

EQ FOR EVERYBODY

*A Practical Guide to the Developing
and Using One's Emotional Intelligence*

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This Third Edition is a condensed version of the material
presented on www.Core.EQI.org/

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INTRODUCTION

A Few of My Underlying Beliefs

I believe we would all be happier and healthier, and increase our chances of survival as a species if we followed one simple principle:

Mutual respect for each other's feelings.

To get to this point, though, we first need two things. We need to:

1. Know how we feel.
2. Communicate how we feel.

Once we have mastered the first two steps, we can begin work on the lifelong challenge of respecting each other's often conflicting feelings and needs. Success requires a healthy development of our emotional intelligence.

I also believe things work better when people act voluntarily rather than out of force, coercion, bribery or fear.

I believe our emotions provide us with the means to know ourselves and that this self-knowledge is the key to our happiness.

I believe children start out basically happy, empathetic and "good" and that most unhappiness in children and adults is a direct result of unmet needs. Further, I believe that in developed countries most of these unmet needs are unmet emotional needs, not unmet physical needs.

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence

I have lived most of my life in the United States, so it is with regret that I say that the USA is a world leader in the amount of unhealthy, socially- and self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, violence and murder. This is not because of a lack of opportunity, wealth or cognitive intelligence. Instead, I believe it is due to a combination of unmet emotional needs and abnormally developed emotional intelligence. I believe this combination is also a leading cause of adolescent depression, self-harm and suicide. It is my hope that the ideas in this booklet will one day help to reverse the unhealthy trends seen in the USA and many other countries around the world.

The booklet is organized into alphabetically-arranged sections. As a guide, I suggest you begin with reading the sections titled Definitions of Emotional Intelligence, Awareness, Empathy, Validation and Emotional Literacy. Next I would suggest Respect and Invalidation.

Thank you for your interest in my work.

Steve Hein

2012 Note from Steve – This is a slightly revised edition of the 2003 booklet. I decided to distribute it freely to help my ideas spread to the places they are needed in the world. You may copy, translate and share this freely.

ANGER

The ultimate test of our emotional intelligence may be in the way we handle anger. Do we use it in productive or counter-productive ways? Does our anger lengthen or shorten our lives? Here are some of my thoughts.

Overview of Anger

There are several important things to remember when speaking of anger:

1. It is a powerful survival tool
2. It is a source of energy
3. It is a secondary emotion
4. In anger mode the brain downshifts
5. Prolonged anger is very unhealthy
6. Repressed anger is also very unhealthy

Nature has developed the emotional state we call “anger” to help us stay alive. Anger sends signals to all parts of our body to help us fight or flee. It energizes us to prepare us for action. Millions of years ago, our threats came mostly in the form of attacks by wild animals who wanted to eat us. Now we more often feel psychologically attacked. (Though this evolutionary trend is reversing in those countries where there is an increase in violence and the use of handguns.)

When we feel energized by anger, it is smart to ask ourselves how we put this energy to the most productive use. As with the use of other forms of energy such as electricity or oil, we want to use it efficiently, not wastefully.

Primary vs. Secondary Feelings

Perhaps the most helpful thing to remember about anger is that it is a secondary emotion. A primary feeling is what is felt immediately before we feel angry. We always feel something else first. One might first feel afraid, attacked, offended, disrespected, forced, controlled, trapped, interrogated, or pressured. If any of these feelings are intense enough, we think of the emotion as anger.

A critical point to remember about secondary feelings is that they do not identify the [unmet emotional need](#) (UEN). When all I can say is “I feel angry”, neither I nor any one else knows what would help me feel better. An amazingly simple, but effective technique, then, is to always identify the primary emotion.

Here is an example. Assume someone wants us to do something we prefer not to do. At first we feel a little pressured but not enough to get angry. When they keep pushing us, we begin to get irritated. If they continue, we get “angry.”

An effective way to avoid getting angry in many cases is simply to express your initial feeling, before it has been elevated to the point of anger. This helps keep the brain in balance and out of the more volatile mode where it has downshifted to a more primitive and physiological response.

Anger as a Response to Fear

One of the primitive functions of an animal’s response to fear is to frighten away the attacker. But in modern human life, we often frighten away those who we need and care about most. Besides this, prolonged anger has clear health consequences. According to Dr. Herbert Benson, these include heart attacks, hardening of the arteries, strokes, hypertension, high blood pressure, heart rate changes and metabolism, muscle and respiratory problems. (*The Relaxation Response*, 1975)

Responding To and Learning From Anger

Anger is an intense emotion. It is evidence that we feel strongly about something. As with every emotion, it has a lesson for us. It can teach us what we value, what we need, what we lack, what we believe and what our insecurities are. It can help us

become more aware of what we feel strongly about and which emotional needs are important to us. One way to learn from anger is shown in the example below:

Instead of saying,

She never should have done that. I can't believe how irresponsible, insensitive and inconsiderate she is. What a cold-hearted, evil witch she is.

a more productive response is:

Wow, I am really upset by this. Why does it bother me so much? What specifically am I feeling? What are my primary feelings? What need do I have that is not being met? What principles of mine have been violated?

From the answers to these questions, we can decide what course of action to take in view of what our goals are. Simply being aware that we *have* multiple options and that we can decide to pick the best one helps soothe the anger. It may help, for instance, to ask if we really want to frighten away the person we are angry at. As soon as we “upshift” to the upper part of our brain, (see section on the brain) and begin to think about our options and their consequences, and make appropriate plans, we start to feel more in control and less threatened. We get out of the automatic stimulus-response mode and realize that we have choices.

Remember that there is a space between stimulus and response, and in this space lies our power to choose the option which is in our long-term best interests.¹

Simply remembering that we have a choice helps us feel more in control. Not surprisingly, studies show that people feel better and are healthier when they have a sense of control over their lives. This is where the balance between upper brain and lower brain comes in. High EQ suggests that we channel our anger in productive ways to help us achieve our goals rather than to sabotage them. Keeping our goals clearly in mind at all times helps us accomplish this.

Here are some suggestions for responding to your anger:

1. Ask what you are afraid of.
2. Ask what feelings preceded the anger.
3. Ask what other feelings you are feeling.
4. Ask what you are trying to control.
5. Ask what you can control.
6. Consider your options.
7. Choose the one which will bring you the most long term happiness.

Finally, here is a technique I sometimes use to help me cope with “anger” (if I haven’t already “downshifted” to a purely reactive animal instinct state). When I catch myself starting to say “I feel angry” or “I am starting to get really pissed off”, I try to remember to say instead, “I feel really energized”. Then I ask myself how I want to channel my energy to its best use. It is a simple little technique, but it makes a big difference in how I feel and how I respond, when I can remember to do it!

¹ Borrowed from Stephen Covey who borrowed it from someone else!

AWARENESS

Without awareness of our feelings and what causes them, it will be difficult for us to lead a happy life. And we need awareness of our own feelings to help us feel empathy. Here are three aspects of awareness: acknowledgment, acceptance and identification.

Acknowledging Feelings

In defining emotional intelligence, John Mayer and Peter Salovey say our emotions “direct our attention to important information in our environment.” They send us signals through the mind and through the body. If we do not acknowledge them, they relentlessly continue to pursue our attention. Nature’s purpose for negative emotions is to call our attention to the causes of our negative feelings so we may take corrective action. Our feelings are something like the inner voices that speak to us. To make healthy and wise choices, we need to find a healthy balance between listening to our feelings and listening to our intellect.

Identifying Specific Feelings

Particularly with negative feelings, it is very important to identify the feeling as specifically as possible. For example, when feeling “angry”, it helps to narrow down the feeling or feelings which preceded the anger. The more specific we are, the more accurate we can be in identifying the unmet emotional need and taking appropriate corrective action. (See section titled Negative Emotions.)

Research indicates that just the simple act of naming a feeling helps us feel better. This happens for two reasons. First, we have a natural fear of the unknown. When we label our feeling, we move it from the unknown to the known and thus we help make it less scary and more manageable. Second, when we label it, we are using the upper part of the brain. We are actually diffusing and moving the chemicals from their concentration in our emotional brains to our reasoning brain. By beginning to think about our feeling, we are also taking the next step towards solving our problem. When our thoughts are clear, this helps us feel more calm and in control.

THE BRAIN

Science continues to provide us with new information concerning the development and functioning of the brain. For example, we are learning more about the relationship between the cognitive and emotional centers of the brain.

The Upper and Lower Brains

According to recent brain research, emotions begin primarily in our lower brain, just above the spinal cord. This is the part of our brain that most closely resembles other animals, and which is often called the reptilian brain. The reptilian brain is older than our upper brain in evolutionary terms. Over time, the brain has grown from the lower, back portion of the head to the upper, front portion.

The Baby's Brain

When a baby is born, his brain is more developed in the lower region than in the upper. Included in the lower region is the emotional center of the brain, the amygdala. The implication of this is that babies and young children are storing emotional memories long before they have the words or logic to go with them. Before we could think, we were already learning to sense and feel. Our feelings precede our thoughts both in evolutionary and developmental terms. This may help explain why our “gut feeling” is so often correct.

Recent scientific innovations have enabled us to actually watch the brain at work when it is thinking and feeling. We can see what happens when a child is frightened or intellectually stimulated. We can watch the connections being formed. This new information is making it more clear that our adult caregivers literally wire our emotional brains when we are young, setting a course of security and empathy or insecurity and insensitivity.²

² For a more complete discussion, see Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*, chapters 1,2 and 12

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Nearly all conflicts involve underlying emotional issues. The stronger the feelings, the more difficult the resolution. To resolve conflicts, then, it is absolutely necessary to address the feelings of all parties. Listed below is a conflict resolution model based on Emotional Intelligence. The basic steps are outlined below:

Seek to Understand

- Validate each person's feeling.
- Confirm a willingness to solve problem.
- Seek understanding of the cause of the feeling.
- Confirm accurate understanding; paraphrase
- Identify the underlying unmet emotional needs.
- Show empathy.
- Ask the powerful and positive question:

What would help you feel better?

Seek to Be Understood

- Share your feelings & needs.
- Confirm accurate reception & understanding.

Mutually Generate Options & Resolutions

- Brainstorm solutions (while withholding evaluation/judgment).
- Discuss each parties feelings about alternatives.
- Make selection which maximizes positive feelings and minimizes negative feelings.

Hints:

1. Resist the inclination to focus on “what happened” at the neglect of the feelings behind the behavior.
2. Allow the least powerful person the lead role in generating and evaluating options. This helps balance the power.

DEFINITIONS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

I have developed the following definition of EI which is based on the Mayer Salovey four branch model of EI.

1. Emotional Perception and Expression - the ability to accurately identify and express feelings

- The ability for self-awareness; to be aware of your own feelings as they are occurring.
- The ability to become emotionally literate.
- The ability to learn to identify and label specific feelings in yourself and others and
- The ability to clearly and directly communicate and discuss these emotions.

2. Use of Emotions - the ability to use your feelings constructively

- The ability to let your feelings guide you to what is important to think about
- The ability to use your feelings to help you make decisions which are healthy for you and the rest of the human species

3. Emotional Understanding - the ability to understand the meanings of emotions and how they can change. This includes the ability to understand...

- The purpose of emotions; understanding their survival value to the species
- The relationships between emotions; how and why they can change from one feeling to another
- The emotions which lead to the behavior in yourself and others
- The relationship between thoughts and feelings
- The causes of emotions and their relationship to our human psychological needs, especially our unmet emotional needs.

4. Emotional Management - the ability to manage emotions for personal and social growth

- The ability to take responsibility for one's own feelings and happiness
- The ability to turn negative emotions into positive learning and growing opportunities
- The ability to help others identify and benefit from their emotions

Mayer, J. D. & Salovey, P. (1997). _ What is emotional intelligence?_ In P. Salovey & D. Sluyter (Eds). _ Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Educators (pp. 3-31). _

Some more simple definitions might be:

Knowing how you and others feel and what to do about it.

Knowing what feels good, what feels bad, and how to get from bad to good.

The emotional awareness, sensitivity and management skills which help us maximize our long term happiness and survival.

EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Emotional literacy is one of the core components of emotional intelligence. Emotional literacy helps us precisely identify and communicate our feelings. Naming them helps us identify our unmet needs; communicating them helps us identify those people who voluntarily assist us in meeting our needs.

The key to emotional literacy is using simple, clear and direct three-word I messages like:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| I feel sad. | I feel motivated. |
| I feel offended. | I feel appreciated. |
| I feel hurt. | I feel disrespected. |

It is important to note that this implies that whenever we say “I feel like...” or “I feel that...” we are not practicing emotional literacy. When we express our feelings by saying “I feel” and then inserting a feeling word, we are communicating very clear and direct “I” messages. On the other hand when we say, “I feel like you are being rude,” we are sending a “you” message in disguise!

Feeling words not only express a feeling, they also express the *intensity* of the feeling. By expressing intensity, they communicate the degree to which our needs are being met and our values and beliefs are being upheld. Accurately capturing the intensity of an emotion is critical to judging the message our feelings are sending. If we either exaggerate or minimize the feeling, we are distorting reality and undermining the effectiveness of our communication.

Non-Violent Communication

Marshall Rosenberg at the Center for Non-Violent Communication (<http://cnvc.org>) travels around the world promoting peace through peaceful communication. The core of his teaching program is the expression of feelings with emotional literacy in exactly the ways described here. According to Rosenberg, the “I feel” statements are the most non-threatening forms of “cooperative, conscious, compassionate” communication.

EMPATHY, COMPASSION, UNDERSTANDING

To show empathy is to identify with another's feelings. It is to emotionally put yourself in the place of another. *The ability to empathize is directly dependent on your ability to experience and identify a wide range of your own feelings.*

If you have never felt a certain feeling, or never labeled it specifically, it will be hard for you to understand how another person is feeling. This holds equally true for pleasure and pain. This is why it is so important that you work on raising your own emotional awareness and sensitivity-- in other words, to be "in touch with" your feelings.

Generally speaking, the more information you have on a subject, the more you understand it. By collecting information about other people's feelings, you get to know them better. This almost always leads to a deeper understanding, which in turn leads to greater compassion.

As you get to know others on an emotional level, you may see how similar their needs and feelings are to yours. Perhaps the differences are just a matter of degree, not of type. This helps you identify with them, relate to them, and thus, empathize with them. Remember that all humans share similar emotional needs. As we get in touch with our own feelings we realize that what doesn't feel good to us also doesn't feel good to others.

As Haim Ginott wrote:

It takes time and wisdom to realize that the personal parallels the universal and what pains one man pains mankind.³

³ Between Parent and Teenager

EQ-BASED LISTENING

It has been said that ninety percent of discipline problems come from children wanting adults to listen to them.⁴ One study reported that the number one request from suicidal teenagers was for adults to listen to them.⁵ The medical power of listening has also been proven by various studies. EQ-based listeners focus on feelings, not "facts".

Clearly, we all feel better when we feel heard. And we feel better when we feel understood. In order to be understood, we must be listened to. Often it is more important to us to feel heard than to actually get what we said we wanted. On the other hand, feeling ignored and misunderstood is literally painful whether we are six or sixty.

As with other emotional needs, the need to be heard is a survival need. We are all interdependent. In other words, many of our basic needs depend on the cooperation of others. But first we must know and communicate our needs. For example, if we are a passenger in a car and we feel unsafe, we must communicate our feelings. If the driver ignores us, our lives may literally be threatened. If we are not heard, we cannot communicate our needs. It is understandable, then, that we feel frustrated or worse when we do not feel heard.

By developing our own listening skills, we can model them to others. They, in turn, will become better listeners and we will more often feel heard, understood and respected. Here are some suggestions for an ideal listening situation.

Listen non-judgmentally

Attempt to identify the underlying feelings

“It sounds like you felt disappointed”

“How did you feel when that happened?”

Listen with empathy; focus on feelings

Show understanding and connection

“I understand”

“I see.”

“I know how you feel.”

“I have felt that way, too.”

Clarify and paraphrase, particularly the feelings

“So, you really felt insulted...?”

Do not judge with your body language or facial expressions

Don't show disapproval

Don't spend your time preparing your response

Don't interrupt, evaluate or jump to conclusions

Use eye contact

⁴ William Glasser as quoted in "The Power of Listening" by Dr. Frank Freshour, p. 14

⁵ Freshour, p. 14

Show interest by nodding, “yeahs, uh huh's”, etc.

Allow long pauses before asking questions; be patient

Give your full attention; stop other tasks

Avoid:

“Scene stealing”

Advising

Interrogating

“Sending solutions”

Correcting

Debating

Remember that listening to either a child, teen or adult helps him/her feel heard, understood, important, valued, respected and cared about.

FEELING LOVED

It is one thing to know someone loves us; it is another to *feel loved*. When we feel loved, we feel safe, supported, understood, accepted, admired, valued, helped, encouraged. In this sense, we may say that love is a secondary emotion.

Defining Love

I agree with Scott Peck who says when we love someone we are concerned with their personal growth, and we put forth an effort toward this end.⁶ He makes the analogy that if we love flowers, we want them to grow and blossom, so we help ensure their natural needs for growth are met. Thus, if we love a person we want to help them meet their natural emotional needs. But as with a flower, we can force neither growth nor conformity to our expectations. When we love someone we want them to be happy. We help them meet their needs, because we know they won't be happy with unmet needs. And we respect and validate their feelings because we know they represent their needs.

Confusion Between Love and Need

It is said that there is a thin line between love and hate, but I disagree. I once had a relationship with an emotionally needy woman who steadfastly professed her love to me. Yet when she felt rejected and abandoned by me, she quickly seemed to literally hate me. She was a very needy person, a child of an alcoholic, and she had become dependent on me to fill her UEN's. When I didn't, she blamed me, expressed her disappointment in me and attempted to "make" me feel guilty. Because she needed me so much, she felt hurt, resentful and vengeful when she realized I couldn't "make" her happy. It was then I realized that when someone becomes dependent on us and we fail to fill their needs, they may blame us, resent us, and even hate us. Thus, the thin line is not between love and hate--it is between *need* and hate.

⁶ Peck calls it "spiritual growth" but I prefer personal growth. See "The Road Less Traveled."

FEELING WORDS

Positive

Accepted
Acknowledged
Admired
Appreciated
Approved of
Calm, Relaxed
Capable, Competent
Cared about
Caring, Empathetic
Clear
Comfortable
Complimented
Confident
Connected
Encouraged
Excited
Focused
Free
Fulfilled
Important
Included
Innocent
Inspired
Interested
Loved, Lovable
Motivated
Optimistic
Patient
Proud
Respected
Responsible
Safe
Secure
Satisfied
Strong, Powerful
Successful
Supported
Trusted
Understood
Valued, Wanted
Worthy
Validated

Negative

Rejected, Judged, Attacked
Unacknowledged, Ignored
Teased, Mocked
Unappreciated, Used, Resented
Disapproved of
Stressed, Anxious, Nervous, Worried, Tense
Incapable, Incompetent
Uncared about, Hurt, Abandoned
Uncaring, Cold, Detached
Confused
Uncomfortable, Awkward
Criticized
Unconfident, Unsure, Scared, Worried
Disconnected, Lonely, Isolated, Alone
Discouraged
Reluctant, Indifferent
Distracted, Overwhelmed, Lost
Controlled, Pressured, Trapped, Obligated
Unfulfilled, Empty, Needy
Unimportant, Neglected
Excluded, Left out
Guilty, Blamed
Uninspired, Drained, Discouraged, Defeated
Uninterested, Bored
Unloved, Unlovable
Unmotivated, Lethargic
Pessimistic, Hopeless
Impatient
Ashamed, Guilty, Embarrassed
Disrespected, Insulted, Offended
Irresponsible
Unsafe, Afraid, Vulnerable
Insecure, Defensive
Unsatisfied
Weak, Powerless
Unsuccessful, Failful
Unsupported
Distrusted, Underestimated
Misunderstood, Labeled
Unvalued, Unwanted
Unworthy, Undeserving, Inadequate

FRIENDSHIPS

All of us need true friends. But what is a true friend, and how do you know when you have found one? We can best answer that question in terms of our feelings. With a true friend you feel:

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Accepted | Listened to |
| Acknowledged | Loved |
| Admired | Recognized |
| Appreciated | Respected |
| Approved of | Safe |
| Cared about | Significant |
| Encouraged | Supported |
| Free | Trusted |
| Heard | Understood |
| Important | Valued |
| Liked | |

(Not coincidentally, these are the basically the exact same feelings children and teens need from their parents.)

When you are emotionally healthy you attract and keep such people because:

- You accept them rather than judge them.
- You express your feelings and encourage them to do likewise.
- You take responsibility for your feelings and never lay guilt trips on them.
- You show empathy, compassion, and understanding for their feelings.
- You are sensitive to their feelings and needs, but you do not let yourself feel responsible for them.
- You recognize that each person is responsible for their own feelings, thus they never feel like a burden.
- You do not blame them or attack them, so they do not need to feel defensive or to counterattack.
- You do not advise them or tell them what to do, since you know that this will foster dependency and, later, resentment.
- You are honest with them, even when what you have to say is unpleasant for them, because (a) You respect them enough to honor them with the truth, (b) You want them to grow through awareness, and (c) You trust them enough to manage their own responses.

A true friend is someone who helps you reach your highest potential, someone who helps you be the best you can be. At the early stages of your friendship a true friend gets to know the real you by frequently asking how you feel about different things. They ask questions like:

What's important to you?
What are your values?
What are your beliefs?
What are your fears?

What are your dreams and desires?
What do you feel strongly about?
What infuriates you?
What excites you?

As the friendship develops, your friend is able to help you find the answers to your important questions in your life. She does this not by advising you, but by asking you the right questions. Perhaps the most important question a friend can ask us is, "How would you feel if you did this versus that?" Our friends serve us best when they help us focus on our feelings. They don't tell us what they would do if they were us, since they know that if they *were* us, they would do exactly what we would do (since they would have our same fears, desires, values, beliefs, needs, etc.). When we are feeling down, a true friend helps us identify our feelings and generate options for feeling better.

A true friend is also honest enough to tell you when you seem to them to be:

- Acting out of character
- Acting out of integrity
- Acting under your potential
- Acting impulsively
- Neglecting your feelings

A friend gives you feedback in an objective, but caring way. She shows concern for you when, for example, you are hurting yourself by being hard on yourself. She expresses her fears, rather than telling you what she thinks you should do.

A friend who is willing to give honest feedback is invaluable, since she will often see things that you do not. We can encourage such honesty by our willingness to listen with an open mind and without feeling defensive. The more secure we are, the easier this is.

Finally, a true friend gives us emotional support, but does not try to fix things for us or do things for us.

HUMAN EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Here are some of the basic human emotional needs expressed as feelings. While all children share these needs, each differs in the strength of the need, just as some children need more water, more food or more sleep. One child may need more freedom and independence, another may need more social connections. One may have a greater curiosity and a greater need for understanding, while another is content to accept whatever is told to him.

One of the major problems in traditional schools is the treatment of all children as if their emotional and psychological needs were identical. The result is many children's needs are unsatisfied. They then become frustrated, as any of us do when our needs are unmet. They act out their frustration in various ways which we perceive to be "misbehavior". This is especially evident when children are expected to all do the same thing for the same length of time. The better we identify their unique needs and satisfy them, the fewer behavioral problems.

In various degrees, each according to his or her own unique nature, the child needs to feel:

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| accepted | satisfied |
| accomplished | secure |
| acknowledged | significant |
| admired | supported |
| alive | treated fairly |
| appreciated | understood |
| approved of | useful |
| capable | valued |
| challenged | worthy |
| clear (not confused) | |
| competent | |
| confident | |
| empowered | |
| focused | |
| free | |
| fulfilled | |
| grown | |
| happy | |
| heard | |
| important | |
| in control | |
| independent | |
| interested | |
| knowledgeable | |
| listened to | |
| loved | |
| needed | |
| noticed | |
| optimistic | |
| powerful | |
| privacy | |
| productive | |
| proud | |
| reassured | |
| recognized | |
| relaxed | |
| respected | |
| safe | |

INVALIDATION

Invalidation is to reject, ignore, mock, tease, judge, or diminish someone's feelings. Invalidation goes beyond mere rejection by implying not only that our *feelings* are disapproved of, but that *we* are fundamentally abnormal. This implies that there is something wrong with us because we aren't like everyone else; we are strange; we are different; we are weird.

None of this feels good, and all of it damages us. The more different one is, for example, more intelligent or more sensitive, the more one is subject to invalidation. When we are invalidated by having our feelings repudiated, we are attacked at the deepest level possible, since our feelings are the innermost expression of our individual identities.

Psychological invalidation is one of the most lethal forms of emotional abuse. It kills confidence, creativity and individuality.

Telling a child she shouldn't feel the way she does feel, is akin to telling water it shouldn't be wet, grass it shouldn't be green, or rocks they shouldn't be hard.⁷ Each person's feelings are real. Whether we like or understand someone's feelings, they are still real.

Rejecting feelings is rejecting reality; it is fighting our most basic instincts and our "truest self." Invalidation has been called a crime against nature, "psychological murder" or "soul murder". Considering that trying to fight feelings, rather than accept them, is trying to fight all of nature, you can see why it is so frustrating, draining and futile.

One of the great leaders in education, Haim Ginott said this:

Primum non nocere- First do no harm. Do not deny your teenager's perception. Do not argue with his experience. Do not disown his feelings.⁸

We regularly invalidate others because we ourselves were, and are often invalidated. Below are a few of the many ways I have seen children invalidated:

- They are told they shouldn't feel the way they do.
- They are told how to feel
- They are told they are too sensitive, too dramatic, too emotional.
- They are ignored when they are most upset and in the most emotional pain.
- They are judged and disapproved of for their feelings.
- They are led to believe there is something wrong with us for feeling how they feel.

Learned Defensiveness and Insecurity

All invalidation is a form of psychological attack. When we are attacked, our survival instinct tells us to either deny, defend ourselves, or counter-attack. Thus when we invalidate children, we are creating insecurity and teaching them to become defensive.

You Can't Heal an Emotional Wound with Logic

I have noticed that people with High IQ's but abnormally developed EI are typically masters at using logic and reason, as they interpret it, to address emotional issues. They may say, "You are not being rational. Let's look at the facts". This approach, however, is a prime example of invalidation. It completely ignores the emotions and their causes. It teaches a person not to feel and suggests one who feels is weak or inferior.

I believe, though, that feelings *are* facts, fleeting though they may be. Trying to dress an emotional wound with logic tends to either confuse, sadden or infuriate people. This is particularly true when logic is used in an attempt to talk a child out of her feelings. But the use of logic serves to slowly isolate or alienate us from our true feelings. So, please keep this in mind:

*You can't solve an emotional problem, or heal an emotional wound, with logic alone.*⁹

* * *

There are many forms of invalidation. Most of them are so insidious that we don't even know what is happening. Just as children know intuitively, we know that *something* doesn't feel good, but we can't put our finger on it. We have been

⁷ Adapted from Abraham Maslow

⁸ *Between Parent and Teenager*

⁹ Adapted from Gary Smalley's work.

conditioned to think that invalidation is "normal." Indeed, it is extremely *common*, but it is certainly not *healthy*.

Here are some more specific invalidating expressions.

Attempts to Talk You Out of Your Feelings or to Order You to Feel Differently

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Smile. | Stop complaining. |
| Be happy. | Don't look so grim. |
| Cheer up. | Put on a happy face. |
| Lighten up. | Don't be so dramatic. |
| Get over it. | Quit your belly-aching. |
| Stop whining. | Don't make such a big deal out of it. |
| Deal with it. | Don't fall all apart. |
| Enough already. | Don't get hysterical. |
| Give it a rest. | Don't worry so much. |
| Forget about it. | |

Minimizing Your Feelings

I was only kidding.
It wasn't as bad as all that.
You must be kidding.
You can't be serious.
There is no reason to get upset.
You are making a big deal out of nothing.
You are blowing this way out of proportion.
You are making a mountain out of a molehill.
It really wasn't as bad as you are making it sound.

Judging & Labeling You

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| You are a cry baby. | You are way too emotional. |
| You have a problem. | You are an insensitive jerk. |
| You are too sensitive. | You are totally out of control. |
| You are over-reacting. | You need to get your head examined! |
| You are too thin-skinned. | |

Turning Things Around

What is your problem?
What's wrong with you?
What's the matter with you?
Why can't you just get over it?
Why do you always have to?
Is that all you can do, complain?
Why are you making such a big deal over it?
What's wrong with you, can't you take a joke?
How can you let a little thing like that bother you?

Telling You How You "Should" Feel or Act

You should be excited.
You should be thrilled.
You should feel guilty.
You should feel thankful that...
You should be happy that
You should be glad that ...
You should just drop it.
You shouldn't worry so much.
You shouldn't let it bother you.
You should just forget about it.
You should feel ashamed of yourself.
You shouldn't wear your heart out on your sleeve.

Defending The Other Person

Maybe they were just having a bad day.
I am sure she didn't mean it like that. You just took it wrong.

Sarcasm and Mocking

Oh, you poor thing. Did I hurt your little feelings?
What's wrong did someone pull your strings? Turn around, let me see those strings.
What did you think? The world was created to serve you?
What happened to you? Did you get out of the wrong side of bed again?

Laying Guilt Trips

Don't you ever think of anyone but yourself?
Have you ever stopped to consider my feelings?

Philosophizing Or Clichés

Time heals all wounds.
Every cloud has a silver lining.
Life is full of pain and pleasure. In time you will understand this.
Everything has its reasons.
Everything is just the way it is supposed to be.

Even when we are happy, unhappy people want to ruin it for us by saying diminishing things like:

Settle down.”
What are you so excited about?
It doesn't take much to amuse you does it?

Summary of Invalidation

When your awareness rises, you'll notice such comments day in and day out. Such comments take their toll on us even as adults, but for children the effects are many times worse since their brains are still forming connections. Anyone who is repeatedly invalidated becomes confused and begins to wonder if there is something wrong with them. Over time one may begin to distrust mankind's greatest asset: his own brain.¹⁰

I am convinced that with enough invalidation, one person can figuratively, if not literally, drive another person crazy. This is especially possible, I believe in the case where one person has long-term power over another, such as in the parent-child relationship, and even more likely when the person being invalidated is highly sensitive and intelligent.¹¹

The more sensitive the child, the more serious the damage of invalidation. Invalidation undermines self-confidence because it causes self-doubt. This, in turn, diminishes our self-esteem. Invalidation is a serious violation of our true selves. I believe it is one of the worst crimes one person can commit against another without ever lifting a finger against them-- yet it is neither illegal nor even identified as a serious problem.

See <http://core.eqi.org/invalid.htm> for more on invalidation

¹⁰ Nathaniel Branden lucidly addresses this in his work on self-esteem.

¹¹ Sensitive children are hurt more by invalidation, and intelligent children begin to make up complicated and unrealistic scenarios to give their world meaning when their environment makes no sense to them. The more intelligent they are, the more they are capable of removing themselves from reality, and the more facts and "logical" arguments they can develop to support their case, yet they may appear "crazy" to nearly everyone else.

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Our negative feelings are indications that something is wrong. One motivational writer calls our negative feelings a *call to action*. Clearly, our bodies are communicating with us, beckoning us to take some corrective action.

Unmet Emotional Needs (UEN's)

When we have a negative feeling, some psychological need is not being met. For example, if a person feels rejected, they have an unmet need to feel accepted. If a person is lonely, they have an unmet need for connection. All negative feelings, then, represent [unmet emotional needs](#), or “UEN's”. Looking at negative feelings as UEN's helps us learn about our emotional needs and helps us find a positive value from what we often call negative feelings.

Getting a Positive Value Out of Negative Emotions

When we become aware of our negative feelings, we can identify the UEN's. This helps us find a constructive, appropriate, healthy way to fill our unmet need. By doing this we are developing self-reliance and personal responsibility.

When we look at our negative feelings as a signal that we need to take some positive action to fill an unmet need, we are able to get a positive value out of each so-called negative emotion. When we begin to believe in this principle, our negative feelings won't feel as frightening or overwhelming.

We simply engage our upper brain toward the task of finding a solution which will help us feel better. This is an important psychological shift and the brain responds by reducing its production of unhealthy stress-related chemicals. The sooner we begin the process of getting a positive value from our negative emotions, the sooner we are able to restore our bodies to a state of healthy equilibrium.

See <http://core.eqi.org/cnfs.htm> for a list of common negative feelings.

RESPECT

Every human needs to feel respected, even the least powerful. (We might say, especially the least powerful.)

Showing and Earning Respect

Respect is like a boomerang. You must send it out before it will come back to you. Respect cannot be demanded or forced; it must be earned. Since the way to earn respect is to show respect, let's see how that is done.

Respecting someone means respecting their feelings and their survival needs. If a person does not respect your feelings, they don't respect you. If those in positions of power and authority do not respect your needs and feelings, they will not earn your respect. Respecting someone's feelings consists of:

- (a) asking them how they feel,
- (b) validating their feelings,
- (c) empathizing with them,
- (d) seeking understanding of their feelings
- (e) taking their feelings into consideration.

Here are some other specific ways to show respect:

- Asking others "How would you feel if..." before making a decision which affects them
- *Voluntarily* making changes and compromises to accommodate their feelings, desires and needs
- Solicit and allow feedback
- Try to understand their beliefs, values and needs
- Give them the opportunity to solve their own problems without underestimating them, in particular:
 - Avoid interrupting them
 - Avoid telling them what to do
 - Avoid telling them what they "need" to or "should" do
 - Avoid giving them unsolicited advice, sermons and lectures

Measuring Respect

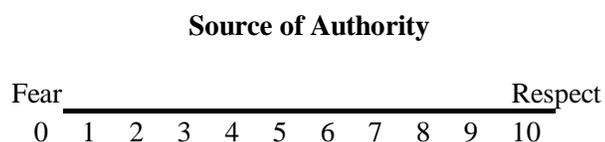
A simple way to measure respect is to ask someone this question: On a scale of 0-10, how much do you feel respected by ____? Such a clear, direct question has provided me with invaluable information since I started asking it several years ago.

If people feel safe around you, you are likely to get an honest answer when you ask them how much they feel respected. Then if it is lower than 10, you can ask "What would help you feel more respected?" I have found that most people are more than willing to express themselves when asked such a question. And the answers are typically articulate and often surprising.

Respect is too important to go unmeasured in society. We scrupulously track far, far less important numbers.

Authority, Fear and Respect

Authority has two basic sources: fear and respect. On the continuum below, we can see that the total source of a person's authority is equal to the combination of how much they are feared plus how much they are respected.



Fear + Respect = Total Source of Authority

For example, in a dysfunctional family a child might fear their parents 8 and respect them 2, for a total of 10. In a healthier family the authority base might be more like Fear 1, Respect 9, again for a total of 10.

Those in positions of authority often expect, and try to demand, that those beneath them show respect. But if they have not first *earned* respect by *showing* it (which is done by respecting the other person's feelings and needs), they may find that their power is actually based on fear. Once a person no longer fears such an authority figure (AF), then the AF's power base quickly disappears out from under them, often leaving them feeling frustrated, resentful, powerless and confused.

Confusion Between Respect and Fear

A New York City gang member was asked why he carried a gun. He replied: "Before I had this gun, I didn't get no respect. Now I do". Similarly, teachers, parents and other authority figures often believe that if a child *obeys* them, or says "Yes, Sir/No, Sir", it means the child respects them. Several older teachers have told me they felt more respected when there was more "discipline" in the classrooms. When I probed deeper, they all made it clear that they were talking about a time when there was more use of corporal punishment in school, and thus more fear of physical pain for disobedience.

There is a grave danger in mislabeling fear as respect. To use an analogy, consider what would happen if two jars in the medicine cabinet were mislabeled. What if poison ivy lotion were labeled as cough syrup, or chlorine as contact lens cleaner?

Fear is toxic; respect is nurturing. Fear destroys self-confidence; respect builds it. Fear is life-threatening; respect is life-enhancing. Furthermore, respect is earned, and then given voluntarily; fear is forced.

To confuse the two has devastating consequences for society.

* * *

Respect may be the cornerstone of emotionally intelligent relationships. And mutual respect seems to me to be the only way humans can peacefully coexist on this planet.

See <http://core.eqi.org/respect.htm> for more

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

If emotional intelligence is needed anywhere in our lives, it is in our intimate romantic relationships. We all yearn to be totally accepted just as we are. We long to be accepted and loved even when we are angry, sad, jealous, hurt or depressed. In fact, when we have the most intense negative feelings, it is simply an indication that we are most in need. These are the times we most need to be accepted. Healthy intimacy is the state of such total acceptance.

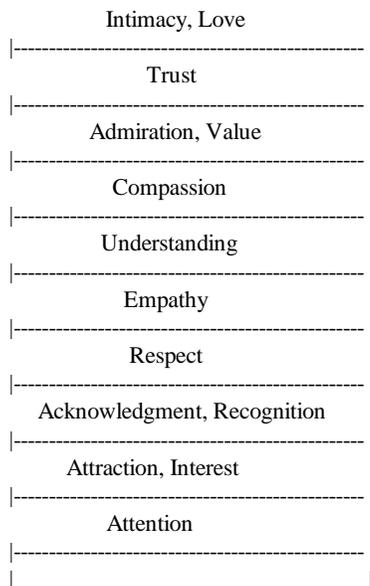
Healthy intimacy means sharing your innermost self, in other words, your deepest fears and desires. To do this you must know what you feel and know how to express it. Intimacy is unhealthy if intense feelings are expressed in acts of jealousy, anger, violence, and loveless sex. There is no safety in such a relationship, so true feelings will eventually either get buried or find expression indirectly through actions and reactions.

The ultimate in total acceptance is healthy sexual intimacy. In healthy relationships, sex follows emotional intimacy rather than the other way around. When there is sex without emotional intimacy we are generally using it as a substitute for the emotional acceptance and nurturing we need. And because no amount of a physical substitute can fill a psychological deficiency need, one can never get enough to be truly fulfilled.

Reaching the pinnacle of total acceptance in a psychologically healthy way seems to be a prerequisite to climbing the “ladder of love”. As we climb this ladder we move through various emotions, each building upon the others before it. As we get “higher” we also become more vulnerable as the risks get greater.

At the early stages we must cover these steps, starting with noticing someone. We then pay some attention to them, are attracted to them and get interested in them.

Next we might seek to understand them, and as we do so we empathize with them and have compassion for them. As we get to know them we might begin to admire them, respect them and support them. We begin to value and appreciate them more and more. At the same time we are building trust. It is under these conditions that healthy emotional intimacy and love can flourish. So we have something like this



As one who often tried to skip steps and climb a bit too quickly, I can attest that such tendencies often put one to risk, just as with an actual ladder. In relationships, however, we risk hurting not only ourselves, but others as well.

EQ helps us climb the rungs of this ladder. A touch of EQ can literally mean the difference between separation and togetherness, compassion and conflict, and love and hate. After propagation of species, the primary value of intimacy is emotional support. But there can be no intimacy and no support without at least some basic understanding of emotions and emotional needs.

There is little better than being fully supported and understood by someone who is important to you. And there is little worse than being misunderstood, unsupported and in constant conflict. Things that others say or do have more emotional intensity when coming from our partners. This is because we both value them and need them more.

One of the best things you can do for your relationship is work on taking responsibility for your own feelings. This means not blaming your partner for your feelings or expecting (or demanding) that they “make” you happy.

Author Ken Keyes suggests, by the way, that we change our demands into preferences. When I have done this in my own life, I find that it has made a significant psychological difference. I feel less “stuck” on things, less needy and I am not nearly as bothered when I don’t get my way. When I try to stay relatively happy regardless of what my partner does, things seem to work better.

In trying to improve your relationship, focus on helping your partner feel:

- Admired
- Appreciated
- Competent
- Heard
- Important
- Respected
- Safe
- Special
- Supported
- Understood
- Valued

Frequently ask them how they feel on the 0-10 scale. Decide what your goal is and if their numbers fall short, ask them what would help them feel better. Don't, however, fall into the trap of feeling responsible for their feelings. There must be a healthy balance between your needs/feelings and theirs. Your feelings will be your guide, so don't neglect to monitor your own feelings as you help your partner fill their UEN's..

Ingredients of a healthy relationship include:

- Compassion
- Empathy
- Understanding
- Trust
- Clear boundaries (which your feelings help you set)
- Voluntary action (vs. coercion, manipulation, pressure, etc)
- Self-knowledge and self-awareness
- Emotional literacy & clear and direct communication

Here are some more suggestions for maximizing intimacy and reducing conflict.

- Show respect for your partner's feelings
- Never invalidate or judge their feelings
- Remember that feelings are not debatable
- Share your honest feelings. Take risks. It is better to find out sooner, rather than later, if your partner accepts them.
- During arguments, remember to talk about feelings. Have the composure to stop and ask each other about your feelings right in the middle of a heated disagreement.
- Seek to understand your partner's feelings, rather than to win arguments.

Be on guard against these "relationship-wrecking feelings". Check to see if these apply to either you or your partner:

Relationship-Wrecking Feelings

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Abandoned | Guilty | Superior |
| Accused, Attacked | Inadequate, Inferior | Taken for granted |
| Afraid | Jealous | Threatened |
| Analyzed | Judged | Trapped |
| Bitter | Manipulated | Unappreciated |
| Blamed | Misunderstood | Underestimated |
| Coerced, Controlled | Mocked | Unheard |
| Criticized | Obligated, Pressured | Unimportant |
| Defensive | Rejected | Unsupported |
| Disrespected | Resentful | |
| Distrusted | Responsible for other's feelings | |

Other pitfalls to avoid are:

- Black and white, all or nothing thinking
- Labeling each other
- Sarcasm
- Withdrawal
- Fear

If you care about someone, you care about their feelings, needs and happiness. You can't "make" someone happy, but by giving consideration to their feelings you at least have a chance of helping them be happier.

Empathy and Defensiveness

Something I have noticed in my own life is that I find it impossible to feel empathetic and defensive at the same time-- Defensiveness always pushes out empathy. Thus, if I feel blamed, criticized or attacked, all of which help me feel defensive, it is virtually impossible for me to focus on the other person's feelings. The more secure I feel about myself, the less often I get defensive, but when I do get defensive it makes problem solving many times more difficult. This realization convinces me of the need for each person to take responsibility for their own emotions and to use non-threatening, non-attacking communication.

SIGNS OF HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

These are generalizations, but are helpful as guidelines.

Healthy Emotional Development

This person:

- Expresses his feelings clearly and directly with three word sentences beginning with “I feel...”
- Is able to read non-verbal communication.
- Considers his feelings in making decisions, balancing them with reason, logic and reality.
- Considers others’ feelings in making decisions.
- Tends to be realistically optimistic & emotionally resilient; does not internalize failure.
- Shows empathy; is able to listen for, hear and validate feelings when communicating.
- Feels strongly about things that really matter for survival and happiness

Unhealthy Emotional Development

A person whose emotional development has been damaged often....

- Makes judgments and labels people and situations rather than his feelings.
- Attacks, blames, commands, criticizes, interrupts, invalidates, lectures.
- Exaggerates, minimizes, avoids, or lies about his feelings.
- Shows no empathy or compassion; uses fear, force and threats to resolve conflicts.
- Acts out his feelings, rather than talking them out.
- Does not consider his or others’ feelings in making decisions.
- Feels strongly about things that don’t really matter for survival or happiness

VALIDATION

To validate someone is to accept, understand and nurture their feelings. To validate is to acknowledge and accept one's unique identity and individuality. When we validate someone, we allow them to safely share their feelings and thoughts. We are reassuring them that it is okay to have the feelings they have. Sometimes validation entails listening, sometimes it can be a hug or a gentle touch. A few keys to validation are:

- Acknowledging the other person's feelings
- Identifying the feelings
- Offering to listen
- Helping them label the feelings
- Being there for them; remaining present
- Being patient
- Being accepting and non-judgmental

Here are some examples of validating comments:

I can see that you are really upset.
That must have been frustrating.
I can understand why you feel sad.
You seem a little worried, troubled, scared, etc.
That really bothered you, didn't it?

Here are a few questions which help the person release their feelings.

What bothers you the most about it?
How strongly are you feeling that (on a scale of 0-10)?
How come? How so? How's that?
It sounds like you are really feeling _____. Is that it?
What else bothered you_____?

By validating someone we demonstrate that we care and that their feelings matter to us. Validation allows a person to release their feelings in a healthy, safe and supportive way. It also helps us get to know them better and helps build bonds.

APPENDIX A- MORE FEELING WORDS

(See Feeling Words Section for Basics)

Intermediate List

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Abandoned | Guilty | Superior |
| Accused, Attacked | Inadequate, Inferior | Taken for granted |
| Afraid | Jealous | Threatened |
| Analyzed | Judged | Trapped |
| Bitter | Manipulated | Unappreciated |
| Blamed | Misunderstood | Underestimated |
| Coerced, Controlled | Mocked | Unheard |
| Criticized | Obligated, Pressured | Unimportant |
| Defensive | Overly Responsible | Unsupported |
| Disrespected | Rejected | |
| Distrusted | Resentful | |

More Advanced

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| abnormal | confined | graded | submissive |
| absorbed | conquered | grossed-out | superb |
| abused | considerate | handicapped | superior |
| accommodated | consistent | heartbroken | suspicious |
| accomplished | constructive | hindered | sympathetic |
| accountable | contempt | horrified | tender |
| acknowledged | cornered | hypocritical | tolerant |
| adrift | cowardly | idealistic | touched |
| advanced | crazy | impressed | treasured |
| aggravated | cross | impulsive | unintelligent |
| aggressive | cruel | in the way | unnecessary |
| agitated | deceitful | incredulous | uptight |
| agonized | dedicated | independent | useless |
| alarmed | defeated | indulgent | warm-hearted |
| alert | defenseless | innovative | weary |
| alienated | demanding | insensitive | wild |
| amiable | dependent | insignificant | withdrawn |
| anguish | depressed | irritated | zealous |
| antagonistic | deprived | jealous | |
| anticipation | desirable | joyful | |
| anxiety | desperate | kidded | |
| apathetic | despised | knowledgeable | |
| appealing | devious | legitimate | |
| applauded | devoted | lucky | |
| appreciative | difficult | mischievous | |
| argumentative | disbelieved | miserable | |
| artful | discontent | nauseated | |
| artificial | discredited | negative | |
| artistic | disgraced | phony | |
| at home | disgusted | pleased | |
| avoided | dishonest | positive | |
| awkward | dismayed | powerful | |
| beaten down | disregarded | puzzled | |
| belittled | disrespected | reassured | |
| belligerent | disruptive | rebuked | |
| betrayed | dissatisfied | recognized | |
| bewildered | distracted | regret | |
| bitter | distressed | reliable | |
| blown away | disturbed | remorse | |
| brutal | doubtful | ridiculed | |
| careless | engrossed | rotten | |
| categorized | enraged | rushed | |
| cautious | envious | scolded | |
| certain | esteemed | self-confident | |
| charitable | excellent | self-reliant | |
| clean | exhausted | sensitive | |
| close | exhilarated | serious | |
| coerced | expectant | shocked | |
| combative | fake | significant | |
| committed | fearless | skilled | |
| compliant | forgotten | small | |
| composed | frantic | social | |
| conceited | fulfilled | soft-hearted | |
| condemned | generous | spiteful | |

APPENDIX C - RIGHTS VS. NEEDS APPENDIX C - RIGHTS VS. NEEDS

All humans have unique natural needs. Though all humans have *similar* needs, we each have *different* needs. Just as I may need more water than you, I may also need more knowledge to satisfy my thirst for understanding and comprehension. I may need more freedom, you may need more security. Thus, while we have similar types of needs, the degrees of our needs varies greatly, especially with our emotional needs.

There is a problem, then, with the idea that all humans have equal rights. The problem is this: What happens when my needs and yours differ, yet we are told we have equal rights. Another problem is: What happens when my rights and my needs conflict? What if, for example, I need information, but someone tells me I have no right to it? Who decides what I need? Who decides what I have a right to? Who is responsible for seeing to it that my rights are met? Who is responsible for meeting my needs? Who decides what society needs? Who decides what it has a right to? How are these decisions made? My belief is that our bodies are the best judges of what we need at any given moment, and our feelings give us the best idea of what we need. Thus, I believe our needs to be more basic to us than our “rights”.

All our “rights” can ultimately be taken away from us by someone who has power over us. But our needs cannot be taken from us. Consider the “inalienable” rights which presumably underlie the entire American government: the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. Each of these can be taken from us in a few seconds by someone who puts us in handcuffs or locks us in a jail, or even by a parent who forces a teenager to get off the phone when the teen needs to talk to someone who will listen. The root of unhappiness and social conflict is unmet needs, including emotional needs. I suggest, then that we begin talking more about human *needs* and less about human rights.

Thank you for your interest in my work! Please check the eqi.org site for the latest items.

Steve Hein