

## **Emotional Intelligence and Education**

By Marek and Darlene Helstrom

When you think of your education, what comes to mind - Math, English, History and Science? What about Emotional Intelligence? The typical high school graduate has several years of math, history, science, even one or two years of a foreign language, but has received no formal teaching or training in emotional intelligence (EQ).

***Emotional Intelligence is the ability to integrate thinking and feeling to make optimal decisions for yourself and others.*** Or simply, **being smart with feelings!**

Emotions run through every facet of our lives – we are emotional beings. Think for a moment about those people in your life that believed in you, motivated you to grow, take a chance and become a better person. Can you recall the traits that endear these individuals to you? Do words like *supportive, motivating, caring, influencing, believing in, trusting, compassionate, listening, forgiving* come to mind when you are thinking of those teachers, coaches, leaders who touched your lives? Those are emotional quality words, and they move us at a fundamental level - evoking us to burst through self-doubt and self-limiting boundaries, reach dreams and help us develop our potential. At best we learn about handling our emotions by default, trial and error. We learn from our parents', in the playground, on the ball field, and “on the job” with no formal training.

We need to ask, is this a satisfactory way to prepare for the myriad of relationships that we encounter in life, let alone our marriages and our children?

Imagine if our educational system provided training in understanding *behavioral patterns*, teaching us to change patterns that don't serve us well. Or trained us to *navigate emotions*, moving ourselves from rage to anger to fear and then analyzing what it is that we actually fear before acting out! Wouldn't it be wonderful if our spouses, teenagers, co-workers, truly could integrate their thinking and feeling, learning to respond with wisdom? What would training in developing *purpose* and goals, learning to respond with *empathy*, and *motivating* ourselves from within do for our kids and communities? These are all EQ competencies, and we all are capable of developing them in our lives.

EQ training is essential, especially as our world creates more pressures, more stresses, more automation...more ways for us to de-personalize, disconnect, become less tolerant, more judgmental, and more fearful, and ultimately less human!