

Also by Daniel Goleman

THE MEDITATIVE MIND

VITAL LIES, SIMPLE TRUTHS

WORKING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

PRIMAL LEADERSHIP (Coauthor)

DESTRUCTIVE EMOTIONS (Narrator)

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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For Tara, wellspring of emotional wisdom

To be sure, the causes of all such problems are complex, interweaving differing ratios of biological destiny, family dynamics, the politics of poverty, and the culture of the streets: No single kind of intervention, including one targeting emotions, can claim to do the whole job. But to the degree emotional deficits add to a child's risk—and we have seen that they add a great deal—attention must be paid to emotional remedies, not to the exclusion of other answers, but along with them. The next question is, what would an education in the emotions look like?

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Schooling the Emotions

The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth.

—ERASMUS

It's a strange roll call, going around the circle of fifteen fifth graders sitting Indian-style on the floor. As a teacher calls their names the students respond not with the vacant "Here" standard in schools, but instead call out a number that indicates how they feel; one means low spirits, ten high energy.

Today spirits are high:

"Jessica."

"Ten: I'm jazzed, it's Friday."

"Patrick."

"Nine: excited, a little nervous."

"Nicole."

"Ten: peaceful, happy . . ."

It's a class in Self Science at the Nueva School, a school retrofitted into what used to be the grand manse of the Crocker family, the dynasty that founded one of San Francisco's biggest banks. Now the building, which resembles a miniature version of the San Francisco Opera House, houses a private school that offers what may be a model course in emotional intelligence.

The subject in Self Science is feelings—your own and those that erupt in relationships. The topic, by its very nature, demands that teachers and students focus on the emotional fabric of a child's life—a focus that is determinedly ignored in almost every other classroom in America. The strategy

here includes using the tensions and traumas of children's lives as the topic of the day. Teachers speak to real issues—hurt over being left out, envy, disagreements that could escalate into a schoolyard battle. As Karen Stone McCown, developer of the Self Science Curriculum and founder of Nueva, put it, "Learning doesn't take place in isolation from kids' feelings. Being emotionally literate is as important for learning as instruction in math and reading."¹

Self Science is a pioneer, an early harbinger of an idea that is spreading to schools coast to coast.* Names for these classes range from "social development" to "life skills" to "social and emotional learning." Some, referring to Howard Gardner's idea of multiple intelligences, use the term "personal intelligences." The common thread is the goal of raising the level of social and emotional competence in children as a part of their regular education—not just something taught remedially to children who are faltering and identified as "troubled," but a set of skills and understandings essential for every child.

The emotional-literacy courses have some remote roots in the affective-education movement of the 1960s. The thinking then was that psychological and motivational lessons were more deeply learned if they involved an immediate experience of what was being taught conceptually. The emotional-literacy movement, though, turns the term *affective education* inside out—instead of using affect to educate, it educates affect itself.

More immediately, many of these courses and the momentum for their spread come from an ongoing series of school-based prevention programs, each targeting a specific problem: teen smoking, drug abuse, pregnancy, dropping out, and most recently violence. As we saw in the last chapter, the W. T. Grant Consortium's study of prevention programs found they are far more effective when they teach a core of emotional and social competences, such as impulse control, managing anger, and finding creative solutions to social predicaments. From this principle a new generation of interventions has emerged.

As we saw in Chapter 15, interventions designed to target the specific deficits in emotional and social skills that undergird problems such as aggression or depression can be highly effective as buffers for children. But those well-designed interventions, in the main, have been run by research psychol-

* For more information on emotional literacy courses: The Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Department of Psychology (M/C 285), University of Illinois at Chicago, 1007 West Harrison St., Chicago, IL 60606-7137.

ogists as experiments. The next step is to take the lessons learned from such highly focused programs and generalize them as a preventive measure for the entire school population, taught by ordinary teachers. }

This more sophisticated and more effective approach to prevention includes information about problems such as AIDS, drugs, and the like, at the points in youngsters' lives when they are beginning to face them. But its main, ongoing subject is the core competence that is brought to bear on any of these specific dilemmas: emotional intelligence.

This new departure in bringing emotional literacy into schools makes emotions and social life themselves topics, rather than treating these most compelling facets of a child's day as irrelevant intrusions or, when they lead to eruptions, relegating them to occasional disciplinary trips to the guidance counselor or the principal's office.

The classes themselves may at first glance seem uneventful, much less a solution to the dramatic problems they address. But that is largely because, like good childrearing at home, the lessons imparted are small but telling, delivered regularly and over a sustained period of years. That is how emotional learning becomes ingrained; as experiences are repeated over and over, the brain reflects them as strengthened pathways, neural habits to apply in times of duress, frustration, hurt. And while the everyday substance of emotional literacy classes may look mundane, the outcome—decent human beings—is more critical to our future than ever.

A LESSON IN COOPERATION

Compare a moment from a class in Self Science with the classroom experiences you can recall.

A fifth-grade group is about to play the Cooperation Squares game, in which the students team up to put together a series of square-shaped jigsaw puzzles. The catch: their teamwork is all in silence, with no gesturing allowed.

The teacher, Jo-An Vargo, divides the class into three groups, each assigned to a different table. Three observers, each familiar with the game, get an evaluation sheet to assess, for example, who in the group takes the lead in organizing, who is a clown, who disrupts.

The students dump the pieces of the puzzles on the table and go to work. Within a minute or so it's clear that one group is surprisingly efficient as a team; they finish in just a few minutes. A second group of four is engaged in

solitary, parallel efforts, each working separately on their own puzzle, but getting nowhere. Then they slowly start to work collectively to assemble their first square, and continue to work as a unit until all the puzzles are solved.

But the third group still struggles, with only one puzzle nearing completion, and even that looking more like a trapezoid than a square. Sean, Fairlie, and Rahman have yet to find the smooth coordination that the other two groups fell into. They are clearly frustrated, frantically scanning the pieces on the table, seizing on likely possibilities and putting them near the partly finished squares, only to be disappointed by the lack of fit.

The tension breaks a bit when Rahman takes two of the pieces and puts them in front of his eyes like a mask; his partners giggle. This will prove to be a pivotal moment in the day's lesson.

Jo-An Vargo, the teacher, offers some encouragement: "Those of you who have finished can give one specific hint to those who are still working."

Dagan moseys over to the still-struggling group, points to two pieces that jut out from the square, and suggests, "You've got to move those two pieces around." Suddenly Rahman, his wide face furrowed in concentration, grasps the new gestalt, and the pieces quickly fall into place on the first puzzle, then the others. There's spontaneous applause as the last piece falls into place on the third group's final puzzle.

A POINT OF CONTENTION

But as the class goes on to mull over the object lessons in teamwork they've received, there is another, more intense interchange. Rahman, tall and with a shock of bushy black hair cut into a longish crew cut, and Tucker, the group's observer, are locked in contentious discussion over the rule that you can't gesture. Tucker, his blond hair neatly combed except for a cowlick, wears a baggy blue T-shirt emblazoned with the motto "Be Responsible," which somehow underscores his official role.

"You can *too* offer a piece—that's *not* gesturing," Tucker says to Rahman in an emphatic, argumentative tone.

"But that *is* gesturing," Rahman insists, vehement.

Vargo notices the heightened volume and increasingly aggressive staccato of the exchange, and gravitates to their table. This is a critical incident, a spontaneous exchange of heated feeling; it is in moments such as this that the lessons already learned will pay off, and new ones can be taught most

profitably. And, as every good teacher knows, the lessons applied in such electric moments will last in students' memories.

"This isn't a criticism—you cooperated very well—but Tucker, try to say what you mean in a tone of voice that doesn't sound so critical," Vargo coaches.

Tucker, his voice calmer now, says to Rahman, "You can just put a piece where you think it goes, give someone what you think they need, without gesturing. Just offering."

Rahman responds in an angry tone, "You could have just gone like this"—he scratches his head to illustrate an innocent movement—"and he'd say 'No gesturing!'"

There is clearly more to Rahman's ire than this dispute about what does or does not constitute a gesture. His eyes constantly go to the evaluation sheet Tucker has filled out, which—though it has not yet been mentioned—has actually provoked the tension between Tucker and Rahman. On the evaluation sheet Tucker has listed Rahman's name in the blank for "Who is disruptive?"

Vargo, noticing Rahman looking at the offending form, hazards a guess, saying to Tucker, "He's feeling that you used a negative word—*disruptive*—about him. What did you mean?"

"I didn't mean it was a *bad* kind of disruption," says Tucker, now conciliatory.

Rahman isn't buying it, but his voice is calmer, too: "That's a little far-fetched, if you ask me."

Vargo emphasizes a positive way of seeing it. "Tucker is trying to say that what could be considered disruptive could also be part of lightening things up during a frustrating time."

"But," Rahman protests, now more matter-of-fact, "*disruptive* is like when we're all concentrating hard on something and if I went like this"—he makes a ridiculous, clowning expression, his eyes bulging, cheeks puffed out—"that would be disruptive."

Vargo tries more emotional coaching, telling Tucker, "In trying to help, you didn't mean he was disruptive in a bad way. But you send a different message in how you're talking about it. Rahman is needing you to hear and accept his feelings. Rahman was saying that having negative words like *disruptive* feels unfair. He doesn't like being called that."

Then, to Rahman, she adds, "I appreciate the way you're being assertive in talking with Tucker. You're not attacking. But it's not pleasant to have a label

like *disruptive* put on you. When you put those pieces up to your eyes it seems like you were feeling frustrated and wanted to lighten things up. But Tucker called it disruptive because he didn't understand your intent. Is that right?"

Both boys nod assent as the other students finish clearing away the puzzles. This small classroom melodrama is reaching its finale. "Do you feel better?" Vargo asks. "Or is this still distressing?"

"Yeah, I feel okay," says Rahman, his voice softer now that he feels heard and understood. Tucker nods, too, smiling. The boys, noticing that everyone else has already left for the next class, turn in unison and dash out together.

POSTMORTEM: A FIGHT THAT DID NOT BREAK OUT

As a new group starts to find their chairs, Vargo dissects what has just transpired. The heated exchange and its cooling-down draw on what the boys have been learning about conflict resolution. What typically escalates to conflict begins, as Vargo puts it, with "not communicating, making assumptions, and jumping to conclusions, sending a 'hard' message in ways that make it tough for people to hear what you're saying."

Students in Self Science learn that the point is not to avoid conflict completely, but to resolve disagreement and resentment before it spirals into an out-and-out fight. There are signs of these earlier lessons in how Tucker and Rahman handled the dispute. Both, for example, made some effort to express their point of view in a way that would not accelerate the conflict. This assertiveness (as distinct from aggression or passivity) is taught at Nueva from third grade on. It emphasizes expressing feelings forthrightly, but in a way that will not spiral into aggression. While at the beginning of their dispute neither boy was looking at the other, as it went on they began to show signs of "active listening," facing each other, making eye contact, and sending the silent cues that let a speaker know that he is being heard.

By putting these tools into action, helped along by some coaching, "assertiveness" and "active listening" for these boys become more than just empty phrases on a quiz—they become ways of reacting the boys can draw on at those moments when they need them most urgently.

Mastery in the emotional domain is especially difficult because skills need to be acquired when people are usually least able to take in new information and learn new habits of response—when they are upset. Coaching in these moments helps. "Anyone, adult or fifth grader, needs some help being a self-

observer when they're so upset," Vargo points out. "Your heart is pounding, your hands are sweaty, you're jittery, and you're trying to listen clearly while keeping your own self-control to get through it without screaming, blaming, or clamming up in defensiveness."

For anyone familiar with the rough-and-tumble of fifth-grade boys, what may be most remarkable is that both Tucker and Rahman tried to assert their views without resorting to blaming, name-calling, or yelling. Neither let their feelings escalate to a contemptuous "f—— you!" or a fistfight, nor cut off the other by stalking out of the room. What could have been the seed of a full-fledged battle instead heightened the boys' mastery of the nuances of conflict resolution. How differently it all could have gone in other circumstances. Youngsters daily come to blows—and even worse—over less.

CONCERNS OF THE DAY

At the traditional circle that opens each class in Self Science, the numbers are not always so high as they were today. When they are low—the ones, twos, or threes that indicate feeling terrible—it opens the way for someone to ask, "Do you want to talk about why you feel that way?" And, if the student wants (no one is pressured to talk about things they don't want to), it allows the airing of whatever is so troubling—and the chance to consider creative options for handling it.

The troubles that emerge vary with the grade level. In the lower grades typical ones are teasing, feeling left out, fears. Around sixth grade a new set of concerns emerges—hurt feelings about not being asked on a date, or being left out; friends who are immature; the painful predicaments of the young ("Big kids are picking on me"; "My friends are smoking, and they're always trying to get me to try, too").

These are the topics of gripping import in a child's life, which are aired on the periphery of school—at lunch, on the bus to school, at a friend's house—if at all. More often than not, these are the troubles that children keep to themselves, obsessing about them alone at night, having no one to mull them over with. In Self Science they can become topics of the day.

Each of these discussions is potential grist for the explicit goal of Self Science, which is illuminating the child's sense of self and relationships with others. While the course has a lesson plan, it is flexible so that when moments such as the conflict between Rahman and Tucker occur they can be capitalized on. The issues that students bring up provide the living examples to

which students and teachers alike can apply the skills they are learning, such as the conflict-resolution methods that cooled down the heat between the two boys.

THE ABC'S OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In use for close to twenty years, the Self Science curriculum stands as a model for the teaching of emotional intelligence. The lessons sometimes are surprisingly sophisticated; as Nueva's director, Karen Stone McCown, told me, "When we teach about anger, we help kids understand that it is almost always a secondary reaction and to look for what's underneath—are you hurt? jealous? Our kids learn that you always have choices about how you respond to emotion, and the more ways you know to respond to an emotion, the richer your life can be."

A list of the contents of Self Science is an almost point-for-point match with the ingredients of emotional intelligence—and with the core skills recommended as primary prevention for the range of pitfalls threatening children (see Appendix E for the full list).² The topics taught include self-awareness, in the sense of recognizing feelings and building a vocabulary for them, and seeing the links between thoughts, feelings, and reactions; knowing if thoughts or feelings are ruling a decision; seeing the consequences of alternative choices; and applying these insights to decisions about such issues as drugs, smoking, and sex. Self-awareness also takes the form of recognizing your strengths and weaknesses, and seeing yourself in a positive but realistic light (and so avoiding a common pitfall of the self-esteem movement).

Another emphasis is managing emotions: realizing what is behind a feeling (for example, the hurt that triggers anger), and learning ways to handle anxieties, anger, and sadness. Still another emphasis is on taking responsibility for decisions and actions, and following through on commitments.

A key social ability is empathy, understanding others' feelings and taking their perspective, and respecting differences in how people feel about things. Relationships are a major focus, including learning to be a good listener and question-asker; distinguishing between what someone says or does and your own reactions and judgments; being assertive rather than angry or passive; and learning the arts of cooperation, conflict resolution, and negotiating compromise.

There are no grades given in Self Science; life itself is the final exam. But at the end of the eighth grade, as students are about to leave Nueva for high

school, each is given a Socratic examination, an oral test in Self Science. One question from a recent final: "Describe an appropriate response to help a friend solve a conflict over someone pressuring them to try drugs, or over a friend who likes to tease." Or, "What are some healthy ways to deal with stress, anger, and fear?"

Were he alive today, Aristotle, so concerned with emotional skillfulness, might well approve.

EMOTIONAL LITERACY IN THE INNER CITY

Skeptics understandably will ask if a course like Self Science could work in a less privileged setting, or if it is only possible in a small private school like Nueva, where every child is, in some respect, gifted. In short, can emotional competence be taught where it may be most urgently needed, in the gritty chaos of an inner-city public school? One answer is to visit the Augusta Lewis Troup Middle School in New Haven, which is as far from the Nueva School socially and economically as it is geographically.

To be sure, the atmosphere at Troup has much of the same excitement about learning—the school is also known as the Troup Magnet Academy of Science and is one of two such schools in the district that are designed to draw fifth- to eighth-grade students from all over New Haven to an enriched science curriculum. Students there can ask questions about the physics of outer space through a satellite-dish hookup to astronauts in Houston or program their computers to play music. But despite these academic amenities, as in many cities, white flight to the New Haven suburbs and to private schools has left Troup's enrollment about 95 percent black and Hispanic.

Just a few short blocks from the Yale campus—and again a distant universe—Troup is in a decaying working-class neighborhood that, in the 1950s, had twenty thousand people employed in nearby factories, from Olin Brass Mills to Winchester Arms. Today that job base has shrunk to under three thousand, shrinking with it the economic horizons of the families who live there. New Haven, like so many other New England manufacturing cities, has sunk into a pit of poverty, drugs, and violence.

It was in response to the urgencies of this urban nightmare that in the 1980s a group of Yale psychologists and educators designed the Social Competence Program, a set of courses that covers virtually the same terrain as the Nueva School's Self Science curriculum. But at Troup the connection to the topics is often more direct and raw. It is no mere academic exercise when, in

the eighth-grade sex education class, students learn how personal decision-making can help them avoid diseases such as AIDS. New Haven has the highest proportion of women with AIDS in the United States; a number of the mothers who send their children to Troup have the disease—and so do some of the students there. Despite the enriched curriculum, students at Troup struggle with all the problems of the inner city; many children have home situations so chaotic, if not horrific, they just cannot manage to get to school some days.

As in all New Haven schools, the most prominent sign that greets a visitor is in the familiar form of a yellow diamond-shaped traffic sign, but reads “Drug-Free Zone.” At the door is Mary Ellen Collins, the school’s facilitator—an all-purpose ombudsman who sees to special problems as they surface, and whose role includes helping teachers with the demands of the social competence curriculum. If a teacher is unsure of how to teach a lesson, Collins will come to the class to show how.

“I taught in this school for twenty years,” Collins says, greeting me. “Look at this neighborhood—I can’t see only teaching academic skills anymore, with the problems these kids face just in living. Take the kids here who are struggling because they have AIDS themselves or it’s in their homes—I’m not sure they’d say it during the discussion on AIDS, but once a kid knows a teacher will listen to an emotional problem, not just academic ones, the avenue is open to have that conversation.”

On the third floor of the old brick school Joyce Andrews is leading her fifth graders through the social competence class they get three times a week. Andrews, like all the other fifth-grade teachers, went to a special summer course in how to teach it, but her exuberance suggests the topics in social competence come naturally to her.

Today’s lesson is on identifying feelings; being able to name feelings, and so better distinguish between them, is a key emotional skill. Last night’s assignment was to bring in pictures of a person’s face from a magazine, name which emotion the face displays, and explain how to tell the person has those feelings. After collecting the assignment, Andrews lists the feelings on the board—sadness, worry, excitement, happiness, and so on—and launches into a fast-paced repartee with the eighteen students who managed to get to school that day. Sitting in four-desk clusters, the students excitedly raise their hands high, straining to catch her eye so they can give their answer.

As she adds *frustrated* to the list on the board, Andrews asks, “How many people ever felt frustrated?” Every hand goes up.

“How do you feel when you’re frustrated?”

COOL
ACTIVITY

The answers come in a cascade: “Tired.” “Confused.” “You can’t think right.” “Anxious.”

As *aggravated* is added to the list, Joyce says, “I know that one—when does a teacher feel aggravated?”

“When everyone is talking,” a girl offers, smiling.

Without missing a beat, Andrews passes out a mimeographed worksheet. In one column are faces of boys and girls, each displaying one of the six basic emotions—happy, sad, angry, surprised, afraid, disgusted—and a description of the facial muscle activity underlying each, for example:

AFRAID:

- The mouth is open and drawn back.
- The eyes are open and the inner corners go up.
- The eyebrows are raised and drawn together.
- There are wrinkles in the middle of the forehead.³

While they read through the sheet, expressions of fear, anger, surprise, or disgust float over the faces of the kids in Andrews’s class as they imitate the pictures and follow the facial-muscle recipes for each emotion. This lesson comes straight from Paul Ekman’s research on facial expression; as such, it is taught in most every college introductory psychology course—and rarely, if ever, in grade school. This elementary lesson in connecting a name with a feeling, and the feeling with the facial expression that matches it, might seem so obvious that it need not be taught at all. Yet it may serve as an antidote to surprisingly common lapses in emotional literacy. Schoolyard bullies, remember, often strike out in anger because they misinterpret neutral messages and expressions as hostile, and girls who develop eating disorders fail to distinguish anger from anxiety from hunger.

EMOTIONAL LITERACY IN DISGUISE

With the curriculum already besieged by a proliferation of new topics and agendas, some teachers who understandably feel overburdened resist taking extra time from the basics for yet another course. So an emerging strategy in emotional education is not to create a new class, but to blend lessons on feelings and relationships with other topics already taught. Emotional lessons can merge naturally into reading and writing, health, science, social studies,

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and other standard courses as well. While in the New Haven schools Life Skills is a separate topic in some grades, in other years the social development curriculum blends into courses such as reading or health. Some of the lessons are even taught as part of math class—notably basic study skills such as how to put aside distractions, motivate yourself to study, and manage your impulses so you can attend to learning.

Some programs in emotional and social skills take no curriculum or class time as a separate subject at all, but instead infiltrate their lessons into the very fabric of school life. One model for this approach—essentially, an invisible emotional and social competence course—is the Child Development Project, created by a team directed by psychologist Eric Schaps. The project, based in Oakland, California, is currently being tried in a handful of schools across the nation, most in neighborhoods that share many of the troubles of New Haven's decaying core.⁴

The project offers a prepackaged set of materials that fit into existing courses. Thus first graders in their reading class get a story, "Frog and Toad Are Friends," in which Frog, eager to play with his hibernating friend Toad, plays a trick on him to get him up early. The story is used as a platform for a class discussion about friendship, and issues such as how people feel when someone plays a trick on them. A succession of adventures brings up topics such as self-consciousness, being aware of a friend's needs, what it feels like to be teased, and sharing feelings with friends. A set curriculum plan offers increasingly sophisticated stories as children go through the elementary and middle-school grades, giving teachers entry points to discuss topics such as empathy, perspective-taking, and caring.

Another way emotional lessons are woven into the fabric of existing school life is through helping teachers rethink how to discipline students who misbehave. The assumption in the Child Development program is that such moments are ripe opportunities to teach children skills that are lacking—impulse control, explaining their feelings, resolving conflicts—and that there are better ways to discipline than coercion. A teacher seeing three first graders pushing to be the first in the lunchroom line might suggest that they each guess a number, and let the winner go first. The immediate lesson is that there are impartial, fair ways to settle such pint-size disputes, while the deeper teaching is that disputes can be negotiated. And since that is an approach those children can take with them to settle other similar disputes ("Me first!" is, after all, epidemic in lower grades—if not through much of life, in one form or another) it has a more positive message than the ubiquitous, authoritarian "Stop that!"

THE EMOTIONAL TIMETABLE

"My friends Alice and Lynn won't play with me."

That poignant grievance is from a third-grade girl at John Muir Elementary School in Seattle. The anonymous sender put it in the "mailbox" in her classroom—actually a specially painted cardboard box—where she and her classmates are encouraged to write in their complaints and problems so the whole class can talk about them and try to think of ways to deal with them. The discussion will not mention the names of those involved; instead the teacher points out that all children share such problems from time to time, and they all need to learn how to handle them. As they talk about how it feels to be left out, or what they might do to be included, they have the chance to try out new solutions to these quandaries—a corrective for the one-track thinking that sees conflict as the only route to solving disagreements.

The mailbox allows flexibility as to exactly which crises and issues will become the subject of the class, for a too-rigid agenda can be out of step with the fluid realities of childhood. As children change and grow the preoccupation of the hour changes accordingly. To be most effective, emotional lessons must be pegged to the development of the child, and repeated at different ages in ways that fit a child's changing understanding and challenges.

One question is how early to begin. Some say the first few years of life are none too soon. The Harvard pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton proposes that many parents can benefit from being coached as emotional mentors to their infants and toddlers, as some home-visit programs do. A strong argument can be made for emphasizing social and emotional skills more systematically in preschool programs such as Head Start; as we saw in Chapter 12, children's readiness to learn depends to a large extent on acquiring some of these basic emotional skills. The preschool years are crucial ones for laying foundation skills, and there is some evidence that Head Start, when run well (an important caveat), can have beneficial long-term emotional and social effects on the lives of its graduates even into their early adult years—fewer drug problems and arrests, better marriages, greater earning power.⁵

Such interventions work best when they track the emotional timetable of development.⁶ As the wail of newborns testifies, babies have intense feelings from the moment they are born. But the newborn's brain is far from fully mature; as we saw in Chapter 15, only as its nervous system reaches final development—a process that unfolds according to an innate biological clock over the entire course of childhood and into early adolescence—will the child's emotions ripen completely. The newborn's repertoire of feeling is

primitive compared to the emotional range of a five-year-old, which, in turn, is lacking when measured against the fullness of feelings of a teenager. Indeed, adults all too readily fall into the trap of expecting children to have reached a maturity far beyond their years, forgetting that each emotion has its preprogrammed moment of appearance in a child's growth. A four-year-old's braggadocio, for example, might bring a parent's reprimand—and yet the self-consciousness that can breed humility typically does not emerge until age five or so.

The timetable for emotional growth is intertwined with allied lines of development, particularly for cognition, on the one hand, and brain and biological maturation, on the other. As we have seen, emotional capacities such as empathy and emotional self-regulation start to build virtually from infancy. The kindergarten year marks a peak ripening of the "social emotions"—feelings such as insecurity and humility, jealousy and envy, pride and confidence—all of which require the capacity for comparing oneself with others. The five-year-old, on entering the wider social world of school, enters too the world of social comparison. It is not just the external shift that elicits these comparisons, but also the emergence of a cognitive skill: being able to compare oneself to others on particular qualities, whether popularity, attractiveness, or skateboarding talents. This is the age when, for example, having an older sister who gets straight A's can make the younger sister start to think of herself as "dumb" by comparison.

Dr. David Hamburg, a psychiatrist and president of the Carnegie Corporation, which has evaluated some pioneering emotional-education programs, sees the years of transition into grade school and then again into junior high or middle school as marking two crucial points in a child's adjustment.⁷ From ages six to eleven, says Hamburg, "school is a crucible and a defining experience that will heavily influence children's adolescence and beyond. A child's sense of self-worth depends substantially on his or her ability to achieve in school. A child who fails in school sets in motion the self-defeating attitudes that can dim prospects for an entire lifespan." Among the essentials for profiting from school, Hamburg notes, are an ability "to postpone gratification, to be socially responsible in appropriate ways, to maintain control over their emotions, and to have an optimistic outlook"—in other words, emotional intelligence.⁸

Puberty—because it is a time of extraordinary change in the child's biology, thinking capacities, and brain functioning—is also a crucial time for emotional and social lessons. As for the teen years, Hamburg observes that

"most adolescents are ten to fifteen years old when they are exposed to sexuality, alcohol and drugs, smoking," and other temptations.⁹

The transition to middle school or junior high marks an end to childhood, and is itself a formidable emotional challenge. All other problems aside, as they enter this new school arrangement virtually all students have a dip in self-confidence and a jump in self-consciousness; their very notions of themselves are rocky and in tumult. One of the greatest specific blows is in "social self-esteem"—students' confidence that they can make and keep friends. It is at this juncture, Hamburg points out, that it helps immensely to buttress boys' and girls' abilities to build close relationships and navigate crises in friendships, and to nurture their self-confidence.

Hamburg notes that as students are entering middle school, just on the cusp of adolescence, there is something different about those who have had emotional literacy classes: they find the new pressures of peer politics, the upping of academic demands, and the temptations to smoke and use drugs less troubling than do their peers. They have mastered emotional abilities that, at least for the short term, inoculate them against the turmoil and pressures they are about to face.

TIMING IS ALL

As developmental psychologists and others map the growth of emotions, they are able to be more specific about just what lessons children should be learning at each point in the unfolding of emotional intelligence, what the lasting deficits are likely to be for those who fail to master the right competences at the appointed time, and what remedial experiences might make up for what was missed.

In the New Haven program, for example, children in the youngest grades get basic lessons in self-awareness, relationships, and decision-making. In first grade students sit in a circle and roll the "feelings cube," which has words such as *sad* or *excited* on each side. At their turn, they describe a time they had that feeling, an exercise that gives them more certainty in tying feelings to words and helps with empathy as they hear others having the same feelings as themselves.

By fourth and fifth grade, as peer relationships take on an immense importance in their lives, they get lessons that help their friendships work better: empathy, impulse control, and anger management. The Life Skills class on

reading emotions from facial expressions that the Troup school fifth graders were trying, for example, is essentially about empathizing. For impulse control, there is a "stoplight" poster displayed prominently, with six steps:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ★ | Red light
Yellow light

Green Light | 1. Stop, calm down, and think before you act.
2. Say the problem and how you feel.
3. Set a positive goal.
4. Think of lots of solutions.
5. Think ahead to the consequences.
6. Go ahead and try the best plan. |
|---|--|---|

The stoplight notion is regularly invoked when a child, for example, is about to strike out in anger, or withdraw into a huff at some slight, or burst into tears at being teased, and offers a concrete set of steps for dealing with these loaded moments in a more measured way. Beyond the management of feelings, it points a way to more effective action. And, as a habitual way of handling the unruly emotional impulse—to think before acting from feelings—it can evolve into a basic strategy for dealing with the risks of adolescence and beyond.

In sixth grade the lessons relate more directly to the temptations and pressures for sex, drugs, or drinking that begin to enter children's lives. By ninth grade, as teenagers are confronted with more ambiguous social realities, the ability to take multiple perspectives—your own as well as those of others involved—is emphasized. "If a kid is mad because he saw his girlfriend talking with another guy," says one of the New Haven teachers, "he'd be encouraged to consider what might be going on from their point of view, too, rather than just plunge into a confrontation."

EMOTIONAL LITERACY AS PREVENTION

Some of the most effective programs in emotional literacy were developed as a response to a specific problem, notably violence. One of the fastest-growing of these prevention-inspired emotional literacy courses is the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, in several hundred New York City public schools and schools across the country. The conflict-resolution course focuses on how to settle schoolyard arguments that can escalate into incidents like the hallway shooting of Ian Moore and Tyrone Sinkler by their classmate at Jefferson High School.

Linda Lantieri, the founder of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program and director of the Manhattan-based national center for the approach, sees it as having a mission far beyond just preventing fights. She says, "The program shows students that they have many choices for dealing with conflict besides passivity or aggression. We show them the futility of violence while replacing it with concrete skills. Kids learn to stand up for their rights without resorting to violence. These are lifelong skills, not just for those most prone to violence."¹⁰

In one exercise, students think of a single realistic step, no matter how small, that might have helped settle some conflict they have had. In another students enact a scene in which a big sister trying to do her homework gets fed up with her younger sister's loud rap tape. In frustration the older sister turns off the tape despite the younger one's protests. The class brainstorms ways they might work out the problem that would satisfy both sisters.

One key to the success of the conflict-resolution program is extending it beyond the classroom to the playground and cafeteria, where tempers are more likely to explode. To that end, some students are trained as mediators, a role that can begin in the latter years of elementary school. When tension erupts, students can seek out a mediator to help them settle it. The schoolyard mediators learn to handle fights, taunts and threats, interracial incidents, and the other potentially incendiary incidents of school life.

The mediators learn to phrase their statements in ways that make both parties feel the mediator is impartial. Their tactics include sitting down with those involved and getting them to listen to the other person without interruptions or insults. They have each party calm down and state their position, then have each paraphrase what's been said so it's clear they've really heard. Then they all try to think of solutions that both sides can live with; the settlements are often in the form of a signed agreement.

Beyond the mediation of a given dispute, the program teaches students to think differently about disagreements in the first place. As Angel Perez, trained as a mediator while in grade school, put it, the program "changed my way of thinking. I used to think, hey, if somebody picks on me, if somebody does something to me, the only thing was to fight, do something to get back at them. Since I had this program, I've had a more positive way of thinking. If something's done negative to me, I don't try to do the negative thing back—I try to solve the problem." And he has found himself spreading the approach in his community.

While the focus of Resolving Conflict Creatively is on preventing violence, Lantieri sees it as having a wider mission. Her view is that the skills needed to

head off violence cannot be separated from the full spectrum of emotional competence—that, for example, knowing what you are feeling or how to handle impulse or grief is as important for violence prevention as is managing anger. Much of the training has to do with emotional basics such as recognizing an expanded range of feelings and being able to put names to them, and empathizing. When she describes the evaluation results of her program's effects, Lantieri points with as much pride to the increase in "caring among the kids" as to the drops in fights, put-downs, and name-calling.

A similar convergence on emotional literacy occurred with a consortium of psychologists trying to find ways to help youngsters on a trajectory toward a life marked by crime and violence. Dozens of studies of such boys—as we saw in Chapter 15—yielded a clear sense of the path most take, starting from impulsiveness and a quickness to anger in their earliest school years, through becoming social rejects by the end of grade school, to bonding with a circle of others like themselves and beginning crime sprees in the middle-school years. By early adulthood, a large portion of these boys have acquired police records and a readiness for violence.

When it came to designing interventions that might help such boys get off this road to violence and crime, the result was, once again, an emotional-literacy program.¹¹ One of these, developed by Carol Kusche along with Mark Greenberg at the University of Washington, is the PATHS curriculum (PATHS is the acronym for Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies). While those at risk for a trajectory toward crime and violence are most in need of these lessons, the course is given to all those in a class, avoiding any stigmatizing of a more troubled subgroup.

Still, the lessons are useful for all children. These include, for example, learning in the earliest school years to control their impulses; lacking this ability, children have special trouble paying attention to what is being taught and so fall behind in their learning and grades. Another is recognizing their feelings; the PATHS curriculum has fifty lessons on different emotions, teaching the most basic, such as happiness and anger, to the youngest children, and later touching on more complicated feelings such as jealousy, pride, and guilt. The emotional-awareness lessons include how to monitor what they and those around them are feeling, and—most important for those prone to aggression—how to recognize when someone is actually hostile, as opposed to when the attribution of hostility comes from oneself.

One of the most important lessons, of course, is anger management. The basic premise children learn about anger (and all other emotions as well) is

that "all feelings are okay to have," but some reactions are okay and others not. Here one of the tools for teaching self-control is the same "stoplight" exercise used in the New Haven course. Other units help children with their friendships, a counter to the social rejections that can help propel a child toward delinquency.

RETHINKING SCHOOLS: TEACHING BY BEING, COMMUNITIES THAT CARE

As family life no longer offers growing numbers of children a sure footing in life, schools are left as the one place communities can turn to for correctives to children's deficiencies in emotional and social competence. That is not to say that schools alone can stand in for all the social institutions that too often are in or nearing collapse. But since virtually every child goes to school (at least at the outset), it offers a place to reach children with basic lessons for living that they may never get otherwise. Emotional literacy implies an expanded mandate for schools, taking up the slack for failing families in socializing children. This daunting task requires two major changes: that teachers go beyond their traditional mission and that people in the community become more involved with schools.

Whether or not there is a class explicitly devoted to emotional literacy may matter far less than *how* these lessons are taught. There is perhaps no subject where the quality of the teacher matters so much, since how a teacher handles her class is in itself a model, a de facto lesson in emotional competence—or the lack thereof. Whenever a teacher responds to one student, twenty or thirty others learn a lesson.

There is a self-selection in the kind of teacher who gravitates to courses such as these, because not everyone is suited by temperament. To begin with, teachers need to be comfortable talking about feelings; not every teacher is at ease doing so or wants to be. There is little or nothing in the standard education of teachers that prepares them for this kind of teaching. For these reasons, emotional literacy programs typically give prospective teachers several weeks of special training in the approach.

While many teachers may be reluctant at the outset to tackle a topic that seems so foreign to their training and routines, there is evidence that once they are willing to try it, most will be pleased rather than put off. In the New Haven schools, when teachers first learned that they would be trained to teach the new emotional literacy courses, 31 percent said they were

reluctant to do so. After a year of teaching the courses, more than 90 percent said they were pleased by them, and wanted to teach them again the following year.

AN EXPANDED MISSION FOR SCHOOLS

Beyond teacher training, emotional literacy expands our vision of the task of schools themselves, making them more explicitly society's agent for seeing that children learn these essential lessons for life—a return to a classic role for education. This larger design requires, apart from any specifics of curriculum, using opportunities in and out of class to help students turn moments of personal crisis into lessons in emotional competence. It also works best when the lessons at school are coordinated with what goes on in children's homes. Many emotional literacy programs include special classes for parents to teach them about what their children are learning, not just to complement what is imparted at school, but to help parents who feel the need to deal more effectively with their children's emotional life.

That way, children get consistent messages about emotional competence in all parts of their lives. In the New Haven schools, says Tim Shriver, director of the Social Competence Program, "if kids get into a beef in the cafeteria, they'll be sent to a peer mediator, who sits down with them and works through their conflict with the same perspective-taking technique they learned in class. Coaches will use the technique to handle conflicts on the playing field. We hold classes for parents in using these methods with kids at home."

Such parallel lines of reinforcement of these emotional lessons—not just in the classroom, but also on the playground; not just in the school, but also in the home—is optimal. That means weaving the school, the parents, and the community together more tightly. It increases the likelihood that what children learned in emotional literacy classes will not stay behind at school, but will be tested, practiced, and sharpened in the actual challenges of life.

Another way in which this focus reshapes schools is in building a campus culture that makes it a "caring community," a place where students feel respected, cared about, and bonded to classmates, teachers, and the school itself.¹² For example, schools in areas such as New Haven, where families are disintegrating at a high rate, offer a range of programs that recruit caring people in the community to get engaged with students whose home life is shaky at best. In the New Haven schools, responsible adults volunteer as

mentors, regular companions for students who are foundering and who have few, if any, stable and nurturing adults in their home life.

In short, the optimal design of emotional literacy programs is to begin early, be age-appropriate, run throughout the school years, and intertwine efforts at school, at home, and in the community.

Even though much of this fits neatly into existing parts of the school day, these programs are a major change in any curriculum. It would be naive not to anticipate hurdles in getting such programs into schools. Many parents may feel that the topic itself is too personal a domain for the schools, that such things are best left to parents (an argument that gains credibility to the extent that parents actually *do* address these topics—and is less convincing when they fail to). Teachers may be reluctant to yield yet another part of the school day to topics that seem so unrelated to the academic basics; some teachers may be too uncomfortable with the topics to teach them, and all will need special training to do so. Some children, too, will resist, especially to the extent that these classes are out of synch with their actual concerns, or feel like intrusive impositions on their privacy. And then there is the dilemma of maintaining high quality, and ensuring that slick education marketers do not peddle ineptly designed emotional-competence programs that repeat the disasters of, say, ill-conceived courses on drugs or teen pregnancy.

Given all this, why should we bother to try?

DOES EMOTIONAL LITERACY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

It's every teacher's nightmare: one day Tim Shriver opened the local paper to read that Lamont, one of his favorite former students, had been shot nine times on a New Haven street, and was in critical condition. "Lamont had been one of the school leaders, a huge—six foot two—and hugely popular linebacker, always smiling," recalls Shriver. "Back then Lamont had enjoyed coming to a leadership club I led, where we would toss around ideas in a problem-solving model known as SOCS."

The acronym is for Situation, Options, Consequence, Solutions—a four-step method: say what the situation is and how it makes you feel; think about your options for solving the problem and what their consequences might be; pick a solution and execute it—a grown-up version of the stoplight method. Lamont, Shriver added, loved brainstorming imaginative but potentially effective ways to handle the pressing dilemmas of high-school life, such as problems with girlfriends and how to avoid fights.

But those few lessons seemed to have failed him after high school. Drifting on the streets in a sea of poverty, drugs, and guns, Lamont at twenty-six lay in a hospital bed, shrouded in bandages, his body riddled with bullet holes. Rushing to the hospital, Shriver found Lamont barely able to talk, his mother and girlfriend huddled over him. Seeing his former teacher, Lamont motioned him to the bedside, and as Shriver leaned over to hear, whispered, "Shrive, when I get out of here, I'm gonna use the SOCS method."

Lamont went through Hillhouse High in the years before the social-development course was given there. Would his life have turned out differently had he benefited from such an education throughout his school years, as children in New Haven public schools do now? The signs point to a possible yes, though no one can ever say for sure.

As Tim Shriver put it, "One thing is clear: the proving ground for social problem-solving is not just the classroom, but the cafeteria, the streets, home." Consider testimony from teachers in the New Haven program. One recounts how a former student, still single, visited and said that she almost certainly would have been an unwed mother by now "if she hadn't learned to stand up for her rights during our Social Development classes."¹³ Another teacher recalls how a student's relationship with her mother was so poor that their talks continually ended up as screaming matches; after the girl learned about calming down and thinking before reacting, the mother told her teacher that they could now talk without going "off the deep end." At the Troup school, a sixth grader passed a note to the teacher of her Social Development class; her best friend, the note said, was pregnant, had no one to talk to about what to do, and was planning suicide—but she knew the teacher would care.

A revealing moment came when I was observing a seventh-grade class in social development in the New Haven Schools, and the teacher asked for "someone to tell me about a disagreement they've had recently that ended in a good way."

A plumpish twelve-year-old girl shot up her hand: "This girl was supposed to be my friend and someone said she wanted to fight me. They told me she was going to get me in a corner after school."

But instead of confronting the other girl in anger, she applied an approach encouraged in the class—finding out what is going on before jumping to conclusions: "So I went to the girl and I asked why she said that stuff. And she said she never did. So we never had a fight."

The story seems innocuous enough. Except that the girl who tells the tale had already been expelled from another school for fighting. In the past she

attacked first, asked questions later—or not at all. For her to engage a seeming adversary in a constructive way rather than immediately wading into an angry confrontal is a small but real victory.

Perhaps the most telling sign of the impact of such emotional literacy classes are the data shared with me by the principal of this twelve-year-old's school. An unbendable rule there is that children caught fighting are suspended. But as the emotional literacy classes have been phased in over the years there has been a steady drop in the number of suspensions. "Last year," says the principal, "there were 106 suspensions. So far this year—we're up to March—there have been only 26."

These are concrete benefits. But apart from such anecdotes of lives bettered or saved, there is the empirical question of how much emotional literacy classes really matter to those who go through them. The data suggest that although such courses do not change anyone overnight, as children advance through the curriculum from grade to grade, there are discernible improvements in the tone of a school and the outlook—and level of emotional competence—of the girls and boys who take them.

There have been a handful of objective evaluations, the best of which compare students in these courses with equivalent students not taking them, with independent observers rating the children's behavior. Another method is to track changes in the same students before and after the courses based on objective measures of their behavior, such as the number of schoolyard fights or suspensions. Pooling such assessments reveals a widespread benefit for children's emotional and social competence, for their behavior in and out of the classroom, and for their ability to learn (see Appendix F for details):

EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS

- Improvement in recognizing and naming own emotions
- Better able to understand the causes of feelings
- Recognizing the difference between feelings and actions

MANAGING EMOTIONS

- Better frustration tolerance and anger management
- Fewer verbal put-downs, fights, and classroom disruptions
- Better able to express anger appropriately, without fighting
- Fewer suspensions and expulsions
- Less aggressive or self-destructive behavior
- More positive feelings about self, school, and family

- Better at handling stress
- Less loneliness and social anxiety

HARNESSING EMOTIONS PRODUCTIVELY

- More responsible
- Better able to focus on the task at hand and pay attention
- Less impulsive; more self-control
- Improved scores on achievement tests

EMPATHY: READING EMOTIONS

- Better able to take another person's perspective
- Improved empathy and sensitivity to others' feelings
- Better at listening to others

HANDLING RELATIONSHIPS

- Increased ability to analyze and understand relationships
- Better at resolving conflicts and negotiating disagreements
- Better at solving problems in relationships
- More assertive and skilled at communicating
- More popular and outgoing; friendly and involved with peers
- More sought out by peers
- More concerned and considerate
- More "pro-social" and harmonious in groups
- More sharing, cooperation, and helpfulness
- More democratic in dealing with others

★ YES!
 One item on this list demands special attention: emotional literacy programs improve children's *academic* achievement scores and school performance. This is not an isolated finding; it recurs again and again in such studies. In a time when too many children lack the capacity to handle their upsets, to listen or focus, to rein in impulse, to feel responsible for their work or care about learning, anything that will buttress these skills will help in their education. In this sense, emotional literacy enhances schools' ability to teach. Even in a time of back-to-basics and budget cuts, there is an argument to be made that these programs help reverse a tide of educational decline and strengthen schools in accomplishing their main mission, and so are well worth the investment.

Beyond these educational advantages, the courses seem to help children better fulfill their roles in life, becoming better friends, students, sons and daughters—and in the future are more likely to be better husbands and wives, workers and bosses, parents, and citizens. While not every boy and girl will acquire these skills with equal sureness, to the degree they do we are all the better for it. "A rising tide lifts all boats," as Tim Shriver put it. "It's not just the kids with problems, but all kids who can benefit from these skills; these are an inoculation for life."

CHARACTER, MORALITY, AND THE ARTS OF DEMOCRACY

There is an old-fashioned word for the body of skills that emotional intelligence represents: *character*. Character, writes Amitai Etzioni, the George Washington University social theorist, is "the psychological muscle that moral conduct requires."¹⁴ And philosopher John Dewey saw that a moral education is most potent when lessons are taught to children in the course of real events, not just as abstract lessons—the mode of emotional literacy.¹⁵ ★

If character development is a foundation of democratic societies, consider some of the ways emotional intelligence buttresses this foundation. The bedrock of character is self-discipline; the virtuous life, as philosophers since Aristotle have observed, is based on self-control. A related keystone of character is being able to motivate and guide oneself, whether in doing homework, finishing a job, or getting up in the morning. And, as we have seen, the ability to defer gratification and to control and channel one's urges to act is a basic emotional skill, one that in a former day was called will. "We need to be in control of ourselves—our appetites, our passions—to do right by others," notes Thomas Lickona, writing about character education.¹⁶ "It takes will to keep emotion under the control of reason."

Being able to put aside one's self-centered focus and impulses has social benefits: it opens the way to empathy, to real listening, to taking another person's perspective. Empathy, as we have seen, leads to caring, altruism, and compassion. Seeing things from another's perspective breaks down biased stereotypes, and so breeds tolerance and acceptance of differences. These capacities are ever more called on in our increasingly pluralistic society, allowing people to live together in mutual respect and creating the possibility of productive public discourse. These are basic arts of democracy.¹⁷

Schools, notes Etzioni, have a central role in cultivating character by

inculcating self-discipline and empathy, which in turn enable true commitment to civic and moral values.¹⁸ In doing so, it is not enough to lecture children about values: they need to practice them, which happens as children build the essential emotional and social skills. In this sense, emotional literacy goes hand in hand with education for character, for moral development, and for citizenship.

A LAST WORD

As I complete this book some troubling newspaper items catch my eye. One announces that guns have become the number-one cause of death in America, edging out auto accidents. The second says that last year murder rates rose by 3 percent.¹⁹ Particularly disturbing is the prediction in that second article, by a criminologist, that we are in a lull before a "crime storm" to come in the next decade. The reason he gives is that murders by teenagers as young as fourteen and fifteen are on the rise, and that age group represents the crest of a mini baby boom. In the next decade this group will become eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds, the age at which violent crimes peak in the course of a criminal career. The harbingers are on the horizon: A third article says that in the four years between 1988 and 1992 Justice Department figures show a 68 percent jump in the number of juveniles charged with murder, aggravated assault, robbery, and forcible rape, with aggravated assault alone up 80 percent.²⁰

These teenagers are the first generation to have not just guns but automatic weaponry easily available to them, just as their parents' generation was the first to have wide access to drugs. The toting of guns by teenagers means that disagreements that in a former day would have led to fistfights can readily lead to shootings instead. And, as another expert points out, these teenagers "just aren't very good at avoiding disputes."

One reason they are so poor at this basic life skill, of course, is that as a society we have not bothered to make sure every child is taught the essentials of handling anger or resolving conflicts positively—nor have we bothered to teach empathy, impulse control, or any of the other fundamentals of emotional competence. By leaving the emotional lessons children learn to chance, we risk largely wasting the window of opportunity presented by the slow maturation of the brain to help children cultivate a healthy emotional repertoire.

Despite high interest in emotional literacy among some educators, these

courses are as yet rare; most teachers, principals, and parents simply do not know they exist. The best models are largely outside the education mainstream, in a handful of private schools and a few hundred public schools. Of course no program, including this one, is an answer to every problem. But given the crises we find ourselves and our children facing, and given the quantum of hope held out by courses in emotional literacy, we must ask ourselves: Shouldn't we be teaching these most essential skills for life to every child—now more than ever?

And if not now, when?