

Book review

The Brain and Emotional Intelligence

New insights

Category: Book Reviews / Non-fiction

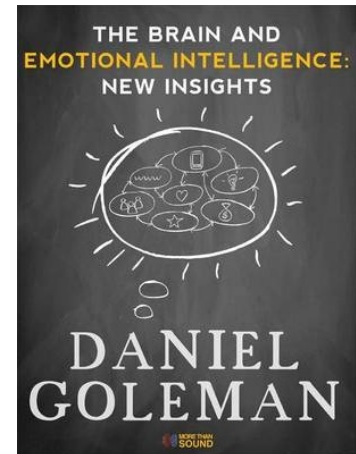
Author: Daniel Goleman

Year: 2011

Publisher: More Than Sound, UK

Audience: For Mental Health Workforce

Summary: A concise overview of the concept of emotional intelligence



The Brain and Emotional Intelligence is a concise overview of the concept of emotional intelligence for the novice, and a boon for the time- or attention-challenged. At less than 80 pages, it's a zippy read yet rich in scope, discussing emotional intelligence versus IQ, creativity, self-awareness and mastery, motivation, stress, how to achieve optimal performance and more.

Daniel Goleman has written several longer books (which I've not read) on emotional intelligence. Goleman's introduction suggests that this short volume is intended as an update to accommodate new research, but not an exhaustive review: "this is a work in progress that focuses on actionable findings, on new insights you can use". In some ways it reads like a blog. Research findings and technical diagrams are interspersed with chatty anecdotes and suggestions for practical application.

A bit choppy and jumpy

However at times its brevity, teamed with its ambitious scope, makes for choppy jumps in tone and topic. It can be unclear who the intended audience is: students, teachers, managers, coaches, the science-curious lay reader? After a little digging, it appears that this was, at least in the original digital-only edition, indeed an anthology of selected essays, which accounts for some of the unevenness.

That said, I found many enlightening points to ponder, for example the links between creativity and relaxation (bearing out the value of a long-held habit – a walk around the block when blocked) and the negativity bias of email. Emoticons are my new best friends!

I would recommend this as a reasonably easy toe-dip for anyone interested in learning about the underlying mechanisms of emotions, or to those seeking a brief but thorough introduction to the field of affective neuroscience.

Reviewed by Amy MacKinnon, graphic designer at the Mental Health Foundation

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