

SUMMARY SEARCH INSIDE YOURSELF

CHADE-MENG TAN



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Summary of “Search Inside Yourself” by Chade-Meng Tan

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Search Inside Yourself (2012) extols the value of utilizing emotional intelligence and mindfulness in your everyday life to achieve personal and professional success.

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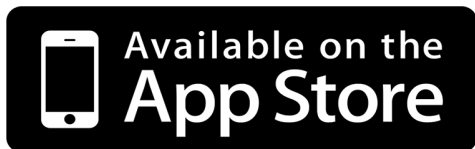


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Introduction

We all know that education is important; that's why we work hard to do well in school and prioritize earning a college degree. But how often do we consider the type of intelligence that can't be taught in school? It might come as a surprise to you, but although there are no classes on emotional intelligence, it's actually one of the biggest factors which influences your professional success. So, through the course of this summary, we're going to learn more about emotional intelligence and how to cultivate it through following Tan's three step method.

This approach advocates beginning by developing your capacity to harness and focus your attention. Once you improve your focus, you can engage in some concentrated self-analysis and form a new understanding of your cognitive and emotional processes. You can then build on your new insights and form new habits that will help you maximize your happiness, mental health, and creative potential.

There are Many Different Types of Intelligence

How do you define intelligence? Is it someone with a lot of education? Someone with a special talent? Someone who has an exceptionally high IQ? The truth is, no matter what we associate with intelligence, it actually comes in many different forms that are as unique as the people who possess them. Howard Gardner, a developmental psychologist from Harvard, was the first person to affirm this through a series of psychological tests. Trying out his theory that there is no singular type of intelligence, Gardner posited that a child who wasn't great at math but possessed great literary talent should still be considered intelligent.

And to prove this point, Gardner curated a list of multiple different types of intelligence, including emotional intelligence. He then split this category into two types: interpersonal and intrapersonal. To have intrapersonal intelligence is, essentially, to be very self-aware. You might have a very strong sense of yourself and your place in the world, driven by a deep understanding of your personal feelings, values, and goals. Interpersonal intelligence, however, means being closely attuned to the feelings of others and of yourself in relation to them. These two things put together form your overall sense of emotional intelligence, which can best be defined as your ability to understand and relate to others and use that knowledge to guide your interactions with your fellow human beings.

Gardner's concept of emotional intelligence has remained the gold standard to this day, and future psychologists have used it as a foundation for developing their own theories. For example, Daniel Goleman, author of the bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence*, expounded on Gardner's theory and asserted that emotional intelligence can be separated into five categories:

- Self-awareness: your understanding of yourself
- Self-regulation: your ability to control yourself, especially your impulses and emotions

- Motivation: your ability to self-start and propel yourself towards your goals
- Empathy: your sensitivity to others' feelings and needs
- Social skills: your ability to identify with and influence others

So, now that you know what emotional intelligence is, let's take a look at why it's important and how it can be used in your daily life.

Emotional Intelligence Can Make you Better at Your Job

One of the most compelling benefits of emotional intelligence is the improvement of your performance at work. That's because your sense of motivation-- one of the five categories of emotional intelligence-- can be developed and increased. High motivation in turn promotes optimism, which means that the more motivated you are, the happier you'll be! And as you get happier and more motivated, you'll accomplish more at work. That's what psychologist Martin Seligman found while conducting his 1980s study of insurance agents.

After interviewing a group of insurance agents, he found that salespeople who were optimistic outperformed their pessimistic colleagues by 8% in their first year. By their second year, those who held a "glass half full" approach to life were beating their grumpy colleagues by a whopping 31%! Seligman therefore concluded that skills imparted by emotional intelligence-- like the ability to stay motivated, control your impulses, and connect with people-- can literally make you more successful at work.

These skills can also make you a better leader, as proven by the example of Delta Airlines CEO Gerald Grinstein, who was once faced with the challenging task of cutting costs at work. Although Grinstein was able to be tough enough to make hard decisions, he relied on interpersonal intelligence to help him prioritize his people during this difficult time. Because he understood the critical importance of creating a positive work environment, he made an active effort to help his employees feel valued and respected even while things were tough. This in turn enabled him to motivate his employees and maintain effective communication.

But what if relating to others doesn't come naturally to you? Well, for those with low emotional intelligence, the good news is that it can be developed! One great example of this can be found in Charles Dickens' classic story, A Christmas Carol. Since the nineteenth century, Ebenezer Scrooge has been

remembered as the embodiment of unkindness and his lack of empathy for his fellow man implies very low emotional intelligence. But after a life-changing experience shows him the error of his ways, Scrooge attacks his future with a determination for self-improvement and ultimately reinvents himself in the eyes of his community. So, if Scrooge can do it, you can too!

Meditation Makes You Happier

Although Scrooge had the help of three Christmas ghosts, you don't need a supernatural experience to develop your emotional intelligence! Let's take a look at a few real-world strategies you can use to improve. One great technique is meditation. Although practices like meditation are currently in vogue and some people might want to dismiss them as the next big fad, the truth is that meditation is so much more than instagrammable yoga poses. In fact, it's more like a workout for your brain! And just like workout equipment is designed to help you exercise different parts of your body, there are different meditation exercises to help you accomplish a variety of mental health goals.

One of the best workouts for strengthening your emotional intelligence is a practice called mindfulness. It works by improving our concentration and training both our attention and meta attention. You might not know that there are two different types of attention, but there are, and they're both vitally important in sharpening our focus. Attention-- the state of being alert and focused on what's going around us-- is what's implied when people tell us, "Pay attention!" But meta attention can be defined as "attention of attention," or the state of awareness about how much you're actually paying attention. So, for example, when you're listening to a lecture and you're focusing on what's being said and actively taking notes, that's paying attention. But when you start drifting off and thinking about what you're going to have for lunch-- and you call yourself on it-- that's meta attention.

As you can imagine, training your meta attention can do wonders for your success in your daily life because once you hone the ability to notice when you're zoning out and bring yourself back into the present, you'll be about a thousand times more focused. If you practice this consistently enough, you can ultimately train yourself to practice deep concentration for long periods of time, increasing both your productivity and mental acuity. And in addition to helping you focus, mindfulness can also help you to relax. By

practicing a concentrated relaxation of your mind, you can disconnect from the stresses and anxieties of the day and clear your mind. In fact, Alan Wallace, a mental relaxation specialist, asserts that mindfulness can help your brain do a sort of “factory reset” and return to its default state of happiness, the state we started in as children before life got in the way.

So, if you’re ready to go start your mindful routine right now, here’s what you can do. Start by finding a comfortable sitting position where you feel both relaxed and alert. Once you’re situated, start by taking three slow, deep breaths and then transition to breathing naturally. As you do so, focus on your breathing, taking note of the rise and fall of your chest and how the air feels in your nostrils. Be conscious of moments when your mind starts to wander and gently bring your attention back to your breath. You can do this for ten minutes or any period of time that feels comfortable for you.

Self-Awareness Can Help you Master Your Emotions

Remember how we mentioned self-awareness-- your understanding of yourself-- earlier? We're now going to take a closer look at this element of emotional intelligence because practicing self-awareness can help you take control of your emotions instead of being helpless to their whims. It can even help you become more successful! How? Well, according to psychologists Gary Cherniss and Robert Caplan, self-awareness training leads to success by eliminating negative self-talk. They tested this theory on a group of financial advisors from American Express and found that self-awareness training helped them to eliminate doubts and cut down on the negative internal monologues that feed them. As they stopped engaging in thought patterns that undermined their confidence, these financial advisors were able to be bolder and more self-assured, which led to higher earnings and more success for them, as well as better advice for their clients.

Self-awareness training also helped them to identify their responses to high-stress situations and in turn, find anti-stress techniques that they could use as coping mechanisms. Practicing mindfulness helped them to lower their stress and clear their minds and as a result, they were able to approach their jobs with renewed focus and energy. So, if increased self-awareness is sounding pretty great to you, how can you cultivate it? And how does it work? Well, self-awareness works because it activates the neocortex (or the "thinking part") of your brain. The neocortex is what helps you regulate emotions by thinking through them instead of reacting on impulse. For example, let's say your boss gives you some feedback that upsets you. Maybe you'd like to yell at her, but your neocortex kicks in and reminds you that picking a fight with your boss is not a good call and that instead, it would be better to calm down and consider her feedback rationally before you get upset.

So, when you work on increasing your self-awareness, you're helping yourself become a kinder, calmer, and more successful person. You can even help yourself become more confident as the author discovered through

his experience at the World Peace Festival in Berlin. Although he was honored to be invited to speak at such an important festival, he also found himself getting a little bit nervous, and so he relied on self-awareness to help him cope. Instead of relying on his emotions or giving in to his burgeoning negative self-talk, he employed mindfulness to calm himself down and remind himself of his strengths and weaknesses. Thinking about it rationally, he understood that even though he was intimidated, he really was a good public speaker and had nothing to be afraid of. He also took a moment to acknowledge the things he struggled with, like getting tongue-tied while speaking English, and reminded himself of the best practices he used to avoid those mistakes. Through the practice of self-awareness, he was able to stay confident and collected, and you can too!

A Shared Purpose is Better Than Material Rewards

What tools would you use to motivate your employees? Would you incentivize them with the promise of financial gain? What about cool perks of the job? Many people believe that these are the best ways to motivate people to succeed in their careers, but nothing could be farther from the truth! In fact, intangible motivators-- things like a sense of purpose or the belief that you're making a difference in the world-- are far more effective. Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos, an online shoe retailer, found this to be true when he grew his digital shop to a multi-billion dollar corporation almost overnight. He attributes his success to his motivation: delivering happiness.

Operating on the principle that he should be delivering happiness to his customers, Hsieh also cultivated a company culture that focused on employee happiness. Because of this, his employees were motivated to perform well and deliver a high quality of customer service. This in turn lead to happier customers and more business for Hsieh! But how did he do it? Well, Hsieh believes that happiness in the workplace is derived from three sources. The first is pleasure, or what you might call instant gratification. We feel this when something good but temporary happens, like when we receive a bonus check or some unexpected congratulations from our boss. These things give us a temporary high that feels awesome, but they don't last.

The next source of happiness is passion. This occurs when we find our work fulfilling and when we enjoy our work enough to enter a state of flow. Flow can best be defined as a state of complete engagement and focus and we discover it when we're engaged in a task that's engaging enough to keep us focused but not so challenging that we feel overwhelmed. When we're in a state of flow, we feel happy, motivated, and fulfilled. Unsurprisingly, it's a lot easier to work when we're passionate about what we do! The last source of happiness according to Hsieh is a sense of higher purpose. This is the feeling that we're part of something bigger than ourselves and it's perhaps the greatest motivator of all. Because when we feel that the work we're

doing is contributing to a higher purpose and improving the world in some way, the more satisfaction we take in our ability to contribute.

And when you combine each of these three types of happiness in one work environment, your job no longer becomes a chore! You might even find that you look forward to going to work every day! So, if you're an employer, make an active effort to curate this type of company culture. And if you're an employee seeking a deeper sense of personal and professional satisfaction, hunt for a job that will enable you to tap into these three forms of happiness.

You Need Emotional Intelligence at Home And at Work

Empathy is another vital part of emotional intelligence and, like any skill, it's important to practice it. Because understanding yourself is awesome, but you also have to understand others if you want to move through the world happily and successfully. Empathy helps you to do that by treating others with kindness and building a foundation of trust. One great example of empathy in action can be illustrated by the author's experience with an empathy exercise. After listening closely to his exercise partner as she described her feelings, he rephrased what he had heard in his own words and asked her if he'd understood her correctly. By the end of the exercise, his partner was in tears and confessing that she'd never felt so heard or understood.

If we were to practice those same techniques in the workplace or in our personal lives, what kind of changes do you think we might see? If we chose to listen closely and ask others if we'd really heard what they meant, how might our conflicts be different? Would our partners, children, and coworkers feel more respected and understood? Would we resolve our differences more quickly? The author argues that we certainly would and offers an example of how he used empathy to achieve a smooth conflict resolution with his new manager, Eric. Because he felt a lot of resentment towards Eric, Tan decided that they could only get along if he got his feelings out in the open and initiated a transparent dialogue with Eric. Through the course of the meeting, they discussed things that were both neutral and personal, like their aspirations and personal anecdotes from their lives. In so doing, they got to know each other better and Tan no longer felt resentful.

For this reason, he highly recommends empathy exercises for finding common ground in any situation where you find yourself lacking empathy for someone. Two of the best methods are exercises called Just Like Me and Loving Kindness. With "Just Like Me," you attempt to find common ground

with the other person. Even if you don't have any personal interests or motivations in common, you can at least acknowledge that they want to be happy and loved just like you do. This can help to humanize them and remind you that they too are a person who deserves love and respect. Loving Kindness, however, takes this a step farther by asking you to meditate and develop positive wishes for the other person. Surrendering negative feelings and replacing them with the desire for them to succeed and do their best will help you develop your capacity for empathy and strengthen your relationship with that person.

Love Makes us Better Leaders

At some point in your life, you've undoubtedly had an experience that made you realize just how many people attempt to succeed by putting others down. Whether in the personal or professional sphere, you've also noticed that many people define progress in terms of being selfish and taking what they want. But hopefully, you've also noticed that nothing could be farther from the truth. If you're looking to develop your leadership skills, putting others down is actually the least helpful thing you could possibly do. After all, who wants to follow somebody who belittles them?

Leadership scholars Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner investigated the characteristics of leadership that generate the most positive responses in people and they concluded that the defining factor was affection. The most successful leaders and managers were those who lead with kindness and warmth and who weren't afraid to develop close relationships with their employees. They were also willing to be open, sharing their thoughts with those under them and inviting their employees to communicate with them in return. Leaders who show compassion are the most effective because not only do they inspire the people around them, they seek to connect with others rather than garnering attention for themselves. So, as you seek to develop your leadership skills, remember that it's not about bullying or manipulating people into doing what you say and it's not about pretending that you have all the answers. Instead, you should lead by example, showing others that you're still working on your personal development and you want to help them grow too.

Final Summary

No matter your personal or professional goals, you should begin quest for happiness and fulfilment with searching inside yourself. Cultivate your emotional intelligence and your sense of self-awareness and use mindfulness to stay in control of your thoughts and emotions. When we practice empathy and lead with love, we not only remove toxic attitudes from our lives, we enrich the lives of others as well.



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