

Book Review



ISSN: 2574-3465 Print/ ISSN: 2574-3481 Online

Volume 3, Issue 1 (2019), pp. 100–103

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<http://ojed.org/jump>

doi: 10.32674/jump.v3i1.567

***Emotional Intelligence: A Practical Guide***  
**(Walton, 2012)**

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*Emotional Intelligence: A Practical Guide* by Dr. David Walton (2012) is just that—a practical guide. The study of emotional intelligence (EI) is a relatively new phenomenon, particularly outside of the realm of the business industry. EI can be applied to any industry and every personal walk of life. Northouse (2019) describes emotional intelligence as “our ability to understand emotions and apply this understanding to life’s tasks” (p. 28). Many of the published works about EI are very academic and research-oriented. However, Walton does a great job of translating the research concepts to a practical approach any person can benefit from, ranging from children to adults.

The book is a comprehensive document containing a total of 164 pages. It is evident a great deal of consideration for the reader was invested in the publication. Features such as the easily readable font size, page formatting, and icons that indicate “remember this” or “useful tip” serve as valuable tools highlighting important information. Walton examines the study of EI initially by providing a background of the subject matter. He notes several strategies throughout that the reader can consider to gain a better understanding of their own EI. The intended audience for this book extends to business leaders, educators, healthcare providers, administrators, managers, and ordinary individuals seeking self-improvement and relationship strategies to gain and sustain positive outcomes.

The content layout is organized in two parts: Part One: The Emotional Intelligence Framework and Part Two: Emotional Intelligence in Practice. Part One is comprised of four chapters, and Part Two is three chapters. In today’s world with so many matters competing for our attention, the design of the book is attractive and not overwhelming. Walton creatively

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demonstrates knowledge about EI while engaging the reader through participation in case study reviews and quizzes.

Walton depicts the foundation of EI within the introduction of the book. Here he credits notable research conducted in the 1980s and 90s by EI gurus John Mayer, Peter Salovey, David Caruso, and Richard Boyatzis. He recognizes Reuven Bar-On as the researcher who coined the term “emotional intelligence” in a 1980 dissertation. Walton goes on to expound upon the highly recognized research of Daniel Goleman published in his bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995). In his research, Goleman (2006) classifies emotional intelligence into four constructs: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Walton describes the rationale for utilizing EI as beneficial to mental health giving the capacity to understand both ourselves and how we deal with the pressures we face.

Chapter 1 focuses on the construct of self-knowledge and the importance of understanding ourselves and the ability to recognize our own emotions. Walton states this is the foundational step for managing yourself. The term “mindfulness” is introduced in this chapter. It emphasizes the importance of being aware of emotions in a present state, which fosters the ability to focus and reflect. This proves to be very powerful when applying critical and analytical thinking to the decision-making process. Mindfulness directs attention to self and being considerate of others. Walton suggests tips to strengthening self-esteem, and encourages the reader to define their purpose and direction.

In Chapter 2, Walton transitions to the second construct of self-management. Now that you are aware and can identify your emotions, there must be ways to manage them. People find it easier to manage positive emotions. However, greater energy is required to fare the presence of negative or challenging emotions. The term “rumination” often associated in a psychological perspective as a process of repeating negative thinking is discussed in this chapter. Walton notes while life will present times of trouble that are shocking or even unnerving, you can learn to manage your emotions in a healthy manner. He identifies coping mechanisms to deal with outbursts and impulsive reactions. Self-management of emotions promotes self-control, willpower, and respect for others.

The power of understanding others is the theme for Chapter 3. The previous chapters primarily focused on self-identification and management. However, this chapter stresses the importance of effective listening skills. By exercising good listening tactics, more attention is given to emotional cues and awareness of surroundings that might shape an encounter. Walton

describes listening as active with both eyes and ears, and he notes nonverbal communication is a channel for information about emotions, feelings, and attitudes. He mentions good communication is the foundation of emotionally intelligent relationships both professionally and personally. Also, Walton identifies certain cues to be mindful of while communicating with others. These cues may determine the course of direction for conversation and provide feedback on what encounters might be appropriate and positive while de-escalating potentially dangerous situations.

Walton provides practical steps in Chapter 4 to assist in managing relationships. He refers to the steps as building blocks such as showing people that you value them, communicating with clear and concise messages, approaching conflict constructively, and other vital tips. Other content in this chapter describes different stages of relationships. Another important premise that is becoming more prominent in mainstream leadership is authenticity. Walton (2012) defines authenticity as “the permission we give ourselves to be who we really are, warts and all” (p. 97). He continues to describe an emotionally intelligent relationship as one that has the ability to generate a climate of appreciation and value. This is underscored by metanoia, which refers to the ability and willingness to change your mindset.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to the practice of EI in the workplace. Walton highlights the valuable attributes EI cultivates in a healthy work environment. Not only does it signal employees are able to manage their own emotions and respect for others, but it utilizes principles of team-building and leadership practices that enhance organizational development. Walton positions the reader to identify tools to manage uncertainty and difficult situations in the workplace. EI can instill feelings of stability and security and sustain trust that might otherwise be jeopardized.

Parenting and teaching children are the main topics in Chapter 6. Walton compares relative studies promoting social and emotional wellbeing. Therefore, EI can be modeled and encouraged in children so that they recognize their emotions, realize their impact, and think and behave accordingly with others. EI in children can help them display and not suppress emotions. Additionally, cultivating the ability to survive and overcome difficult circumstances increases resilience. One of the largest benefits to parents is establishing and sustaining a positive venue to raise and nurture children with the hope of them becoming responsible adults.

The final chapter closes with the aspects of EI and health. Walton indicates the relation of EI and health maintenance, disease management, psychological disorders, and emotional wellness. He illustrates the impact

EI has on physical health and negative factors such as stress and anxiety. Furthermore, the practice of EI can promote healthy lifestyles. There are benefits of EI even in near death experiences or managing chronic illnesses. Metanoia, the changing of one's mindset, which will assist in our outlook and ability to keep matters in the proper perspective. Grounding is a psychological technique described as a positive way to distract or divert negative thinking and focus on something positive.

Walton's practical approach to understanding and applying EI may be very appealing to an expansive audience. The book does not discount the value of research and academic contributions about EI. More so, Walton has discovered a way to make the topic interesting and useful in a variety of settings. He also includes a listing of books for readers who would like to expand their knowledge about EI. The suggested resources are diverse in the area of research and personal preferences. *Emotional Intelligence: A Practical Guide* is a recommended study for anyone interested in learning about the topic, and for experts further understanding an important phenomenon.

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