



*REACHING YOUR POTENTIAL*

## **“The Emotionally Intelligent Leader”**

By Dr. Reggie Thomas, President

What do you think is the most important characteristic of leadership, second to character and credibility? I believe it is possessing relational competency. Dr. Daniel Goleman is the leading expert in the field of emotional intelligence and he contends that only 25% of our success as a leader has to do with our IQ. He further asserts that 75% of our success has to do with how well we manage our relationships.

Emotional intelligence has four components of competence. They are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. As a leader, one has to navigate through the complex issues of working with people. Relationship management is a key characteristic of succeeding as a leader. This is important because as leader, one has to collaborate with people, manage conflict, deal with difficult people, and navigate through diversity, which includes personality differences and varying opinions. The leader has to skillfully handle people. This means that he/she has to control his/her emotions, and not be governed by others' emotional reactions.

Managing relationships is the most visible tool in leadership because it involves persuasion, conflict management, and collaboration with others. Working with people can be tricky because people are “emotional” beings, and can be sensitive, and in some cases difficult. The leader must learn skills for managing the complexities of relationships. Relating to others in an emotionally intelligent manner is not acting disingenuously or manipulatively. Goleman believes that emotionally intelligent leaders lead out of authenticity by acting from their genuine feelings. Managing relationships is not about being friendly, although warmth and friendliness are essential to excelling in relationship management. Relationship management is friendliness with a purpose. That means that leaders must influence people and move them in the right direction. Emotional intelligence is the key to inspiring others, developing people, leading change, managing conflict, and promoting teamwork and collaboration. To excel at these, the leader must be in control of his/her own emotions and serve as a guide in highly charged emotional situations.

Leaders often allow their emotions to hijack them. Emotional hijacking occurs when the leader allows emotions to overwhelm them in the heat of the moment. It is important to learn the skill of not reacting to emotionally charged situations. Instead it is imperative to pause, reflect, and evaluate how to properly respond to people in a rational manner.

When a leader loses his/her cool, that means the emotional brain hijacks the rational brain; thus causing the leader to respond in an inappropriate way. When the leader is emotionally hijacked, he essentially is hijacking his credibility and influence. So if credibility is the most important characteristic of leadership, then leaders must conduct themselves in a way that will not hijack their credibility and leadership influence.