3.1 BRILLIANT BUT APPALLING

Not every boss who is brilliant is also appalling. Let me make that very clear. There are a number of exceptional bosses who are both brilliant and great leaders of people. And there are a number who are not. Over the years, I have coached a handful of brilliant but appalling bosses. Coaching those who become the collateral damage of such a boss has been a far more frequent event.

Brilliant but appalling bosses are known for their intellect. They are razor sharp, corralling disparate trails of thought into clear synopses in the blink of an eye. They are innovators and visionaries, expounding a strategic view that leaves those in the audience breathless and awed. They dismantle rock-solid arguments with style and substance.

Although it is generally accepted that the further up the corporate ladder you go, the more emotional intelligence plays a part in your ability to perform well and lead others, the brilliant but appalling boss often stumbles at this hurdle. Unused, perhaps, to thinking in anything but intellectual terms, this kind of leader can create incredible excitement – and incredible fatigue – throughout a team or organisation.

**Impact**

Unaware of their behaviour or impact on others (or dismissing its impact if they are aware), brilliant but appalling bosses can swiftly intimidate and shut down their audience. Ironically they are often in search of creative input from the people they lead, but fail to get it because no-one (bar the bravest, most severely disenfranchised or thickest-skinned) speaks up in meetings any more. Having suffered public humiliation one too many times, intelligent, committed and motivated people keep their heads down. Even when the boss shows the occasional glimmer of self-awareness – perhaps having been urged to get a coach – if this is a random occurrence, no-one will trust it.

Long-term, the resentment people feel at being on the receiving end of such treatment, the abiding sense of having been deeply disrespected and the attempts to stay motivated by rationalising the boss's poor behaviour creates deep emotional fatigue within an organisation and its culture.

**2.3.2 BEHIND CLOSED DOORS**

One of the skills that job descriptions never seem to include is the ability to read minds. This would come in very handy with certain types of unaware boss – such as those who live behind closed doors both physically and metaphorically.

There are a variety of reasons for this. Some bosses are very autonomous in their approach to work and assume others operate like them, needing very little interaction or input. Others believe that people are paid a salary, have a job description and should therefore just get on with it. After all, the workplace is not a kindergarten and it is not the leader's job to make people happy and solve their problems, right? Others still are naturally shy, find it daunting to 'walk the corridors' and awkwardly interact with people.

**Impact**

For those who themselves like to work autonomously, these might be the leaders from heaven. For those who prefer regular human contact, an understanding of where we're going and the building of team spirit, it can be confusing and worrying when communication, interaction and interest from above is absent. Trying to pin down a meeting with the boss, knowing that while they will make time for you it's seen as an interruption, is psychologically and emotionally tiring and causes people to doubt themselves. 'Is it me? Am I missing something? Do I need to change my style? Am I doing something wrong?'

Left to fend for themselves in a leadership vacuum, people can feel disempowered and uneasy. When no-one is seen or felt to be actively steering the ship they have to make assumptions about the course it is on and the part they and their team play in this. Ironically, much as we talk about delegation and ‘empowerment’, responsible, committed and grown-up individuals long to be led by someone who is visible, proactive and engaged with them.


### 2.3.3 NEVER LESS THAN PERFECT

Perfectionists can be inspiring. They produce immaculate work that others can rely on and never let their standards drop. They can also be tricky to deal with.


For those working for a perfectionist boss, life can become difficult. This type of boss often gets involved in details that are the bread and butter of lower levels. Perhaps fearing that things are not being done as they ‘should’, he or she can interfere in the running of a project, undermining instructions from the project leader, by-passing the chain-of-command, and confusing everyone in the process. This kind of unaware boss sucks the life out of a team because those whom they lead need to carefully upwards-manage them. Those who themselves are the managers of such a perfectionist boss, on the other hand, can have sleepless nights about whether things will actually get delivered on time and whether the team will start cracking apart under the strain.

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## Impact

Other perfectionist bosses are difficult to work with because they don't discriminate. Everything needs to be perfect – even when it doesn't. Most people I meet want to do a good job. They understand that certain types of output cannot be less than perfect. However when perfection is required across the board it can become tedious. It can delay delivery of projects, and it can pile on stress and pressure unnecessarily. Sometimes people give up. Having failed to give their boss what he or she seems to want despite having made numerous corrections, they create a rough draft and delegate it upwards. After all, the boss cannot be pleased, so why bother? With the perfectionist mind-set in full flow, the boss also sighs and gets to work. No-one can do it as well as them anyway. Others are simply not up to scratch, or just not dedicated enough.

## 2.4 WHY IS EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS IMPORTANT FOR LEADERS?

*A bad boss can take a good staff and destroy it, causing the best employees to flee and the remainder to lose all motivation.*

– Anon

You can already see from the three leaders described above the havoc that lack of self-awareness, emotional and otherwise, can cause. If you are leading people, you are in an emotional game. You are highly infectious, both positively and negatively. You influence the mind-sets, emotions and performance of those around you on a daily basis. This is why the people you lead want you to be aware of yourself and the impact you are having. As do you.

### 2.4.1 BUILDING TRUST – THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Leadership is about getting results while building trust – and people want to trust you. It makes their life easier and smoother and it creates a tone and mood that is conducive to a happier workplace and good performance. If you don't create trust, you may well suffer from Chief Exec's disease. No-one tells you what is really going on; they tell you what they think you want to hear. They work around you rather than with you and artificial harmony reigns.

### 2.4.2 THEY WILL CHECK YOU OUT

However in order to know if they can trust you, they will check you out. They will look to see if you are competent, in terms of skills, experience and ability. And they will look to see if you are emotionally intelligent. Do you handle yourself well under pressure? Do you share your stress indiscriminately? Do you leave an emotional wake behind you? Do you know how you come across? Do you know how they feel about you and around you? Do you listen? Do you care about them? Is it all about you or do you build relationships and team? How do you handle conflict? Will you fight for them? All this and more will shape their relationship with you and influence those factors that drive performance.

### 2.4.3 AWARENESS EQUALS CHOICE

For you as a leader, as you become more self-aware, in particular of your emotions and the role they play in your behaviour and performance, you give yourself more choice. You will find that you can choose to refine, adjust, re-work or ditch certain habitual responses and behaviours, and thereby invite different results. This helps build your resilience and broadens your repertoire. It also makes you better at handling yourself and building effective working relationships.

## 2.5 TOOLS FOR CHANGE

*A leader would never say 'give me a reason to trust you'. That's why we call them leaders, because they go first.*

*– Simon Sinek*

The goal of using the tools below is simple. It is to **become more skilled at being emotionally self-aware and through this to increase your ability to act with emotional intelligence**. One of the keys, here, is to notice. Start noticing more about yourself and how you feel. Start noticing how you typically feel and behave in certain situations. Start noticing the quality of your relationships with others. You play a part in determining that quality.

### What's motivating you?

First of all ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do I want to become more emotionally self-aware?
- In which situations do I want to become more emotionally self-aware?
- What outcome am I looking to achieve?

## How to improve your emotional self-awareness

### 1. Become more aware of your strengths and weaknesses

Understanding your strengths and weaknesses helps you identify the ways in which your emotional intelligence may be present or absent. If one of your strengths is efficiency, for example, you will get things done. If one of your weaknesses is not listening to those around you, you may get things done while losing the goodwill of your team. If you are aware of this, you can choose to adjust your behaviour where necessary.

#### Reflect

- Come up with a list of your top three to five strengths and weaknesses.
- What impact do they have on you and on those you lead?
- Check with those around you. What do they see and experience?

#### Act

- What do you learn from this and what action will you take?

### 2. Become more aware of how you are feeling

*Labeling your emotions is key. If you can name it, you can tame it.*

*– Mark Bracket*

Generally, we are not fluent in the language of emotion and we often dismiss our emotions as inconvenient, embarrassing or frightening. As we grow up, we develop an emotional repertoire of sorts. Some of us shut down our emotions and keep them under wraps. We are not encouraged to express them or even acknowledge them and so we don't – until the day we come to the end of our long fuse and explode. It shocks us, and those around us, and we batten down the hatches again. Some of us are on the opposite end of the spectrum. We operate on a hair trigger and are quick to express whatever we are feeling whenever we feel it. There are many shades in between and all of us slide along the emotional spectrum in our own way. If we are to become more emotionally intelligent as leaders, we need to become more familiar with the emotional side of ourselves (and others).

## 2b. Using five categories of emotion

There are thousands of words to describe how we feel. To make it easier, you might want to use the five major categories of emotion described below. Each category is a spectrum, encompassing strong feelings to weaker feelings. For example in the anger category, feelings range from strong feelings of rage to a barely noticeable flicker of irritation.

- **Love-joy: I feel** happy, light-hearted, ecstatic, hopeful, optimistic, loving, delight, pleasure, satisfaction, etc.
- **Fear: I feel** terrified, horrified, anxious, nervous, fright, alarm, panic, dread, etc.
- **Sadness; I feel** overwhelmed with grief, deeply sad, weepy, moved, teary, etc.
- **Anger: I feel** enraged, frustrated, resentful, annoyed, irritated, exasperated, indignant, etc.
- **Guilt-shame: I feel** guilty, embarrassed, exposed, ashamed, remorseful, contrite, responsible, etc.

### Reflect

- Which of these **categories** of emotion are you most familiar with?
- Which feelings are most familiar to you?
- Which **categories** are you least familiar with?
- Which feelings are most unfamiliar to you?

### Act

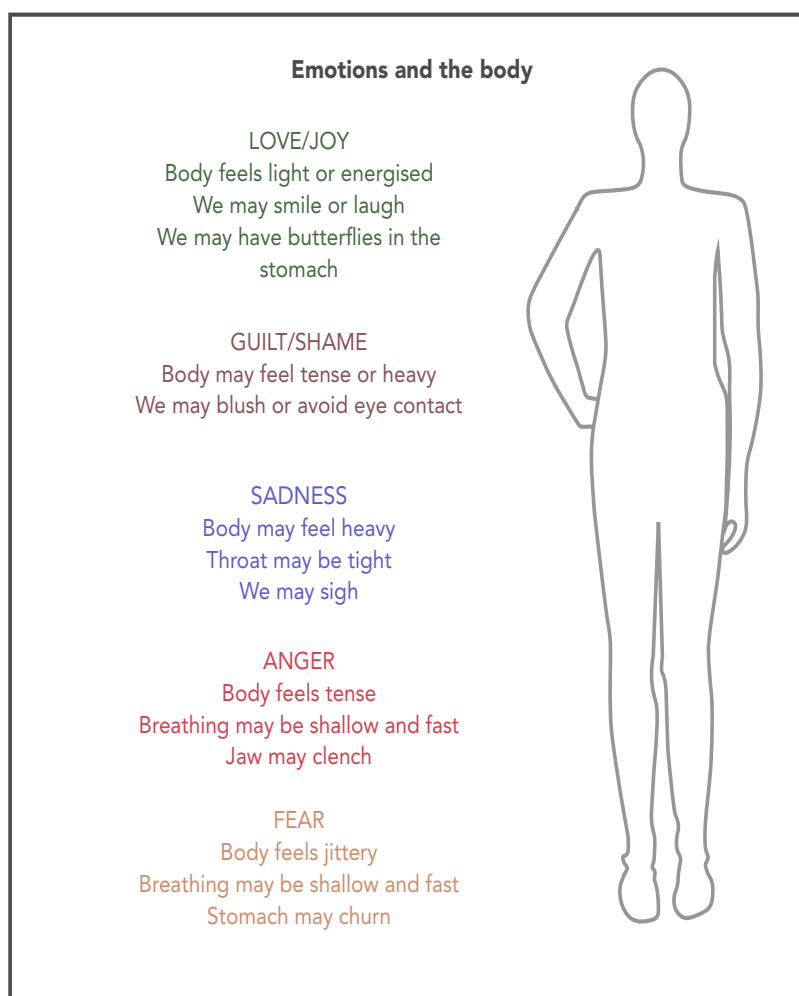
- During the day stop every now and then and tune in to yourself. How are you feeling?

## 3. Tune in to your body signals

Most of us spend a lot of time in our heads. We might, run, cycle, swim, go the gym or hone and look after our bodies in other ways, but many of us never actually listen to our bodies unless something is going wrong. Interestingly, our emotions tend to manifest physically in our bodies – the churning stomach of anxiety, or the red face of anger, for example. Becoming more aware of our own specific body signals helps us realise that something is going on, often before the mind works it out. We can use this information to more quickly recognise our moods, both positive and negative, and ‘danger zones’, those moments when we are about to be driven towards a habitual, automatic and unproductive reaction to a person or an event. See it as a speedy way of gaining information. It will be very useful when looking at your hot buttons in the next chapter.

### 3a. Map your body signals and emotions

The figure below provides a generic picture of how our bodies respond to certain emotions. For example, when we are sad, we may feel lethargic and heavy and we may sigh. When we are angry, our bodies can feel jittery and tense and we may breathe rapidly. When we are happy we may feel light and energised.



Draw out a similar figure and map your own physical response to your emotions. When you are angry your neck or jaw may tense up or your heart start beating rapidly, for example. When you are sad you may feel an ache in your throat or you may cry. Anxiety may manifest as a churning stomach or sweaty palms, etc. To make life easier, I recommend you use the five categories of emotion (knowing that each category covers multiple ways of feeling).

#### Reflect

- How does my body feel when I am angry/sad/afraid/happy/ashamed, etc.?
- What happens to my breathing?
- What happens to my voice?

**Act**

- During the day stop every now and then and tune in to yourself. How are you feeling? How does your body feel?

**4. Look at what is causing your feelings**

When we are emotionally self-aware, we are able to identify how we are feeling and the causes of those feelings. We are also aware of the impact our emotions have on our decisions and behaviours. You recognise, for example, that you are often irritated: people walking into meetings late irritates you; people submitting documents with typos irritates you; not finding a parking space irritates you. When you feel irritated you recognise that you become impatient with people around you. You stop listening. You talk in a clipped and rapid manner. You make decisions impulsively and unilaterally.

Occasionally, you recognise that you feel anxious. This tends to happen when you think about the difficult management meetings held every Monday. You recognise that sinking feeling. You recognise the feeling of lethargy in your body. You recognise that if someone asks you how you are and you say 'fine', they won't believe you. Your anxiety will leak through in your tone of voice and body language. Luckily no-one asks you to make a quick decision at this stage because you recognise that you are not in the optimal state to do so.

How aware are you of the causes of your feelings? How aware are you of the impact your feelings have on your behaviour?

**Reflect: Positive feelings**

- What makes me feel positive at work?
- What are the signals that I'm feeling positive or in a good mood?
- How does my mood influence my behaviour?

**Reflect: Negative feelings**

- What makes me feel negative at work?
- What are the signals that I'm feeling negative or in a bad mood at work?
- How does my mood influence my behaviour?

**Act**

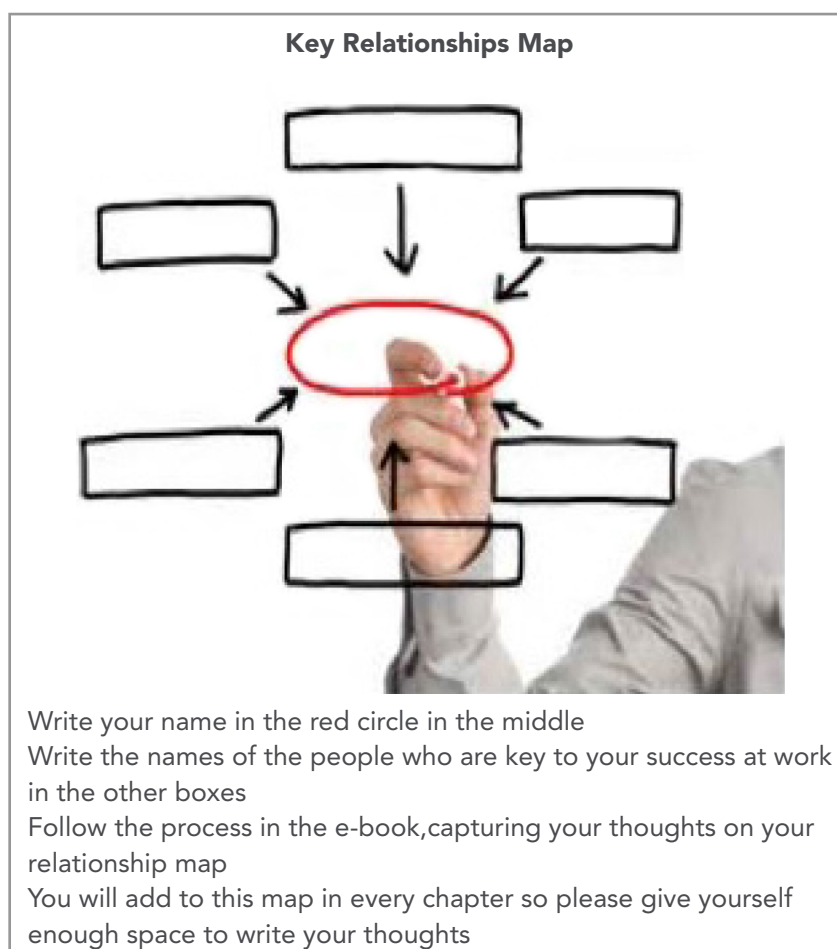
- During the day stop every now and then and tune in to yourself. What kind of mood are you in?
- What makes you feel that way?
- How is your mood influencing your behaviour?

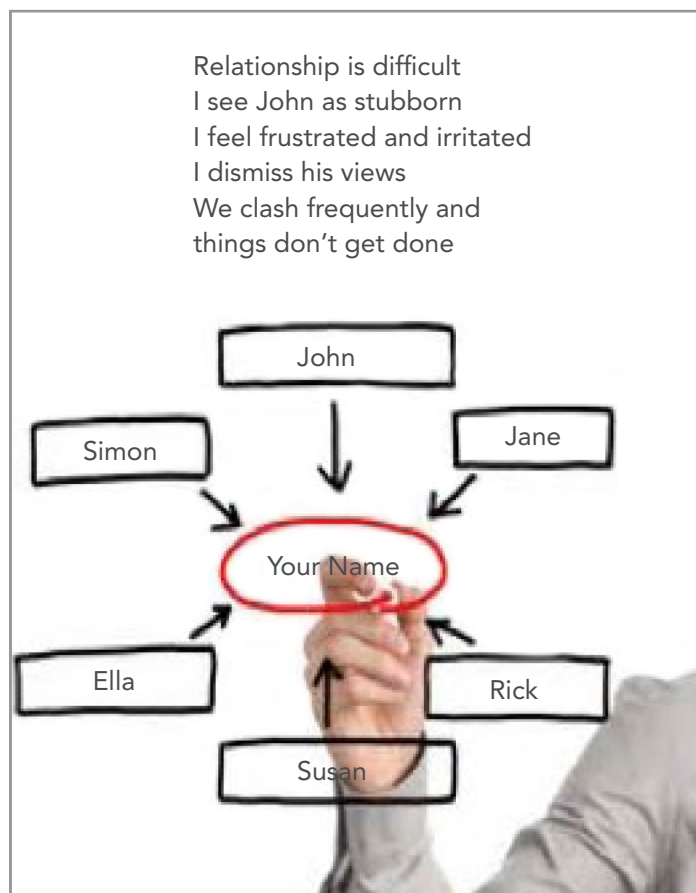
## Emotional self-awareness in your key relationships

*Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.*

– Rumi

Sometimes it's easier to become more self-aware (and to develop our emotional intelligence in general) by looking at our relationships and how we feel and operate in them. Whether we are aware of it or not, we have habitual emotional responses to events and people around us. Using the template below, map out up to five of your key working relationships. These are the relationships that help ensure your success. You may want to include your boss, a peer, people reporting to you, stakeholders, clients, etc. Put people's names or initials in the circles. Some people add their spouse or partner and children. It's up to you.





### Reflect

Take some time to reflect on these relationships using the questions below. Write on your relationship map to capture your thoughts. You will build on this in the following chapters.

### Background information

- Why is each relationship important to you?
- What condition is the relationship in right now? (Very good, OK, disastrous, tense, etc.)
- How would you like the relationship to change (or not)?

### How do you see the other person?

- Do you see them as useless, brilliant, dogmatic, fun, for example?

### How do you feel in the relationship?

- How do you tend to feel in each relationship? Refer to the categories of emotion in the exercise above if you need to.



- Is this influenced by how you see the other person?
- In what way?

### **How do you behave?**

- How do your feelings affect your behaviour and communication? Are you defensive, blaming or attacking, or compassionate, empathetic and light-hearted, for example? Think about your typical responses, tone of voice, body language.

### **The impact**

- What impact do your patterns of behaviour and interaction have on the relationship? (A great question to reflect on, particularly where a relationship is tense, unproductive or conflictual is: what is it I do that has the other person behave towards me in the way that they do?)

### **Act**

- On the basis of what you now know, choose one of your relationships and consider how you might use your increased self-awareness to enhance the relationship in some way. Try it out.

### **Tip**

A relationship is a system. What one person does affects the other and vice versa. Bringing more awareness to your part in a relationship – that which you do to help the relationship flourish or wither – is a vital component in making a relationship work (even) better. This is the part that you can change and in doing so invite a different result.

*What lies behind us, and what lies before us, are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.*

*– Oliver W. Holmes*

## **2.6 RECOMMENDED READING**

- The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything – Stephen M.R. Covey
- Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box – The Arbinger Institute
- Emotional intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ – Daniel Goleman

## 3 EMOTIONAL SELF-MANAGEMENT

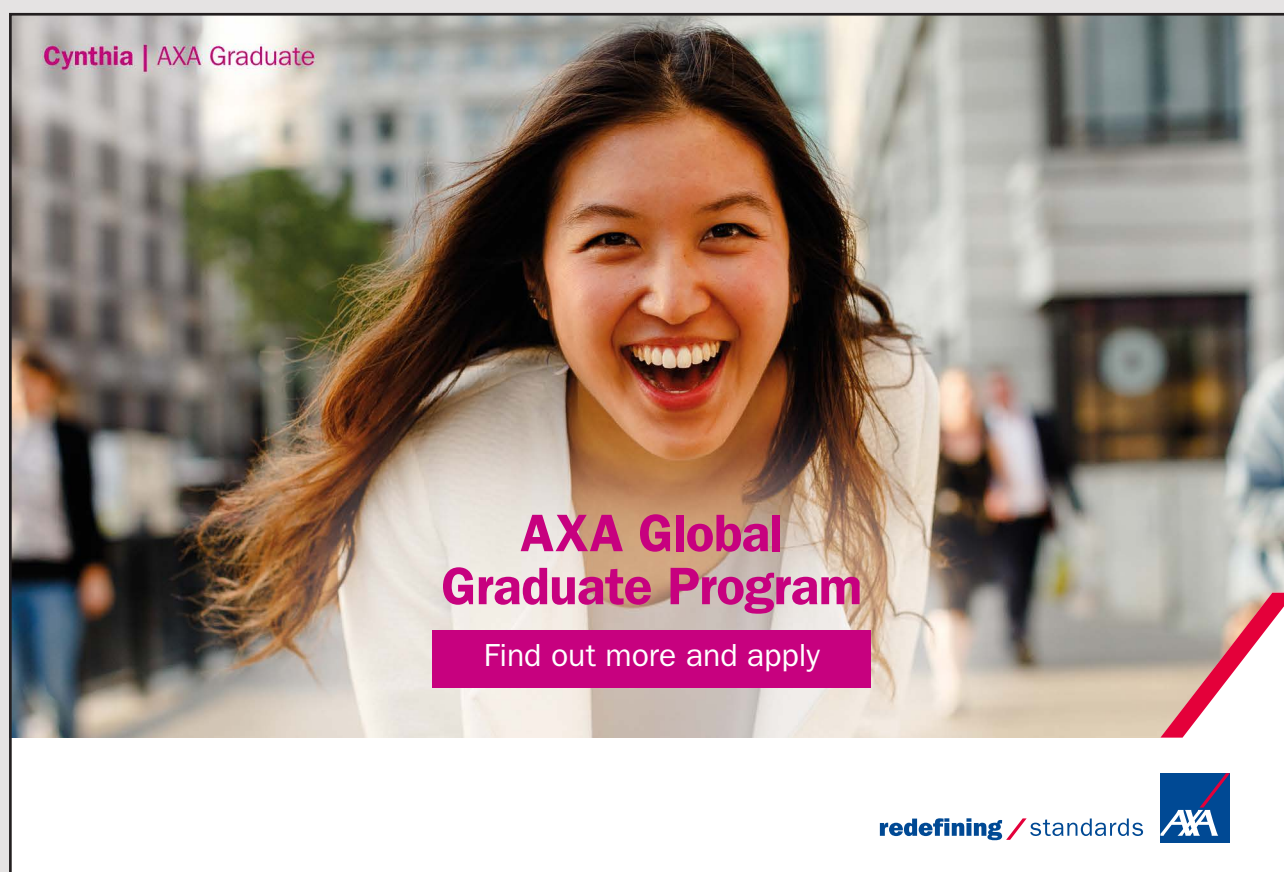
*I am indeed a king because I know how to rule myself.*

*– Pietro Aretino*

### 3.1 WHAT DOES EMOTIONAL SELF-MANAGEMENT ACTUALLY MEAN?

When we are skilled at emotional self-management, in its most basic form we do not allow our emotions to overtake us and propel us into behaving in a way that alienates those around us or makes us feel helpless or diminished in some way. When we can manage our emotions effectively, we are able to:


- Recognise the mood we are in and find ways to make ourselves feel more positive where necessary.
- Stay focused, think clearly and moderate our behaviour even when we are in the grip of powerful emotions.



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When we increase our capacity to manage our moods and emotions, we become more resilient, better at dealing with stress and more effective under pressure.

### **3.2 A BRIEF EXAMPLE**

It's Friday afternoon and you are reading through what should be the final version of a project document that needs approval by the Board. As you read, you feel yourself becoming more and more irritated. In spite of three meetings to discuss the content, structure and focus of the document, what you are reading now is full of glaring errors, poor argumentation and budgetary lunacy. You feel the adrenaline rush through your body and you are off, striding down the corridor preparing for battle. You get to the office of one of the team – and no-one is there! To add insult to injury, not only have they done a lousy job, they've also gone home early. Full of anger and righteous indignation, you head into the next office. There they are, those responsible for this shoddy workmanship. Before they can even turn round to look at you, you let loose with a torrent of blame and sarcasm. What possessed them? Are they stupid? How could they let you have this rubbish at the last minute? Don't they realize how important this is?

#### **Later on**

As the emotions die away, you begin the process of beating yourself up for responding as you did. The staff (at least the one person brave enough to risk it) has already brought your behaviour to your attention on a number of occasions. It's time to do something about this, you think to yourself, and so you start learning about your emotional hot buttons. You learn that certain situations (and the way you perceive them) press your buttons, in particular your Disrespected button. You are very sensitive to anything that 'feels like' disrespect and you perceive it often in your environment.

As you learn how your buttons operate, you begin to see the kind of thing that sets them off. You become increasingly aware of the tell-tale signals that your buttons are about to push you down the slippery slope of bad behaviour, and you discover mechanisms for decreasing their power. Your team is thrilled. Because you manage yourself better and are less reactive, they are more forthcoming. Much of what they kept to themselves and tried to deal with on their own, they now share with you. The Friday-afternoon type of incident has become a rarity. And, strangely enough, you yourself feel far less disrespected these days.

### 3.3 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LEADERS DO NOT MANAGE THEIR EMOTIONS?

*Reason is the gatekeeper, but it cannot resist the rushing torrents of emotion.*

*– Bangambiki Habyarimana*

#### Three examples of leaders who do not manage their emotions

Lack of emotional self-management shows up in many ways and my aim with the following three examples is to illustrate what it *can* look like and the impact it *can* have. You might recognise yourself, or your boss, in some of these examples.

#### 3.3.1 PERMANENTLY STRESSED

Some leaders generate stress. They may not mean to but they do. Permanently under fire from their boss or indeed from themselves, they spread ripples of anxiety, unhappiness and despair amongst the people they lead. They seem to operate on a hair trigger and no-one knows what sets them off. Not only are they unaware of their emotions, they fail to control them in the very circumstances where this is most needed.

Some members of the team are off with burn-out. While they have done their best to cope with the boss's moods, the endless long hours, the ever-changing priorities, the constant sense of urgency and the complete lack of acknowledgement or appreciation, they have had to remove themselves from the situation in order to survive. Others have changed department or left the company altogether. Even the most resilient members of the team are finding it hard to keep going. The boss's reputation has become such that recruitment is proving nigh on impossible, something that generates even more stress.

#### 3.3.2 THE INNER UNDER-PERFORMER

Tomorrow is the high-level meeting again. It's on the top floor of your office building, the room with beautiful views across the city. This is a room you dread being in. At your level, you are supposed to be a contributor to the debates, bringing sharp and incisive thought to a range of scenarios, reducing the complex into digestible bites and generally stunning people with your brilliance. At least that's how you see it, which is part of the problem you face.

Before you even get into the room on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, your Not Good Enough button is in charge. This emotional button makes you sensitive to feeling not good enough, or believing others perceive you as such. Your finely tuned radar scans for ‘dangerous’ situations where feelings of not being good enough might be evoked. During these yearly meetings your tactic has been to say nothing, other than agreeing with someone who has gone before you. Invariably, you come out of the meeting frustrated with your own behaviour. Someone else put forward ideas that you had going round in your head. You wanted to add a point to the debate but by the time you’d mustered your courage things had moved on. The impact on your environment is hardly chaotic, but the inner impact on you is significant. The more you don’t speak up the less you can speak up and those around you question not just your presence at the meetings but whether you are in the right role.

### 3.3.3 WELCOME TO MY MOOD

Sometimes a person’s mood walks in the door before them. If you are a leader and you are in a good mood, this can be helpful. If you are in a bad mood and your mood affects your behaviour, it will be distinctly unhelpful to those you lead. You may get away with it if you have spent time building trust with your team. If you have taught them that largely you will act with emotional intelligence towards them and others, they are likely to give you the benefit of the doubt. If you haven’t done this, and if you constantly send your mood through the door before you, the chances are you will end up creating unhelpful pressure for your team.

When the boss is in a bad mood people are very quick to ask themselves what they have done wrong, paging back to see where things might have gone belly-up. They may waste time trying to think of ways to handle you, ways to tell you things so you don’t take your mood out on them. Or they may avoid telling you things altogether. Anyone who has had to do it will tell you that dealing with a moody boss is draining and uninspiring. It affects morale, motivation and productivity. People long for grown-up leaders who handle themselves well, energise the team and inspire those who follow them.

## 3.4 WHY IS EMOTIONAL SELF-MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT FOR LEADERS?

*Nothing so conclusively proves a man’s ability to lead others as what he does from day to day to lead himself.*

*– Thomas J. Watson Sr.*

I don't think anyone expects a leader never to have an off-day, and of course if you do have an off-day, you will have more latitude if you have developed effective working relationships based on trust. Generally speaking, however, those whom you lead are rooting for you to handle yourself well under pressure. This is less about being on the receiving end of, let's say, a verbal blast. It's more about their need for you to stay credible in their eyes. They want you to be able to handle it, because it helps them do so too.

### **3.4.1 STEADYING THE SHIP**

These days, mergers, acquisitions, company-, department- and team-restructuring goes on all the time. There is a requirement to be lean, agile, matrixed, customer-centric and much more. Change is inevitable and constant in many organisations. In the midst of ambiguity and uncertainty, fear levels rise. Everyone looks for answers and snippets of insider knowledge. Gossip and speculation can take over. As a member of your team, the question of my future becomes more important than dealing with that overdue report. Business as usual becomes erratic as I wonder whether I will be consulted about potential changes to my role or asked where I might want to move to. The more powerless I feel to shape my professional future (other than finding a new job and leaving) the less I can focus on what needs to be done. I tick over, like most of my colleagues, but the brilliant results our part of the business is known for, are no more.

As a leader, your job is to steady the ship – and you know how important it is for you to manage your emotions well during this period. No longer do you scurry around, brow furrowed, unavailable for consultation, uncommunicative, curt and on edge if someone pins you down. You know that if you do this, the ship will list from side to side, trust levels will fall and performance most likely go with it. You have learned that even though you are under enormous pressure, managing your emotions and moderating your behaviour is essential. Demonstrating that you are grounded and calm, remaining open, available and communicative, has a powerfully positive impact on those who need you to lead more strongly than ever.

### 3.4.2 BUILDING CONFIDENCE 360

Some leaders are known to be ‘volatile’. This is a polite way of saying that they cannot, or choose not to, manage their emotions. I sometimes wonder if this kind of leader has any idea how much time is wasted on strategies to manage them. The people they lead have strategies for managing them, including the right time of day to make an approach. Their bosses have strategies for managing them, including putting their head in the sand and convincing themselves it’s not that bad really given what the volatile leader delivers. Their peers have strategies for managing them, including talking to each other before important meetings and agreeing how to raise a sensitive topic without throwing the meeting entirely off course. After a while, this can cause resentment and frustration – shall we dance on eggshells today or manage eruptions?

Now consider the other side of the coin, a leader who has learned not to take everything personally; does not attack at the drop of a hat; sees healthy debate as a means to trade ideas not insults, even under fire. This is a leader who knows their triggers, manages their mood and takes charge of their emotional buttons. This is a leader people want to work for, come into contact with and model. This is a leader who is life-enhancing, building trust and confidence at all levels in the organisation.

### 3.4.3 COOL UNDER FIRE

Many people just want a leader who doesn’t flap. They want someone who doesn’t get bent out of shape at the drop of a hat and who doesn’t leak irritation permanently and abundantly. They want someone who doesn’t respond from a knee-jerk emotional reaction driven by untested assumptions about other people’s motives. They want someone who is cool under fire; who argues with passion but not with anger; someone who can stay focused and make decisions under pressure. They want someone they can be proud to work for and from whom they can learn. This is a leader who is emotionally self-aware, and who actively manages their emotions.

## 3.5 TOOLS FOR CHANGE

The goal of using the tools below is simple. It is to **become more skilled at managing your emotions and through this to increase your ability to act with emotional intelligence.**

*I don’t want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them.*

– Oscar Wilde

## What's motivating you?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do I want to improve my emotional self-management?
- In which situations do I want to manage my emotions more effectively?
- What outcome am I looking to achieve?

## How to improve your emotional self-management

### 1. Identify what you are 'tolerating'

Sometimes life circumstances put us on emotional red alert, meaning that we are less capable of managing ourselves and our emotions. Recognising this and finding ways to support ourselves through these events is vitally important. At other times, we store up emotion because we are tolerating certain things in our lives rather than dealing with them.

This can be simple, such as having a leaky tap in the bathroom that never gets fixed. It can be more complex, such as having a bullying boss whose behaviour you are afraid to confront. Dealing with some of these 'tolerations' can be remarkably energising and emotionally stabilising. It puts emotional energy back in the tank and acts as a buffer, making you less liable to be triggered emotionally.

#### Reflect:

- Identify things you are putting up with or putting off in some way. If they drain your energy, this is a clue.

#### Act:

- Decide to deal with three of the smallest/easiest things on your list and do this as soon as possible.

### 2. Become aware of what makes you upset at work

*I don't have to attend every argument I'm invited to.*

*– Unknown*

#### Reflect

- What makes you feel angry, frustrated, resentful, impatient, anxious or stressed at work?
- What is your response to these situations?
- Does your behaviour help resolve things or make them worse?



**Act**

- If the situation happens again, what are some different responses you could make?

**3. Handle your emotional buttons**

Along with identifying your triggers for strong emotion, understanding and managing your emotional buttons will significantly improve your ability to manage your emotions. Emotional buttons deserve a book of their own. Even so, in the following few pages, you will find some ‘buttons basics’ that will already make a difference to how you manage you emotions.

**3a. What are emotional buttons?**

*Parents know how to push your buttons because, hey, they sewed them on.*

*– Camryn Manheim*

Emotional buttons are part and parcel of being human. Indeed, the phrase ‘to push someone’s buttons’ is now part of modern life. Simply put, buttons are emotionally-based sensitivities that we carry around with us from our childhood. They predispose us to perceive and respond to certain types of event in a certain way.

When buttons get triggered, they bring with them a powerful emotional charge, which translates into fight, flight or freeze behaviour. This looks and feels different for different people. Some people shut down their emotions and try to get on with things, storing up whatever they are feeling until later, then perhaps unleashing it in a sudden burst of road rage or a crying jag that comes out of nowhere. Others will let rip as their buttons gain control of them.

**3b. How do emotional buttons work?**

If someone stands on your toe in the train, you may feel a surge of irritation but it’s unlikely that one of your buttons is being pressed – unless you retaliate by shouting at them or punching them! When an emotional button gets pressed, we are flooded with emotion in some way. It feels to us like the stakes are high, even if on the face of it the situation doesn’t warrant it. For example people with a Disrespected button can feel a surge of fury if someone fails to copy them on an email related to their project. Depending on the behavioural pattern this button evokes in them, they might storm into that person’s office and accuse them of hiding information, or silently seethe and find a way to get even later. Those whose buttons are not triggered by such a situation might simply phone and remind the person to put them on the distribution list.

### 3c. There is a pattern

*If we lack emotional intelligence, whenever stress rises, the human brain switches to autopilot and has an inherent tendency to do more of the same, only harder. Which, more often than not, is precisely the wrong approach in today's world.*

*– Robert K. Cooper*

Certain types of situation and interaction tend to repeatedly push our buttons. Each time we behave in the same old way and get the same old result. In fact, as our minds and bodies move into fight, flight or freeze mode, our emotions cloud our ability to think and it feels like there is no alternative. The feelings come up and we're off, down that same old pathway.

The good news is that the situations that push our buttons and the behaviour they evoke, are not random. They are part of a pattern. The more we can identify what triggers our buttons in the first place, and the more familiar we become with the recurring patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour associated with our buttons, the more effective we can become at emotional self-management.

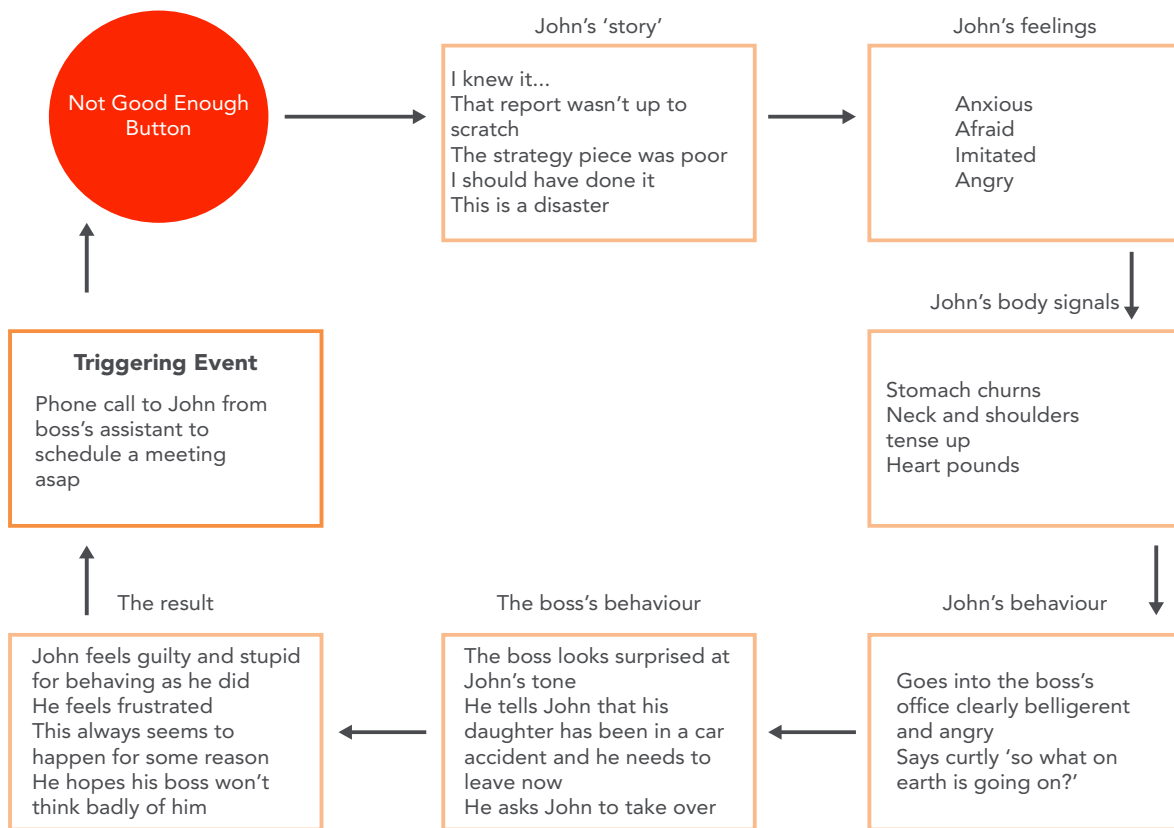
### 3d. The button spiral

Here is a very simple method of understanding how buttons work. It's called the button spiral (see the diagram below). John, a senior manager leading a department of 350, has received a phone call from his boss's assistant asking him to schedule a meeting with the boss as soon as possible. John asks what the meeting is about and is told that the assistant doesn't know. She's just been asked to schedule it straightaway. For John, who has a Not Good Enough button, this is a triggering event (1). The unusual urgency of the meeting and the lack of information on why it is being held, is making him feel anxious.

He begins to tell himself a story about what's going on (2). I knew that report wasn't up to scratch, he says to himself. I should have spent more time on it. The strategy piece was poor. I should have done it myself. I bet it's about that. Why else would he call me up to his office on such short notice? This is a disaster. John is viewing the meeting through the lens of his Not Good Enough button and this button is now in control.

The more he builds his story, the more John's stomach churns, the more his neck and shoulders tense up and the more his heart pounds. These are the body signals (3) John always feels when this button gets pushed, although he has no awareness or understanding of this. At the same time, the anxiety builds within John and the inner stakes feel very high.

Upset with himself for feeling anxious, John goes to his boss's office feeling ever more belligerent about being 'summoned'. He enters the boss's office, visibly angry, and says curtly, 'so, what on earth is going on?' (4). The boss replies, 'my daughter's just been in a car accident and I need you to take over some files for me...'



Someone else in John's situation might have had their 'Disrespected' button triggered. Through the lens of this button their story might have unfolded as follows: He always does this. Does he have any idea how much pressure we're under? Why can't he set up meetings in advance like normal people? Does he think I'm just an idiot running around at his beck and call? This might have produced a rush of anger, a red face and clenched jaw, and an impatient, indignant air. In the boss's office, the behavioural pattern might have been to fidget, finger-tap and silently communicate 'what is it *this* time'.

Those with a different set of buttons – not triggered by this event – might simply choose to walk up to the boss's office and listen from emotional neutral.

### 3e. Common emotional buttons

You don't necessarily need to name your emotional buttons. You can simply acknowledge that 'a' button got triggered. Then you can use the button spiral to identify situations and events that push you off course or keep working out badly, and examine how your own thoughts, feelings and behaviour contribute to that happening. The awareness you gain through this will be helpful in designing a different approach – and inviting a different response.

However many people not only want to name their buttons, they want to trace them back to their root causes. One way to do this is to write your emotional biography, in which you identify the key events that shaped you emotionally. Something that shaped me emotionally, for example, was attending seven different schools between the ages of six and fifteen. My Outsider button was formed as a result and while I know its patterns and triggers intimately, it still has an emotional resonance today in some situations. I also developed Disregarded and Powerless buttons during the process of moving around so frequently. This was linked to how we communicated as a family during this time and how I perceived and experienced this.

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**Reflect**

- If you want to identify your buttons, below is a list of the most common buttons I (and my fellow coaches in this methodology) have encountered over the years. (The originator of the buttons methodology as I learned it is Stephen Garber. Find him on [www.thirdlevel.com](http://www.thirdlevel.com).)
- As you look through this list, tick off any that resonate with you. If none do, you may begin to gain more clarity as we look further at your button pushers. You can also create your own names for your buttons if this feels better.
- Your buttons are fuelled by emotion both from past events and from the present. Emotional fuel is extremely powerful, putting your body into a state of red alert, clouding your mind and driving you down the same old behavioural highway.
- Can you identify the emotion that goes with each button? It might be easier to use the five main categories of emotion discussed in chapter two. These are anger, sadness, fear, guilt/shame and love/joy.

Common Emotional Buttons List	
• Abandoned	• Not Good Enough
• Alone	• Out-Of-Control
• Authority	• Outsider
• Bad	• Powerless
• Betrayal	• Public Embarrassment
• Controlled	• Rebel
• Disloyalty	• Rejected
• Disregarded	• Responsible
• Disrespected	• Stupid
• Duty	• Undeserving
• Exposed	• Unimportant
• Failure	• Unwanted
• Loss	• Unlovable
• Imperfect	• Unsafe
• Inadequate	• Unworthy
• Injustice	• Valueless
• Invisible	• Victim
• Martyr	• Weak
• Mistrust	• Wrong

#### 4. Identify what pushes your buttons

There are a number of ways to identify what pushes your buttons. Once you know what pushes your buttons, you can start bringing a different level of awareness to these situations. This in itself is helpful in moving you out of reactive mode and towards more conscious behaviour.

**Reflect**

- Look back to exercise two in this chapter and see if anything emerges from that. Remember you are looking for situations and circumstances that cause you to react in a *repetitive and unproductive manner*.
- Something else you can try is working with a sentence stem. Simply complete the following sentence: *Something that pushes my buttons is...*

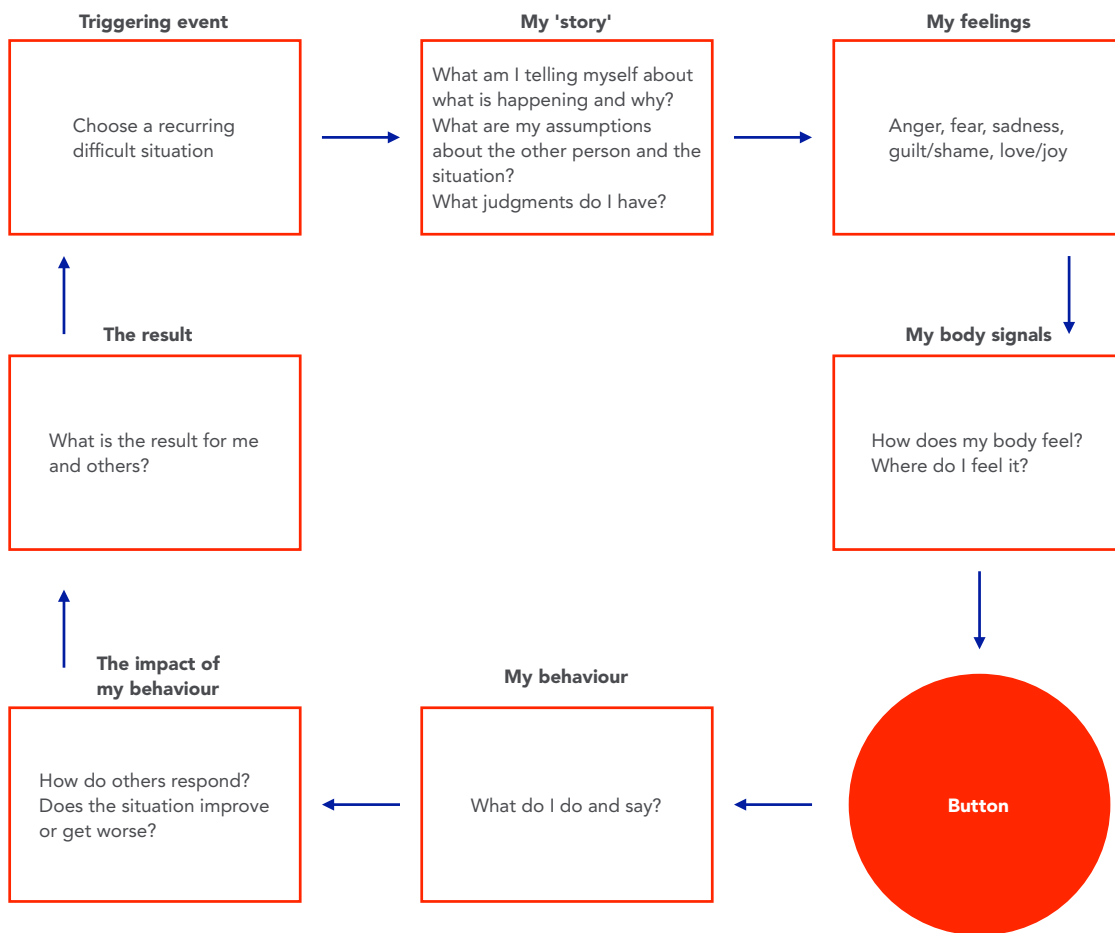
**5. Identify how your buttons control you**

*Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.*

*– Benjamin Franklin*

Use the button spiral below to start identifying your own patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour that stem from your buttons.

- Choose a recurring difficult situation and put it in the event box.
- What do you tell yourself about this event – for example, assumptions about the other person motives, judgments about their behaviour, decisions about whether this is good or bad, etc. Put this in the next box along.
- How do you feel as you tell yourself this story about the event? Put this in the feelings box.
- How does your body feel? Identify your body signal and put this in the body signal box.
- Which button(s) is/are being pressed? Put this in the buttons box.
- How do you behave? Put this in the behaviours box.
- What is the impact of your behaviour on you and others? Put this in the impact box.
- What is the result?



You now have a clear view of your own inner and outer process that occurs when your button(s) get pressed under the circumstances you described. The story you tell yourself, complete with any assumptions you make and judgments you have, is a powerful player in the process by which you get hijacked through to an unproductive end. The emotion pushes you down the same old path and your behaviour is automatic.

## 6. Manage your buttons and regain control

At each stage in the button spiral you can regain control and find your balance. In order to do this, however, you must become more aware in the moment of how the spiral is operating and which stage you are at.

### 6a. Spot button-pushers in advance

Know what is likely to trigger your buttons and prepare yourself in advance where you can.



### **6b. Challenge your story**

Most of us like to be right and we often treat our perception of events as the ‘truth’ of the matter. Personally I am very taken by the philosophy that ‘we are all right – partially’. Challenging your story asks you to stretch beyond your own view, in the spirit of discovery. Understanding someone else’s perspective makes it easier not to take things personally.

- What *else* is going on besides your version of the story?
- How might understanding this be of value to you?
- What would it be like for you if the other person (if there is one) wanted to understand how you see things?
- Challenge yourself to create a different story attached to this event.

### **6c. Use your body signals to alert you to a button hijack**

Some people are very tuned in to body signals and over time can tell when a button is about to go off because of the way their body feels. If this is you, then use your body signals to help you step back from an emotional hijack.

#### **Tip**

When you next feel your body being agitated or stimulated in some way, put a hand to this area and ask yourself what your body is trying to tell you. Simply acknowledging how you feel helps you to pause – instead of simply reacting. In this pause you create the room for choice. What do I want to do now?

### **6d. Reduce the emotional load**

Personally speaking, I chose to reduce the emotional load around my buttons by learning how to box and whacking a boxing bag every day for a good six months. Over time, this significantly diminished the impact my buttons had when they were pushed and helped me respond differently. Of course this is one method and it’s not for everyone. That being said, finding a way to offload new and accumulated emotion is important. Some people swim, bike, run or do yoga. Others take up an eating regime that nourishes and relaxes the body and makes them less prone to erupt or clamp down. Still others simply breathe. This is available to all of us, and focusing on your breath and using it to calm you when your buttons are threatening to hijack you (or indeed have hijacked you) is extremely powerful. You can choose to breathe out the emotion that you are feeling and calm your body and your mind.

#### **Reflect**

- What method will I use to reduce the emotional load of my buttons?

### 6e. Decide what impact you want to have

Consciously decide how you want to behave when your buttons get pressed in this situation and the impact you want to have. Although you may not be able to come out with this behaviour immediately, the more aware you become in the moment, the more you challenge yourself to see beyond your own story, the more you find ways to reduce the old and new emotional load of your buttons, the easier it becomes to change your behaviour and manage yourself more effectively.

#### Reflect

- How would I like to behave in this situation?
- What impact do I want to have?
- How can I increase my chances of behaving in this way?

#### Act

- Do something different when the moment occurs!

**In summary – Wait, Observe, Act (WOA)**



The acronym WOA (in English this is something you say to horses to slow them down) is very useful in managing buttons. What this reminds you to do is:

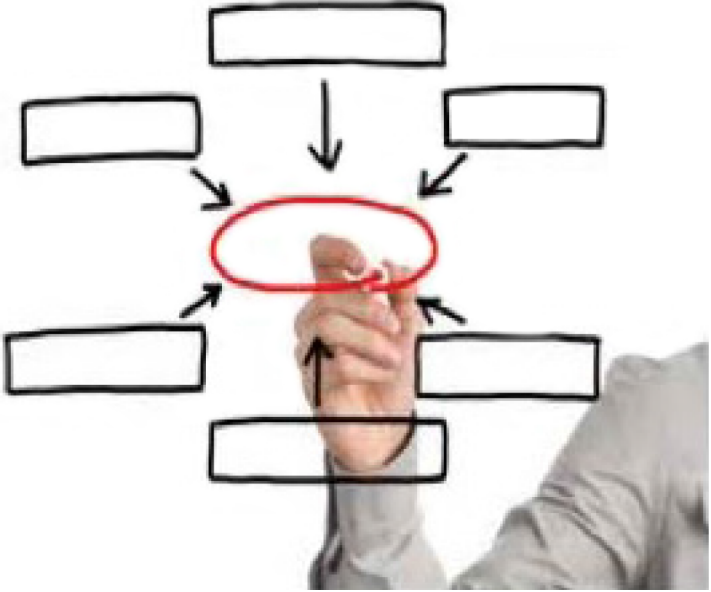
- **Wait** – become and stay aware in the present moment.
- **Observe** – what is happening? How are you feeling? What are you telling yourself about the situation? What are you about to do? You may not be able to do anything differently right now but knowing what is happening helps to take the edge off.
- **Act** – make a choice about how you want to behave. Even if you do what you have always done, you will be choosing to do it rather than being driven by your buttons.

### Emotional self-management in your key relationships

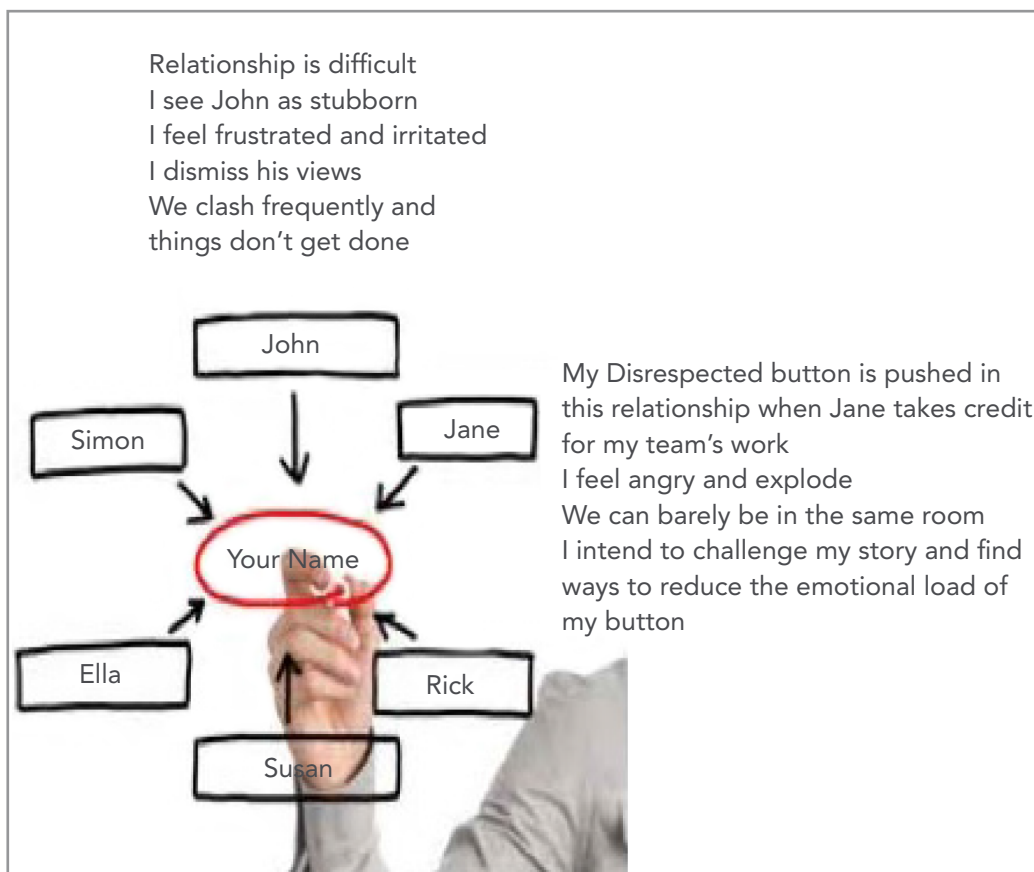
Relationships offer an unparalleled opportunity for buttons to get pushed. If your parents are still alive and you go back home to see them, watch what happens to you after you've stepped across the threshold. Some people revert back to being five years old at the drop of a hat, while others remain largely in adult mode until something presses their buttons. Family gatherings are notorious for being a riot of unconscious button pressing.

If you drew out your relationship map in chapter two, use the same template and develop it further through this exercise. If you didn't do this, simply map out up to five of your key working relationships using the template below. These are the relationships that help ensure your success. You may want to include your boss, a peer, people reporting to you, stakeholders, clients, etc. Put people's names or initials in the circles and write on the map to capture your thoughts.

**Key Relationships Map**



Write your name in the red circle in the middle  
 Write the names of the people who are key to your success at work in the other boxes  
 Follow the process in the e-book, capturing your thoughts on your relationship map  
 You will add to this map in every chapter so please give yourself enough space to write your thoughts



### Reflect

- Which of these relationships pushes your buttons?
- Which buttons do they push *in you*? (Take these from the common buttons list or make up your own)
- How do you feel?
- What do you end up doing?
- What is the impact?
- How will you manage your emotions and buttons more effectively?

*Feelings come and go like clouds in a windy sky. Conscious breathing is my anchor.*

*– Thich Nhat Hanh*

## 3.6 RECOMMENDED READING

- Growing Yourself Back Up: Understanding Emotional Regression – John Lee
- The Chimp Paradox – Prof. Steve Peters

## 4 EMOTIONAL AWARENESS OF OTHERS

*Being a leader is more than just wanting to lead. Leaders have empathy for others and a keen ability to find the best in people – not the worst – by truly caring for others.*

*– Henry Gruland*

### 4.1 WHAT DOES EMOTIONAL AWARENESS OF OTHERS ACTUALLY MEAN?

When we are aware of others not just physically, but emotionally, we are able to:

- Sense and understand other's feelings, needs and concerns.
- Demonstrate empathy – in other words imagine what it might be like to be in the other person's shoes and respond from that perspective.

When you increase your capacity to be emotionally aware of others and to respond with empathy, you are better equipped to understand what makes people tick and to engage with them more effectively.

### 4.2 A BRIEF EXAMPLE

*Most conversations are simply monologues delivered in the presence of witnesses.*

*– Margaret Millar*

You are getting ready to go to the meeting of senior leaders at your company. You are the most senior of all and today you will address the issue of 'downsizing'. This does not mean downsizing of the company's ambitions – you need to make that clear. This is about reducing head count – getting shot of the unwilling and the hangers-on; making the most of the hungry and the ambitious; doing more with fewer resources and working smarter. You are fired up, ready to get everyone behind you and on the same page.

Somehow, you have dismissed the notion that your ideas are contentious and need careful handling, and as you walk into the room you fail – spectacularly – to read the atmosphere. Had you done so, you would have realised that you could cut the air with a knife. Impervious to the tension in the room you launch in, and as far as you are concerned the presentation goes without a hitch, until you ask if there are any questions. There are plenty, mostly ridiculous in your view. The only thing they seem concerned about is their own jobs and the jobs of people in their departments. That’s what’s wrong with this company you think to yourself. People are always moaning. You have another engagement in half an hour and so you steamroller the room. ‘I don’t care how you do it, just get it done’ you tell your senior management team.

What you don’t realise is that you may have won the battle, but you have lost the war. Days later, none of the senior team have done anything other than nibble around the edges of the ‘downsizing/do more with fewer people’ challenge. If you didn’t know better you’d think that people were avoiding you.





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### Later that month

One day you wake up and, as if by magic, your capacity for understanding the emotions of others and for demonstrating empathy has grown. As you walk into the office, you are thinking about the questions people had and the remarks they made when you gave your presentation. You realise that there is a great deal of anxiety, fear even, behind those remarks. In fact you can even understand this. Some will be afraid of losing their jobs, others will find it hard to live with uncertainty. Many have worked at the company for a long time and change might be difficult for them.

I must acknowledge these fears and let people know it's normal to feel anxious and uncertain, you think to yourself. I must acknowledge that change is a challenge for many of us. I must reassure people that the company will act with integrity. I need to ask the right questions and listen hard to the answers. I need to create a climate that enrolls people in the change. Just one week later, after putting your plan into action, you and your senior management team find yourselves having a healthy and stimulating debate on how to do more with fewer resources. Ironically, their ideas are far superior to your own.

## 4.3 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LEADERS ARE NOT EMOTIONALLY AWARE OF OTHERS?

*Most human beings have an infinite capacity for taking things for granted.*

*– Aldous Huxley*

### Three examples of leaders who are not emotionally aware of others

Lack of emotional awareness of others shows up in many ways and my aim with the following three examples is to illustrate what it *can* look like and the impact it *can* have. See if you recognise anything of yourself in these examples. You may see something of your own leaders as well. If it's the latter, you will know how off-putting such emotionally unintelligent behaviour can be.

#### 4.3.1 WHY BOTHER, NO-ONE IS LISTENING

It's the third away-day of the year. The first went really well. People were interested, excited, passionate even, about their views and sharing them. Conclusions were drawn, actions were assigned and deadlines pencilled in. The second away-day was somewhat more subdued. The same themes seemed to return and progress on the issues everyone considered important was marginal at best. This time round there's a distinct feeling of lethargy, except from the boss who appears to be agitated and impatient.

As the boss you believed this was the best way to collapse time and get things done. Bring people together, let them say what's on their mind, agree a course of action and just move forward. So why aren't people doing it? Well, to understand that, you'd need to do the one thing you don't do – listen. Then you'd need to do the other thing you don't do – respond with empathy even if you disagree. Teaching yourself to read the non-verbal cues your staff is giving you would also help you out.

### **Impact**

If you were to listen you'd find out that people have given up trying to be heard. Their interest and engagement faded on the back of what seemed like immovable obstacles, unsolvable at their level. They tried to bring these to your attention in a variety of ways but were met by a human brick wall. They could not simply get on with it, as you appear to have wanted them to do. They have given up. No-one is listening. So why bother?

### **4.3.2 THE CURSE OF ARTIFICIAL HARMONY**

Artificial harmony reigns supreme in a number of organisations around the world. On the surface, all seems well. Underneath, however, there's a bubbling cauldron of unexpressed views, tensions and feelings. This is a culture of compliance rather than commitment. People may nod in meetings as if in agreement, but things tend not to get done the way they were 'agreed'. They move forward slowly, hampered in some way.

### **Impact**

Artificial harmony occurs because people have learned that it's not safe or it feels pointless to speak up. The boss doesn't listen, over-rules their ideas, has no understanding of what is important to them and what their concerns are, and doesn't seem to care. Problems go underground to emerge in gossip, speculation and rumour and the most meaningful comments and contributions are made outside of meetings – in the corridor or over a coffee. With their views unheard and unrecognised through the official channels, people continue to do what they think is right and aim to keep the boss as far away as possible.

Leaders who do not recognise the atmosphere and feelings of those around them, who do not know how to surface and address these 'intangibles', who do not listen when it is critical to do so, risk leading others into the sticky state of artificial harmony.



### 4.3.3 FEEDBACK? ROUND HERE?

Somebody once said: ‘Before you are a leader, success is about growing yourself. When you are a leader success is all about growing others’. Some leaders would take issue with this. People are paid to do the job. They are paid to get results and motivate others. They are paid to solve problems not lay them at my door. Well, technically yes – but. People, no doubt, will want to prove themselves to you. You are in charge, you are the leader, you influence their careers to some extent.

#### Impact

They will not want you to see them as weak, incompetent or incapable in some way. They will work hard. They will strive. They will do their best. Then they will get fed up. Most will keep going, of course, but you won’t be developing the next generation of leaders on your watch.

What people crave is the human touch. Someone else once said: ‘People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care’. I checked this out for years to see if it held true and even in the more hardened environments (on a bleak wind-farm, for example), it certainly did. People want some kind of show of interest and – yes – caring, from their leader. They want feedback on their views from someone who has made the effort to understand their perspective on things and how they feel. They want feedback that recognises, acknowledges and encourages their contribution. They want to know when they are not coming up to scratch and to be told about it. And they want this as part of the fabric of leadership, not simply as part of a rote annual performance review.

## 4.4 WHY IS EMOTIONAL AWARENESS OF OTHERS IMPORTANT FOR LEADERS?

*When you show deep empathy toward others, their defensive energy goes down, and positive energy replaces it. That’s when you can get more creative in solving problems.*

*– Stephen Covey*

You can’t lead well if you don’t understand your followers and what is important to them. Leadership is about the heart as much as it is about the head and you make the connection not just through your own competence and integrity, but also through your desire to understand what matters to others. People want to know that you will make the effort to do this, to listen to them and to sense when things are off.

#### **4.4.1 NEW IN ROLE**

Once upon a time, you were new to the role of leader, or perhaps that is the case for you now. When we are new in role we often like to make changes and stamp our mark on things. How we do this is important. We can lose people within an hour of making our opening speech, or we can build interest, hope and curiosity. Much depends on how we go about it. If we demonstrate the first two cornerstones of emotional intelligence, i.e. self-awareness and the capacity to manage our emotions, this will help in building trust and getting people behind us.

If we add to that our emotional awareness of others and our capacity for empathy, we start to win hearts as well as minds. Listening to understand what is going on around you; reading the mood and the atmosphere; imagining what it is like to stand in other people's shoes and acknowledging their feelings and concerns goes a very long way in building trust and enabling change to come about.

#### **4.4.2 EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT**

Sometimes in our working lives we are blessed with a leader who just seems to get it right. If this leader is you, one of the things that marks you out is your understanding that we are all different. You don't deal with people in a one-size-fits-all manner. While you may be driven, results-oriented and directive by preference, you know that this approach will not be effective all the time. You realize that in order to keep people with you, you need to round out your approach. Some people are more naturally oriented towards precision and detail. This matters greatly to them. Others are drawn to new ideas, innovation and looking into the future. Others still see work as a means to an end – such as a good family life – and the end is far more important to them than the work itself.

You know that your natural style, used indiscriminately, can cause resistance, pushback, confusion and even burn-out. You know how important it is to stand in other's shoes and see things from their perspective. You have learned to adjust your own style accordingly to get the best from others. For you, this is an investment of time that ultimately becomes a significant time-saver.

### 4.4.3 BRIDGE THE GAP

As a leader you will no doubt have to make difficult decisions at some point in your career, some of which may have a big impact on those around you. At your level in the company, you know that these decisions have been made for good reason, and not without debate. While the decisions can't be changed, what can make the difference is whether you as a leader, whose job it is to achieve results while building trust, communicate with awareness and empathy. Sharing how the decision was made; recognising and acknowledging how people feel; demonstrating that you understand why they feel that way and being clear on what comes next, including help and support available, helps followers to feel respected as human beings, – something that is vital for all of us if we are to give of our best.

## 4.5 TOOLS FOR CHANGE

*People may hear your words but they feel your attitude.*

*– John C. Maxwell*

The goal of using the tools below is simple. It is to **become more skilled at emotional awareness of others and through this to increase your ability to act with emotional intelligence.**

### What's motivating you?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do I want to improve my emotional awareness of others?
- Why do I want to respond to others with more empathy?
- What outcome am I looking to achieve?

### How to improve your emotional awareness of others

#### 1. Identify situations in which you want to become more emotionally aware of others

##### Reflect:

- On what occasions would you have liked to have been more aware of other's feelings and more empathetic in the past?
- What would you do differently if you had the chance, and why?
- What is happening in your workplace at the moment?
- What are the situations that call upon you to be aware of how others are feeling and to demonstrate empathy?
- What ideas do you have for approaching those situations differently? (For example taking a few moments to register the atmosphere before you begin a meeting.)

## 2. Listen

*Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.*

*- Winston Churchill*

Developing the capacity to understand other's needs, concerns and feelings means learning to listen well, and learning to ask the right questions. Most of us think we are good listeners but in reality most of us are quite shocking at it. As Stephen Covey says, most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. Half the battle with listening is deciding that it is important to us to do so. All the techniques in the world won't help if we don't actually want to listen. Our body language and emotional tone will give us away very quickly.

### 2a. Listening audit

Use the quiz below to assess your listening skills.

On a scale of 25–100 (100 = highest), how do you rate yourself as a listener? \_\_\_\_\_

To find out how accurate your perception is rate yourself in the following situations and total the score.

4 = Usually, 3 = Frequently, 2 = Sometimes, 1 = Seldom

- \_\_\_\_\_ I try to listen carefully even when I'm not interested in the topic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I'm open to viewpoints that are different from my own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I make eye contact with the speaker when I'm listening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I try to avoid being defensive when a speaker is venting negative emotions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I try to recognize the emotion under the speaker's words.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I anticipate how the other person will react when I speak.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I take notes when it's necessary to remember what I've heard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I listen without judgment or criticism.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I stay focused even when I hear things I don't agree with or don't want to hear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't allow distractions when I'm intent on listening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't avoid difficult situations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can ignore a speaker's mannerisms and appearance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I avoid leaping to conclusions when listening.

- \_\_\_ I learn something, however small, from every person I meet.
- \_\_\_ I try not to form my next response while listening.
- \_\_\_ I listen for main ideas, not just details.
- \_\_\_ I know my own hot buttons.
- \_\_\_ I think about what I'm trying to communicate when I speak.
- \_\_\_ I try to communicate at the best possible time for success.
- \_\_\_ I don't assume a certain level of understanding in my listeners when speaking.
- \_\_\_ I usually get my message across when I communicate.
- \_\_\_ I consider which form of communication is best: email, phone, in-person.
- \_\_\_ I tend to listen for more than just what I want to hear.
- \_\_\_ I can resist day-dreaming when I'm not interested in a speaker.
- \_\_\_ I can easily paraphrase in my own words what I've just heard.
- \_\_\_ Total

### Scoring

75–100 = You are an excellent listener and communicator. Keep it up.

50–74 = You are trying to be a good listener. Keep practicing.

25–49 = Listening isn't one of your strong points. Start paying attention.

### 2b. Types of listening

Here is a brief overview of typical types of listening. Which do you tend to favour in the relationship(s) you have chosen to focus on?

#### Listen to disagree or join in

With this type of listening we are focused on our own thoughts and feelings rather than those of the speaker. As soon as we hear something we disagree with we jump in and start talking. With this type of listening we might also bring the conversation back to ourselves by sharing experiences of our own that are similar to the speaker's. We might give the speaker our opinion on what they are saying and solutions for them to consider. We often listen in this manner when we are in social situations or with friends. It's a great way of 'listening' to keep the conversation flowing but doesn't work if the speaker really needs to be heard.

#### Listen to understand

When we listen to understand we make a conscious effort to find out what is going on for the speaker. We listen for what the speaker is trying to say and why they are saying it. We hear what is being said and what is left unsaid or is covert in some way.

We listen for emotions. How is the person feeling? What feelings might be underneath the ones they are currently expressing (fear underneath anger or anger underneath sadness, for example). We invite the speaker to tell us more or describe and explain further. We encourage with nods of the head and eye contact, for example.

We reflect back what we are hearing and feeling from them. This type of listening is helpful to gain an understanding of the other person's thoughts, feelings, needs and concerns. When the topic is 'hot', we need to practice self-management and button control in order to put aside our own need to be heard and to focus on the other. The positive impact of doing this is well worth the effort.

### **Listen without intent**

This type of listening requires us to put down pre-conceived ideas of how the conversation should go. We allow reflective silences to occur and we stay present in the moment, fully focused on the speaker and with a minimum of interruptions. This level of listening takes practice!

### **2c. Hints and tips**

There are many good articles and TED Talks out there to give you techniques to improve your listening. Here are some pointers. In the relationship(s) you chose to focus on, practice the following:

- **Be present** – If it's not a good time, tell them. Adopt a posture that tells *you* you are now in listening mode.
- **Pay attention** – Listen with your eyes as well as your ears. What is their body language telling you? (Facial expressions, gestures, etc.)
- What is the tone of the communication? Anxious, angry, subdued, etc.
- What are the points they are trying to make?
- **Show interest** – make encouraging noises. Ask the other person to tell you more, or to describe and explain more about the subject matter.
- **Demonstrate understanding** – paraphrase to check your understanding. Summarise and reflect back information and feelings.

### 3. Question your way to good listening

Good open questions help you listen better and get the information you need about people's feelings, concerns and needs. They are a way to seek further information without hijacking or re-directing the conversation. Open questions typically start with who, what, where, when, and, used judiciously, why. Some simple and useful questions to ask if you need more information when listening are:

- What's important to you?
- What makes that important to you?
- How do you feel about it?
- What would you like to happen/not happen?
- What is the most important thing for me to know/be aware of/understand?
- What are your hopes and concerns?

#### Reflect:

- Think about the relationships you have chosen to work with. In what situations might open questions be helpful?

### 4. Practice empathy through acknowledging and validating

Learning to listen and ask open questions will help you develop your emotional awareness of others. Depending on how you do this, it will also help you practice responding with empathy. Key to this is your capacity to *acknowledge and validate* other people's feelings. When you do this, you create a sense of safety and build trust and connection with others.

Validation is the recognition and acceptance of another person's thoughts, feelings, sensations and behaviours as understandable. It doesn't mean you have to agree with them and you don't have to talk them out of it. Listening and validating will help diffuse strong emotion. Here are some examples of validating statements.

- First acknowledge: paraphrase, restate or reiterate what has been said, including how people are feeling. I see that you are feeling angry and upset, for example.
- Then validate: let them know it's understandable or normal for them to feel how they do, for example:
  - I can understand that you feel disrespected.
  - Of course you are worried about XYZ. Anyone would feel that way.
  - That must be discouraging.
  - It must be difficult to be in this situation.
- Do not invalidate people's feelings by telling them they are over-reacting, moaning about nothing, weak or incompetent for feeling that way. You will lose trust instantly.

**Tip**

Remove 'yes, but' from your vocabulary. It is soul-destroying. Use 'yes, and' instead.

**Act**

- Choose one of your key relationships and practice the cycle of emotional awareness of others:
- Listen and prompt (tell me more); ask open questions for clarity; acknowledge thoughts and feelings (you can't get to the meeting on time and are frustrated about it); validate feelings (it's understandable to feel that way given how much preparation you did).

**Emotional awareness of others in your key relationships**

If you drew out your relationship map in chapter two and three, use the same template and develop it further through this exercise. If you didn't do this, simply map out up to five of your key working relationships using the template below. These are the relationships that help ensure your success. You may want to include your boss, a peer, people reporting to you, stakeholders, clients, etc. Put people's names or initials in the circles and write on the map to capture your thoughts.

I joined MITAS because  
I wanted **real responsibility**

The Graduate Programme  
for Engineers and Geoscientists  
[www.discovermitas.com](http://www.discovermitas.com)



**Month 16**  
I was a construction supervisor in the North Sea advising and helping foremen solve problems


Real work  
International opportunities  
Three work placements



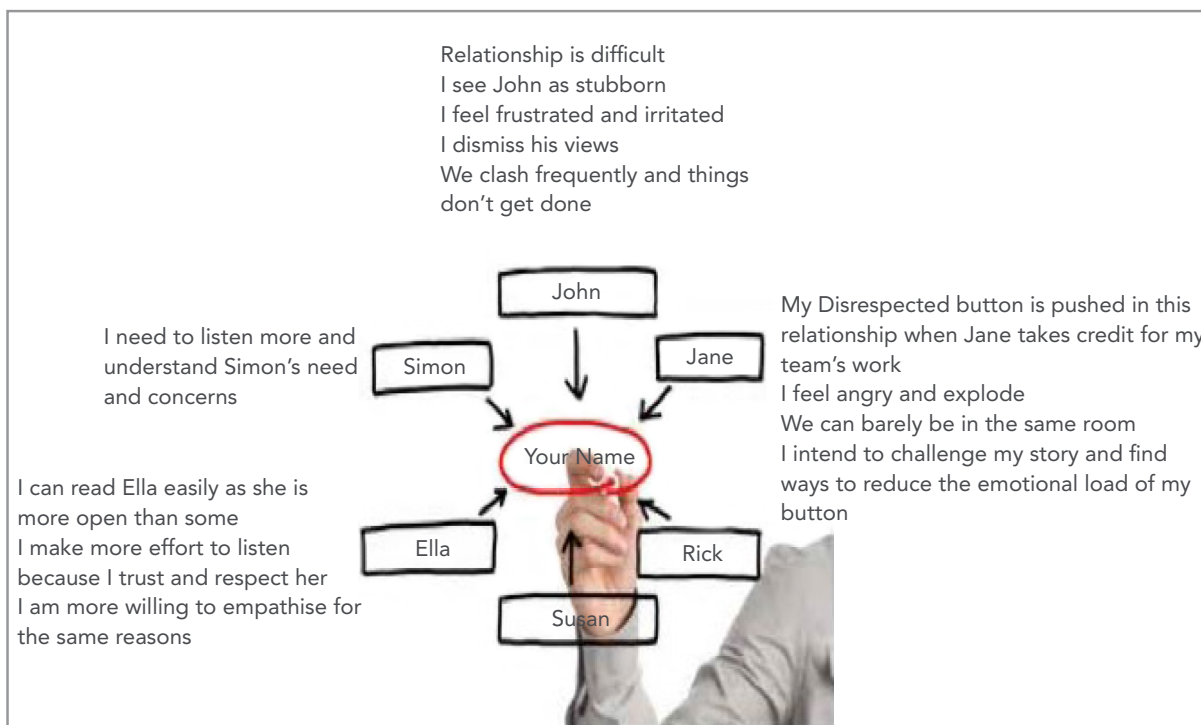
 **MAERSK**



**Key Relationships Map**



Write your name in the red circle in the middle  
Write the names of the people who are key to your success at work in the other boxes  
Follow the process in the e-book, capturing your thoughts on your relationship map  
You will add to this map in every chapter so please give yourself enough space to write your thoughts



- In which relationships do you make more effort to find out how the other person feels and their needs and concerns and why?
- Who can you read more easily and why?
- Who do you listen to and why?
- Where do you need to listen better?
- Where you need to demonstrate empathy and build connection?
- Choose one or two to focus on moving forward.

*If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from his angle as well as your own.*

– Henry Ford

## 4.6 RECOMMENDED READING

- Power Listening: Mastering the Most Critical Business Skill of All – Bernard T. Ferrari
- Making Questions Work – Dorothy Strachan

# 5 RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

*The glue that holds all relationships together – including the relationship between the leader and the led – is trust. And trust is based on integrity.*

*– Brian Tracy*

## 5.1 WHAT DOES RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT ACTUALLY MEAN?

When we are skilled at relationship management we are able to:

- Develop and maintain good relationships.
- Work well with others.

Improving your ability in this domain helps you to be more effective at handling conflict, improving workplace morale, helping others reach their full potential, and building networks at all levels.

## 5.2 A BRIEF EXAMPLE

One day, you are asked to take on a large project that is potentially very significant for the company (and its clients) if all goes well. This is a project that is not well defined. It's the result of a series of brainstorming sessions and is directionally interesting, possibly risky, and very exciting. As the leader of this project, you will need to pull together a team from all over the organisation because different types of experience and expertise are required. That shouldn't be a problem though. That's the kind of thing the organisation does for a living.

However almost from the word go, the project is stymied. Lots of people show interest in the idea, but it never goes further than that. You can neither influence nor persuade people to join you. You sit down and think about why this might be. The subject matter is interesting and demanding. The project will be highly visible to very senior stakeholders. People should be fighting to get onto it to further their career. After a while, you realise that you never really paid much attention to developing relationships with people. Neither did you see the point of networking and getting to know people outside your immediate environment. You are an unknown quantity for many people and at this point, your persuasive power is virtually zero. You can't call in any favours, because you never granted any. You can't pull on relationships to support you, because you never built any that mattered.

### The next day

The magic wand is waved once more and the next day, you wake up and decide to take a different approach. You know who you would like to have on the team. Now you need to go and get them. You talk to them. Listen to them. Tell them about your vision and inspire them. You talk about how you want to work together so that everyone benefits in a way that matters to them. You invite them in and over time they say yes.

## 5.3 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LEADERS DO NOT MANAGE THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WELL?

*At their core, organisations are just a giant network of relationships. So if you fail to build those relationships, your chances of succeeding are not very high.*

– Unknown

The following three examples illustrate what *can* happen when you don't manage your relationships well and the impact it *can* have. See if you recognise anything of yourself in these examples. You may see something of your own leaders as well.

### 5.3.1 PLAYING FAVOURITES

This is something I see regularly and it's largely unintentional. Leaders can be seen to play favourites. They can be seen to have their coterie or inner circle, and most people don't know how to get through the door. When time is short, those who do the most and best work might form this inner circle. At other times those with the most visible projects might be drawn in. Sometimes, – sad to say – it can look like an issue of nationality or gender preference.

#### The Impact

Leaders can be remarkably unaware of the impact this has on the morale of their team. I once worked with a number of senior executives who felt, metaphorically, like they were always waiting on the runway and never made it onto the plane with their boss and others at their level. There didn't seem to be a lot of difference in terms of performance and visibility, gender or nationality, and what it came down to was simply that the boss found it easier to get on with those who sat with him in the plane.

Sometimes we need to take stock of this. Those whose style and drivers are different from ours can get lost if we don't pay attention, and if we succumb to the lure of those who are like us. This affects even the most senior of people. Those who can't get on the plane begin to examine themselves (and maybe, indeed, they need to make some changes). However if their performance has been high and appreciated under a different regime, seeds of self-doubt and a subtle dip in engagement can arise as they struggle to click with a new leader and divine what they might be 'doing wrong'. Maybe it's their job to figure it out. Maybe they never will, and you'll lose a potential asset to the team. How much more effective it is when emotionally intelligent leaders, with good relationship management skills, spot this – look out for it even – and make sure they know how to engage and collaborate with people whose style is not an intuitive fit with theirs.

### 5.3.2 THE 'THEORY' OF CHANGE

There is the theory of change – and many compelling books on how to instigate and manage it in business – and the practice of change. The theory works with charts, diagrams, steps, milestones and outcomes. This is necessary and desirable. The actual practice of change, however, is often messy, frustrating and circuitous, because it involves human beings. Many of us have seen a variety of graphs on the 'change curve'. Some of these show attitudes to change over time, such as early adopters who jump on board straightaway, middle-of-the-roaders who go with the flow when critical mass is reached, and die-hard resisters who fight change until the bitter end. Interestingly, one of the most prevalent shows the *emotional response* to change. It's likened to the cycle of grief with the stages of shock, denial, anger, blame, apathy, acceptance, exploration, understanding and integration.

Here leaders need to use all their emotional intelligence skills. They need to be aware of their own thoughts and feelings about change and how this affects their spoken and unspoken communication. They need to manage their emotions and any buttons that get pushed by change. They need to be aware of how others feel about change and the needs and concerns that must be acknowledged. They need to lead with 'decisive empathy', validating how people feel while ensuring the process does not derail. Managing relationships, be they with individuals, teams or functional areas, is critical during periods of instability and change.

### 5.3.3 IT WON'T JUST GO AWAY IF YOU DO NOTHING ABOUT IT

Sometimes, as a leader, you wish certain things would just go away. This can be the case when you have someone 'difficult' on your team. Perhaps it's someone who takes up all the air-time; or someone who never delivers on time. It might be someone who manages their team badly, but manages you with supreme skill, telling you what you need to hear to let them get on with it. Perhaps it's someone who doesn't pull their weight, leaving everyone else to take on extra work; or someone who creates conflict at the drop of a hat. It might even be someone who is resentful and frustrated because they can't move up in the company.

#### Impact

It's tempting to turn a blind eye and see if things will work themselves out. Sometimes they do and sometimes it's good to let this happen. If it's a chronic condition, however, this is different, and it won't just go away if you do nothing about it. You can learn to live with it and some leaders and teams do this if the price is not too high. It still inhabits the psyche of the team, however, and creates ripples of disturbance underneath a calm surface. It's often far more effective to actively manage the relationship. This means pointing out the behaviour and its impact, understanding what is behind it, gauging whether the person concerned has the means or desire to participate differently in the team, and taking decisive action on that basis.

## 5.4 WHY IS RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT FOR LEADERS?

*If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.*

*– Daniel Goleman*

As a leader, managing relationships well is vital. You can't lead without followers, and no-one will follow you if they don't know who you are and what you stand for. Relationships are also central to your ability to influence effectively, to stay connected to what is important to people and to your business, and to manage in times of adversity and change. Developing leadership potential in others cannot be done without strong relationship management skills.

Very few leaders I have met manage their relationships consciously and proactively. More often than not this happens only when someone frustrates or concerns them, then the process becomes conscious instantly. Why is this happening, they ask themselves, and only then do they begin to look. The people you lead want you to be able to build relationships with all kinds of people, especially the difficult ones. It shows it can be done and is inspiring and energising.

#### **5.4.1 HANDLING 'CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS'**

Managing relationships actively and with skill makes it easier to have the 'crucial' conversations that very few people handle well. These are the kinds of conversation that people put off. They feel very risky, as though there's a danger that you might make things worse. Emotionally it can feel as though the stakes are high, even if the subject is relatively trivial. Crucial conversations are often about people's behaviour, for example experts in a field who refuse to be managed by their less knowledgeable boss; people who always seek the limelight to the detriment of their colleagues; gossips who spread malice and deny responsibility; people who say no before you've even asked the question. If you have spent some time understanding people and their different styles and building bonds even with those you don't naturally get on with, the chances are you have created a level of trust that eases the path for these types of conversation and increases your chances of a positive outcome.

#### **5.4.2 INFLUENCING ACROSS THE ORGANISATION**

Sometimes, as a leader, you need to work with people over whom you have no authority. You need them to get things done for you when they may have different priorities. This requires influence, which is hard to bring to bear when a relationship is weak or non-existent. Developing and maintaining relationships both within and outside of your immediate environment extends the network of people who know you and what you stand for. It gives you the opportunity to help others out when they need your support and to build trust and respect. Putting effort and energy into your networks gives you something to call upon when you are the one who needs help, support or backing in some way.

### 5.4.3 UNITED WE STAND

As a leader, one of your tasks is to unite people behind a vision or direction. This can be challenging, particularly when there are divergent vested interests at play. When you actively manage your relationships, you engage with your audience in one form or another and help them to perceive you as trustworthy and credible. They get to know you and how you see things. You listen to understand more of what matters to them and why. You demonstrate your understanding of this in way that builds trust. Ultimately you influence hearts and minds, inviting (rather than demanding) and motivating people to work together towards a vision.

*When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion.*

*– Dale Carnegie*

## 5.5 TOOLS FOR CHANGE

The goal of using the tools below is simple. It is to **become more skilled at actively managing your relationships and capacity to lead.**

### What's motivating you?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do I want to improve my relationship management skills?
- What are the situations in which I want to improve these skills?
- What outcome am I looking to achieve?

### How to build your capacity to manage relationships

#### 1. Focus on the relationships themselves

In the previous chapters, we looked largely at you and your impact on others. You created a relationship map that helped you to understand more about the following:

- You know in which relationships you need and want to become more self-aware.
- You know more about how you see the other person, what you feel and how you behave.
- You are more aware of your buttons, what pushes them in your relationships and the consequences of this.
- You know more about how to handle your buttons when they get pushed.



- You know more about how aware of others you are, or not.
- You know who you can read more easily, listen to and empathise with, and where you need to do more of this to understand things better, to lead more effectively, to motivate and inspire.

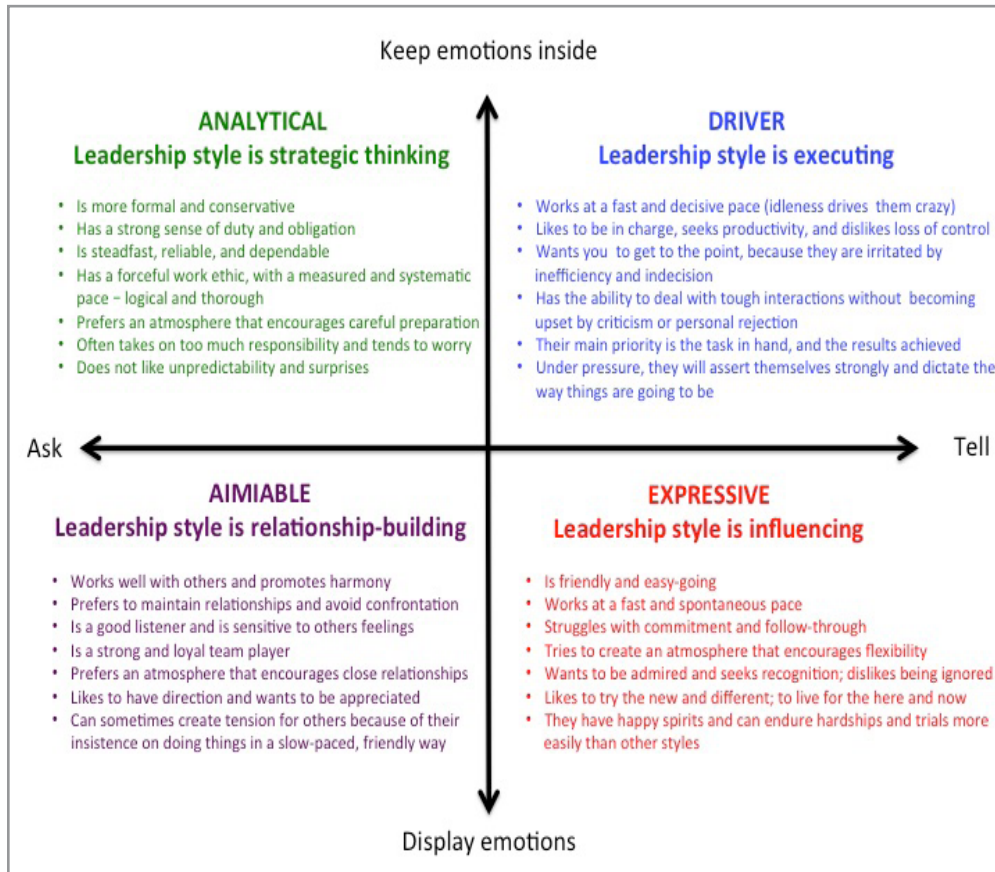
Now we will look more closely at the relationships themselves. Look at your relationship map or draw one out as instructed in previous chapters.

- Which relationships do you manage more effectively/less effectively?
- How do you recognise this?

## 2. Find out about working styles

There are many personality-, leadership- and other types of assessment out there and one that is simple to use is called *social styles* (or working styles). This assessment is based on work originated by David Merrill and it looks at how you go about your tasks and interact with people on your team. If you type social styles into Google, you will find a number of websites that provide a free assessment and details on each style.

In brief, the four styles are driver, expressive, amiable and analytical. Each style has its own characteristics, its own strengths and weaknesses, habits of communicating, behaviour under stress, etc. Some of the characteristics of each style are shown in the figure below.



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**MASTER IN MANAGEMENT**

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- PROPEL YOUR EDUCATION BY EARNING A DOUBLE DEGREE THAT BEST SUITS YOUR PROFESSIONAL GOALS
- STUDY A SEMESTER ABROAD AND BECOME A GLOBAL CITIZEN WITH THE BEYOND BORDERS EXPERIENCE

Length: 10 MONTHS  
Av. Experience: 1 YEAR  
Language: ENGLISH / SPANISH  
Format: FULL-TIME  
Intakes: SEPT / FEB

**5 SPECIALIZATIONS**  
PERSONALIZE YOUR PROGRAM

**#10 WORLDWIDE**  
MASTER IN MANAGEMENT  
FINANCIAL TIMES

**55 NATIONALITIES**  
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We have an element of each of these styles within us but we tend to favour one more than the others. Under stress we stay more firmly in our preferred quadrant, becoming increasingly autocratic (Driver), attacking (Expressive), compliant (Amiable) or avoidant (Analytical).

- Which style feels most familiar to you?
- Which styles are you most likely to clash with?
- Looking at your relationship map, what working style do you think each person favours?
- How does this gel or clash with yours?

Once you are more aware of your preferred working style, you can see how some of its characteristics may impact your ability to act with emotional intelligence. You can also see where you may clash with other styles. This is useful for designing a strategy to manage your relationships more effectively.

### 3. Design an alliance

Sometimes it can be invaluable to consciously design an alliance with an individual or a team. This means looking at how you want to 'be' together. You might want an alliance based on trust and transparency, for example, or on challenge and growth. Designing an alliance also means looking at how you want to 'be' together when the going gets tough. You might agree to listen to understand rather than interpret and assume; or to stop and remember the characteristics you value and respect in each other, for example. When you have designed an alliance, you can revisit it to see how well you are doing.

- Which of your relationships would benefit from designing an alliance?
- What might some of those benefits be?
- How might you go about doing this in your key relationships?

#### 4. **Build your emotional bank accounts**

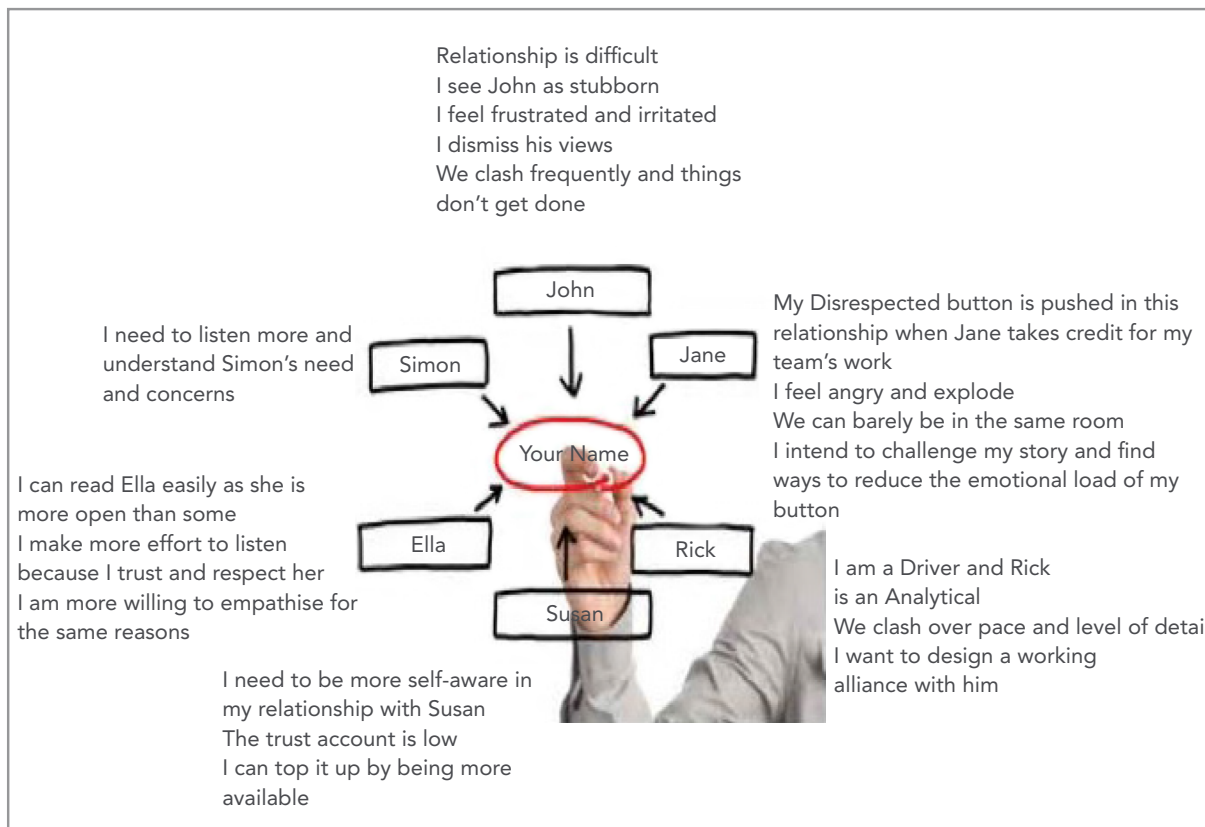
With each person with whom you have a relationship, you have an emotional bank account. The currency of such an account is trust. The account starts at neutral, and, like any bank account, you can make deposits and withdrawals. You make deposits into the account through your behaviour. When you keep a commitment, for example, you make a deposit. When you disrespect the other person in some way, you make a withdrawal.

Deposits take a while to build up. However when you have a high emotional account balance, you can draw upon the reserves of trust. The other person is more likely to give you the benefit of the doubt. There is more tolerance of mistakes and more room for forgiveness. Conversely, when you constantly make withdrawals through rude, sarcastic, or disrespectful behaviour, for example, you use up the reserves of trust and the emotional account balance becomes overdrawn. With trust levels at zero or lower, suspicion, mistrust, negative judgment and conflict are rife.

- On a scale of 1–5, (1 is overdrawn, 5 is a healthy balance), what condition are your emotional accounts in with each person on your relationship map?
- In what ways do you typically make withdrawals from emotional bank accounts and reduce the reserves of trust?
- In what ways do you make deposits and build the reserves of trust?
- Where do you most need to make deposits?

#### 5. **Complete your relationship map**

- Who isn't on your relationship map and should be? Think about people you need to influence or inspire in some way. Think about networks you would like to create or join.
- What changes do you now choose to make?



*The best way to lead people into the future is to connect with them deeply in the present.*

*– James Kouzes and Barry Posner*

**5.6 RECOMMENDED READING**

- Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When The Stakes Are High – Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler.
- The Five Dysfunctions of a Team – Patrick Lencioni.