

7 Secrets Of Emotional Intelligence

Brian Whetten, Ph.D., M.A.

The Roots of Our Problems

In our life and in our work, we all have a number of unresolved issues. These cut in to our happiness and success, and often lead to painful mistakes that cost us tremendous time, money, and energy. Think about your work for a minute. What – or perhaps **who** – are the biggest challenges you face? What are some of the tactics you have tried so far to fix them? Do these issues seem stupid sometimes? Well, they are – not because the people involved are stupid – but because the core of these issues is usually emotional in nature, and can't just be solved in our heads. People seem irrational sometimes because the roots of our issues **aren't** rational.



The simple truth is this: **at their core, most unresolved issues are not intellectual or ideological, but emotional in nature.** And while we receive many years of schooling for our minds, very few of us are ever given classes on how to work with our emotions, and the emotions of others.

Emotional “blind spots” are often the most prevalent – and most crippling – at the top of the company. An example of this comes from a friend who recently left his position as an executive of a company that appeared to be failing. Accurately sensing the emotional challenges at the top, the CEO ordered 360 degree evaluations for everyone – but then didn't participate! In my own career as an entrepreneur and executive, my biggest challenges and weaknesses have been due to a lack of emotional rather than cognitive intelligence.

The Power Of Emotional Intelligence

In Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Goleman helped redefine what it means to be smart. He asserted that EQ (a combination of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and interpersonal skills) is more important than IQ in corporate success — and subsequent research backs this up. In Developing Management Skills, David Whetten and Kim Cameron summarize this research.

Increasing your Emotional Intelligence is one of the fastest ways to get more of whatever you most want out of life.

"A study of UC Berkeley Ph.D.'s over 40 years found that EQ was four times more powerful than IQ in predicting who achieved success in their field – even for hard

scientists. A McBer study comparing outstanding managers with average managers found that 90 percent of the difference was accounted for by EQ. In a worldwide study of what companies were looking for in hiring new employees, 67 percent of the most desired attributes were EQ competencies. In a study of highly emotional intelligent partners in a consulting firm ... the high EQ partners contributed more than twice as much revenue to the company as did the low EQ partners."

Unlike IQ, EQ can be developed and improved over time; it is largely a learned set of competencies. Most executives and entrepreneurs learn it the hard way, by racking up "gray hair" through surviving painful failures and stressful conflicts. While I originally started a company to get rich and prove my self-importance, once I strapped myself in for the drunken rocket ship ride that unavoidably followed after my first round of investment, the real value came from the blast furnace flames that burned off so many of the layers of my self-deception. I remember one venture capitalist saying that "*entrepreneurs are like fighter pilots — you have to be willing to let them crash multi-million dollar vehicles in order to train them.*"



While million dollar mistakes are certainly powerful learning tools — and I am humbly grateful to the investors who let me make all of mine — they aren't necessarily the most efficient or joyful way to go about it. Coaching provides a faster, more efficient, and much less painful path to developing EQ, and the success and fulfillment that naturally flow from it.

This paper summarizes **Seven Secrets Of Emotional Intelligence** that you can use to catapult your EQ forward. I suggest that you treat this document more like a buffet than like a 7-course meal. Read through it lightly, feeling for what resonates with you, what whets your appetite – what might be valuable in a current challenge you are facing. Then take one or two particularly tasty chunks, and think about how you could digest them, and apply them to your life. For most of us, we could easily spend years trying to fully learn and integrate these “secrets” – so don't worry! There's no need for indigestion – just enjoy the spread, try the different ideas on, and if something works for you, it's yours to keep!

Secret 1: It's Not About You

It's a **fact** of life that we often get hurt or upset over things that others do to us. It's a great emotional **secret** of life that **nothing they do really has anything to do with us**. When something goes wrong, we naturally cast ourselves as the victim, and feel that people are out to get us. We do this because it is one of the easiest and most socially acceptable ways of meeting our core needs. We get to feel important, righteously indignant, and morally superior. We get to be right. We naturally assume that because **we** are the most important person in our life, they must be supremely concerned with us as well. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

Like many, I was desperately insecure as a teenager. I was what could politely be called a “late bloomer” socially – my varsity letter was in chess, and I was the one the chess team made fun of. I was also very sensitive emotionally, and so I got hurt – often and badly – by the regular teasing I endured, particularly from those that I called my friends. I took each insult personally, thinking there must be something wrong with me, and that no one liked me. What I didn’t realize until much later was that it wasn’t that they didn’t like me, but that they didn’t like **themselves!** We were **all** insecure, and we vented that insecurity on each other, by putting others down and trying to make ourselves seem superior. And that was OK – its all part of growing up.

For me, the one thing my battered self-esteem had to cling to was my freakish intelligence, and so I was constantly finding ways of not-so-subtly pointing out how smart I was; how I had skipped a grade; how I was going to a gifted high school; how I was already in calculus – anything to make me seem superior and prop up my self-worth. What it took me a long time to realize was that this then triggered my friends’ insecurities; which would cause them to find ways to try and put me down; which would trigger my insecurities; which would cause me to brag more about my intelligence – in a painful death spiral of mutual insecurities, we were locked in a race towards the depths of high school hell. This was a great example of a universal pattern – when our pre-existing wounds and insecurities get triggered, we naturally look around us for the perpetrator, and lash out in seeming self-defense.

I say **seeming** self-defense, because there is a deeper truth here. For what it took even longer for me to figure out was that their insecurities had nothing to do with me. When I was bragging about my intelligence to my friends, I wasn’t trying to make them feel bad – I was just trying to stench the profuse bleeding gushing out of the gaping wounds in my self-esteem. Similarly, I can now finally see that when they were teasing me, they weren’t trying to hurt me – they were just trying to make themselves feel better. What

***“Don’t Take Anything Personally.
Nothing others do is because of you.
What others say and do is a projection of
their own reality; their own dream.
When you are immune to the opinions
and actions of others, you won’t be the
victim of needless suffering.”***

- Don Miguel Ruiz
The Four Agreements

made things particularly painful for us was that we all had the same issue – insecurity – and so we kept projecting our insecurity on others (“*they don’t like me*”) and triggering each other’s issues (“*I’m not good enough*”) – which then got projected right back, in a self-reinforcing negative loop. If you are in a relationship where you are getting the message that you aren’t liked, that you aren’t good enough, or that you aren’t smart enough, that person is projecting their issues on to you – and you may be locked in a *projection cycle*, where you are also projecting your issues on them. These cycles are also known as “*intimate relationships*”.

The blunt truth is that every time someone gets angry at us, judges us, gets jealous of us, lashes out at us, or rejects us – at the emotional level, it usually has **nothing** to do with us. We are simply acting as the projection screen for their personal issues. Now, let’s look at how this works from a more technical perspective. One of the most fundamental psychological mechanisms we all have is called *projection* – and here is a brief summary of how it works. We all have an overpoweringly strong need to feel good about ourselves, and most of the things that we don’t like about ourselves we tend to *repress*, and push down in to our *unconscious*. They become part of our *shadow* – the pieces of ourselves that we refuse to look at – and in fact, quickly become *unable* to look at. They are aspects of ourselves that without EQ training, we literally cannot see. However, the emotional energy of these repressed pieces remains inside of us, and is constantly trying to come out. Like a young child locked in a dark closet, our shadow desperately wants to come out and be seen, to come out and be accepted – to come out and be loved. If it can’t come out consciously, then it comes out unconsciously, as what we *project* on to others. The snobbish beauty queen who tries to make herself seem superior is always scared of her own feelings of inferiority. The fundamentalist preacher who gets upset and pounds the pulpit about sinful sexuality is always locked in a battle with his own repressed urges. The boss who micromanages your every move is always terrified of losing self-control. Do you remember the childhood taunt, “*I’m rubber, and you’re glue; whatever you say bounces off of me and sticks to you*”? Out of the mouths of babes...

The opportunity here is to practice compassion. When we truly begin to see how upset and anger work, this world begins to look like a mirrored fun-house, where everyone is stumbling around, lashing out at distorted reflections of their own issues. Underneath anger is always hurt, and underneath hurt is always love. We can only be upset about something we care about, and every violent outburst is really a desperate cry of pain.

“If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man’s life, sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.”

- Henry Wardsworth Longfellow

Secret 2: Everyone Is Doing The Best They Know How

This brings us to the second secret of emotional intelligence – *emotional acceptance*. We oh-so-easily get upset at many things around us, nursing our righteous anger, and blaming others for our pain. However, when we do so, who gets hurt? The truth is that when we blame others, it’s like drinking poison, and expecting the other person to die. While blame allows us to feel right and superior, when we’re stuck on our position, this is as good as it gets, and we pay a great price for this self-righteousness, because **blame always causes us pain**.

Furthermore, when we turn this blame on ourselves (as we so often do) it’s even clearer that we’re the ones who feel the pain. Now, guilt is a powerful tool that allows societies to control

our most animal instincts, and developing a strong sense of right and wrong is a critical developmental task of adolescence. However, while guilt can **control** our “bad” behaviors, it can never **eliminate** the roots beneath them.

Remember my desperate high school insecurity? Well, my senior year I had a “Scarlet O’Hara moment”, declaring inside myself, at the top of my lungs, “*I will never be insecure again!*” I settled in to a canary yellow beanbag in our playroom, picked up a maroon, spiral-bound notebook, and made a list of all the things that I needed to change or accomplish in order to beat my insecurity, and feel good about myself. Education, money, sports, dancing, appearance, friends, beautiful women – I created a battle plan, and spent the next 15 years in mortal combat with my fears and self-judgments. This was an extremely important phase of my development, and one of my favorite compliments is the befuddled looks I get on the rare occasions when I meet up again with someone who knew me in high school or college (“*YOU are Brian Whetten?!??*”) At the same time, while I subdued my insecurities, and was able to herd them in to a cage, they were still there – and my biggest emotional crisis came when our company went public in 2000, just before my 30th birthday, and I finished checking off the last item in my list. I had climbed so far and so fast up the ladder of achievement that smoke was pouring from my adrenal glands, but when I finally paused for a minute to rest, all of my repressed fears came right back to the surface – along with compound interest.

For, **what we resist, persists**. Always. The more that we try to punish or get rid of a piece of ourselves, the more deeply it gets repressed. The more deeply repressed a piece gets, the more energy it has, and the larger the conflict becomes between the angel on one shoulder, and the demon on the other.

For the great truth is that **everyone is doing the best they know how** – and every piece of us is doing the best it knows how. Deep down, we all want the same things. We want security and variety in our lives. We want to be accepted by others, and to feel significant. We want to grow, and to make a difference. We want to love and to be loved. What keeps us from feeling love is our perception of conflict and separation – the battles we fight with those around us, and more importantly, the battles we fight within ourselves.

“Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.”

- Buddha

To get the love we most want, we have to learn to love ourselves. And to love ourselves, we have to stop running from our shadow, call a truce in our internal wars, and stop projecting those conflicts on to others. We have to learn to accept and love **all** of the pieces and voices inside of us. All of them. A big piece of true emotional mastery is being able to love our demons as much

as our angels, our darkness as much as our light, and our pain and fear as much as our joy and freedom. Simple...but not easy.

Secret 3: Discipline is Freedom

As any wise parent knows, if you give a child everything they ask for, you spoil them – literally, as in a piece of food that has gone bad. One of my dearest friends aches over the way his niece is being raised by her single mother. While having all the best intentions, the mother has little sense of discipline, either for herself or for her child. If the child doesn't want to get up in the morning, the mother may try to cajole her, or may just give up and let her sleep. If the daughter wants to eat sugar cereal instead of the eggs the mother has prepared, she may get mad at the child, or just give in. My friend calls it “*watching a train wreck in slow motion.*”



For the truth is that **discipline is one half of love**. When we think of love, we tend to think of “*turn the other cheek*”, our dream of finding someone who will completely accept us, or the image of a mother’s unconditional love for her child. Acceptance is the first half of love – the feminine side, if you will – and the other, more masculine half is discipline. Not discipline as in punishment, but discipline as in consistent, steady, appropriate, loving boundaries. In every hierarchical relationship – a parent with a child, a manager with an employee, or inside ourselves, between our wiser voices and our less mature voices – the dance of emotional mastery is the challenge of simultaneously being both emotionally accepting and unconditionally loving, while also having the discipline to set and hold appropriate boundaries. How do we love ourselves enough to consistently make self-honoring choices? How do we fully open ourselves to our spouse’s love, while also fully holding to and honoring our own truths? How do we see the perfect goodness at the core of every human being, while also helping hold them accountable to the consequences of their actions? Again – this is a simple, but hard won truth.

Now, I cannot stress highly enough that the reason to practice discipline is not because we “should” do so – but because we **want** to do so. Because of how painful it was for most of us to experience discipline as children, we almost all have it paired, at a deeply emotional level, with some notion of punishment and guilt. However, this misses a key distinction – **punishment is pain, while discipline is freedom**.

For most of 20’s, I described myself as having attention deficit disorder, or ADD. While I was able to hyper-focus on things that interested me, I had no attention for the things that didn’t.

Like the Tasmanian Devil, I only had two speeds – tornado-on or totally-off. Because of late and missed homework, I graduated in the bottom half of my high school class. Because of a chronic inability to pay my bills on time, I was unable to get any new credit cards, and regularly had my utilities cut off. Now, success was extremely important to me (remember the maroon notebook) and so I beat myself up constantly for my failures, telling myself that I shouldn't be failing at these simple tasks, that I wasn't living up to my potential, and that I should be doing better. I **punished** myself mercilessly for each infraction, and tried to use my guilt and fear as a cattle prod to push me in to action.

In fact, I actually got quite good at using the pain of guilt and procrastination to finally jolt me in to action, and that allowed my class rank to go up as I moved in to college, and then again as I went to grad school. Here's how it would work. Let's say I had a 5-8 page paper due. I would sit down the night before it was due, and try to force myself to work on it. However, because I was trying to punish myself in to action (using pain as a motivator) my defense mechanisms would kick in to protect me from this pain, and I would start procrastinating. I would pick up a good book, or turn on the TV – *“just for 15 minutes – I mean it!”* and when an hour had gone by,



I would start feeling even worse about it. This would usually continue until around 3am, as I approached the “point of no return” – the last possible time I had to start by, if I was going to stay up all night and still get it done on time. Finally, the fear of failing yet again, combined with the night's guilt, flipped me in to “on” mode, and I would furiously and frantically work until it was done. Sometimes I calculated the “point of no return” right, and finished on time, but more often I didn't.

Here is the key. Because I had the notion of discipline paired with pain, punishment, guilt, and failure, it became ridiculously hard for me to get certain things done – even little things, like pulling a bill out of an envelope and mailing it. The more I procrastinated, the more I punished myself; and the more I punished myself, the more I procrastinated. All of this continued (*“really, I have ADD!”*) I would tell my friends, as they quizzically pointed out my ever-growing list of maniacal over-achievements) until July 2003, when I took a 28-day retreat/self-development seminar called Insight IV. The program started off with David Allen's “Getting Things Done” program, which brought me to the awareness that I was being enslaved by my patterns of punishment and procrastination. I had spent my life avoiding detail management, because that felt “free” to me – but I didn't really have freedom – I was in a lot of pain, and I couldn't even pay my bills on time! Just like an obese person enslaved by food, or an alcoholic enslaved by booze, I was trapped by this punishment-pain-procrastination loop around detail management. I

decided then and there to rewire my association of discipline, from punishment to freedom, and I used the power of the Insight IV program to support me in replacing my old habits with new ones. To my constant surprise, people now regularly comment on how exceptional they think my detail management skills are (“really – are you sure you are talking about **me**?”) and I feel so much more empowered, peaceful and happy in my life (although I confess that I still sometimes miss a deadline or two with my bills. 😊)

Self-discipline is the essential tool for creating our freedom to manifest whatever it is – love, joy, peace, pleasure – that we most desire. Self-discipline lets us choose to grow in pleasurable ways, rather than being forced to grow through painful ones.

Secret 4: It's All About You

Remember the first secret – that other people’s upset has nothing to do with you? Well, now we’re ready to look at the flip side of that principle – that your upset has nothing to do with anyone else. As Steve Chandler points out, there are fundamentally two types of people in this world – owners and victims. While there is real victimization in this world, and we have an ethical responsibility to help prevent and stop this abuse, as mature adults, we also have the opportunity to release our addiction to our victim stories. For, when we position ourselves as the victim, we are **voluntarily giving up our power**.

One of the most dramatic examples of this great lesson is the story of Viktor Frankl, told in his inspirational classic, Man’s Search For Meaning. Dr. Frankl survived years of unspeakable horror in the Nazi death camps, where his captors were determined to strip him of every single freedom he had. Here was a man who, of all people, had a legitimate justification for labeling himself a victim, and indulging himself in self-pity. However, his experience was that the people in the camps who did so rapidly gave up hope, and died shortly thereafter. He attributes his rare survival – both emotionally, physically, and spiritually – to his refusal to give up “*the last of human freedoms*”, the freedom to “*choose one’s attitude*” – to hold on to our personal power by claiming ownership and **100% personal responsibility** for all of our upsets and emotional reactions.

For, if someone else is to blame for our suffering, then they are also our only hope for removing our suffering. However, if we embrace the attitude that we are responsible for all of our emotional reactions, if we embrace the notion that we are the proud

“We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

- Viktor Frankl
Man’s Search For Meaning



owner of every emotion we experience, if we embrace the standard that we are the ultimate solution to every emotional problem we face – then we have found a truth that will set us free. While most of us have responsibility paired with burden, obligation, or carrying the weight of the world on our shoulders, in its purest sense, response-ability is power – the ability to choose how we respond to a situation.

Our emotional problems aren't “out there” – they're inside of us – as I discovered when I finally stopped running from the inner sources of my fears, turned around, and faced

them directly. Winning in the world and building a healthy ego are important developmental tasks – as M. Scott Peck says, “*if you give up winning before you have won, you are exactly what you started out as – a loser.*” At the same time, as the renowned psychologists John Lennon and Paul McCartney point out, you “*can't buy me love*” – the emotional states we most want are found inside of us – and Core Coaching can show you how to get more of them, more efficiently, and more of the time.

Secret 5: The Source Of Self-Confidence

In the 80's, a great self-esteem movement broke out, and over the course of two decades, it penetrated and transformed many of our primary and secondary schools. In a 1999 LA Times article, “Losing Faith in the Self-Esteem Movement”, Richard Colvin states that:

“At Loren Miller Elementary School in Los Angeles, a school struggling to raise test scores that are barely in double digits, children last year spent part of each day working on ... their self-esteem. In daily ‘I Love Me’ lessons, they completed the phrase ‘I am...’ with words such as beautiful, lovable, respectable, kind or gifted. Then they memorized the sentences to make them sink in. ...

Having high self-esteem certainly feels good, psychologists say. But, contrary to intuition, it doesn't necessarily pay off in greater academic achievement, less drug abuse, less crime or much of anything else. Or, if it does pay off, 10,000 or more research studies have yet to find proof. ...

‘There's nothing that boosts self-concept more than being able to do something-it doesn't matter if it's reading or something on the monkey bars your brother can't do,’ said Robert J. Stevens, a professor of educational psychology at Penn State University.”

While positive affirmations can be very powerful, and unconditional acceptance is one half of loving; as we explored earlier, acceptance is nothing without self-discipline. True self-confidence requires something more than just stating “*I am a better singer than Britney Spears*” 1000 times. **True self-confidence is based in reality – the reality of our history of keeping agreements with ourselves.**

As opposed to self-esteem (“how much I like myself”) or even self-love (“how much I unconditionally accept and lovingly self-discipline myself”) self-confidence is fundamentally a measure of **self-trust**. In America, with our puritanical work ethic, we tend to place great emphasis on the first determinant of self-trust – **our ability to handle the challenges that life throws at us**. As Nietzsche said, “*that which doesn’t kill us makes us stronger*”, and part of life is competition and challenge. One of the best ways to increase our self-confidence is to decide that we are going to do something tough – and then do it. At the same time, there is another, equally important piece that few of us understand – **self-trust is critically determined by the level to which we keep our agreements with ourselves.**



There is a very basic piece of our consciousness that keeps track of every single agreement we make with ourselves, no matter how big or small. This piece is very much like a child, in that every promise is important. The other day, there was a man in Costco with two screaming children, around the ages of 4 and 6. Demonstrating the adage that “*parenthood is a practice of ever escalating bribes,*” he promised them that if they would be quiet, they would go for ice cream later – and this quieted them down. Now, I didn’t see what went on later, but can you imagine what would have happened if an urgent call came from his office, and he decided “*we don’t have time for ice cream any more?*” The promise may not seem like a big deal to us, but to a young child, even an ice cream cone is a big deal! If this happened on a regular basis, the children’s trust in their father – and therefore in their world – would be seriously damaged.

The keeper of our self-trust, and therefore our self-confidence, is like a 5 year old with a perfect memory. It remembers **every** single promise we make, either with ourselves or others, and keeps track of whether or not we keep it. It is very literal, and it also doesn’t understand our excuses for why we didn’t keep our word – all it knows is that we promised something, and then we either kept that promise – or didn’t.

Have you ever had an employee or partner who you could absolutely trust to deliver on each commitment they made to you? If so, how much did you value them? I was blessed to have an engineering manager like that, and he was worth his weight in gold, because I could delegate something to him, and **know** that it was handled. Wow. On the other hand, I have worked with

a few business partners who, with all the best intentions, kept promising things and then not delivering when they said they would. I had complete trust and confidence in my manager, and so when I thought of him, I felt light, joyful, and peaceful. However, whenever I thought of my untrustworthy business partners, I felt a sense of conflict, fear, and a need to “crack the whip” with them. The same patterns hold for our relationship with ourselves.

The single most powerful secret to increasing self-confidence is this: **be impeccable with your word** – again, not because you “should” do so, but because you cannot imagine the joy and inner peace you will experience when you do! This involves the cultivation of a few basic skills.

“Self-trust is the first secret of success.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

1. Learn to **meticulously track** the agreements you make, no matter how small. The essence of a good time management system is that it functions like an employee you totally trust, so you don’t have to keep the items in your head. *“Out of head, on to paper”* as David Allen says – wow, is this powerful!
2. Either deliver on the letter of the agreement, or **consciously renegotiate** it with all parties involved (especially yourself) **before** it is due.
3. Limit the agreements you make, to things you are sure you can and will do! If you aren’t sure, you can set an **intention** to do so, but make it clear that you are **not committing** to anything. Recognize the limits of your self-discipline, and respect them.
4. Track and keep the agreements you make with yourself at least as carefully as those you make with other people.

Incidentally, this is a big piece of why most New Year’s resolutions and personal change efforts fail – people make BIG promises to themselves, rather than trying for a bunch of small incremental changes. If I promise that I am going to totally avoid chocolate this year, the best score I can hope to rack up for this agreement – over the course of an entire year! – is 1-0. Whereas the first time I fall prey to the lure of those hand-crafted Belgian chocolates on top of my fridge, I am now 0-1, with no hope for improvement. Instead, if I limit myself, say from a habit of a box a week to no more than one chocolate a day, then every day that goes by is a chance for a win, particularly if I consciously celebrate my successes. After I get the score up to something like 10-2, or even 20-1, I’m feeling pretty darn good about myself, and then I can “up the bar” again if I choose.

A major study found that in long term, happy, successful marriages, the ratio of positive to negative feedback needed to be at least 5 to 1. A basic level of self-confidence requires at least the same ratio – and as we increase it to 20 to 1, or 100 to 1, our self-confidence soars.

This may sound like a lot of work – and at first, it can be, for change doesn't always come easy. However, we're just talking about reprogramming a few basic habits, and changing our habits is a lot like pushing a round rock across a plateau and then down a hill. At first, it may take significant energy to overcome its prior inertia. Then, as we continue pushing, there comes a point where it takes on a life of its own, building ever-increasing momentum and power without our even having to think about it. Being impeccable with our word is a master habit that can quickly start to provide us with immense surplus energy and self-confidence, which we then can use in any other areas of our life we choose to.

Secret 6: The Roots Of Insecurity

While self-confidence comes from trusting that we can handle the challenges life throws at us, and from trusting that we will keep our agreements with ourselves, insecurity comes from more than just a lack of self-trust – it ultimately stems from the “three poisons” – pain, fear, and self-judgment.

While many books could be written on just this one topic, we can try to briefly cover the essential points. First off, **we are all insecure** to one level or another – and the people who pretend not to be are often the most insecure, because arrogance is just a reflection of insecurity. Arrogance is a defense mechanism, where we pretend that we are better than someone else, in order to temporarily hide from our own insecurities. I know this well, because judgments of superiority used to be the single most entrenched feature of my personal defenses. However, over time I discovered something – every judgment of superiority masked its mirror insecurity. If I notice myself saying “*boy, what an idiot – I'm sure glad I'm smarter than he is*” I now know that one of my insecurities has been triggered, such as “*I'm not smart enough*” or at a deeper cut, “*I'm not worthy of love*”. In the past, I wasn't even aware that I was making these self-judgments. Now, at least on a good day, I am able to pull out the EQ tools I have learned, and release the insecurities directly.

“Out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there.”

- Rumi

Insecurity always includes a component of self-judgment. What is self-judgment? For now, we'll have to content ourselves with a few examples. A self-judgment can be a thought, either conscious or unconscious, that we aren't good enough, that we are separate and alone, that we have done something wrong, that we are going to die, that our clothes aren't as fashionable as the other kids – it can be any thought that makes us feel guilty, shameful, embarrassed, or afraid. In

particular, self-judgments tend to make us feel *unworthy*. Unworthiness is a “90% issue” – meaning that for 90% of all issues, for 90% of all people, the core of the issue includes a self-judgment that “*I’m not good enough.*” Interestingly, the question we rarely ask is, “not good enough for what?” What is it that we fear we are unworthy of? The answer is almost always love. One of our greatest fears is that we are unworthy of love, and so we either won’t get the love we want, or we will lose the love we have. These fears and self-judgments are all illusion, like monsters under the bed, and a primary developmental task is learning how to release them. (Note: to learn more about self-judgments, and to learn some of the power tools you can use to release them, please see the document “*Healing Our Self-Judgments.*”)

Now, this does not mean that there is no right or wrong. As demonstrated by the challenges pointed out in the self-esteem article, we live in a real world, and our actions have consequences. If I study hard, I can get good grades. If I don’t pay my bills, my utilities will get cut off. If I give my love to others, I feel better. If I am exclusively self-centered, I feel awful and alone – even if I am too scared to consciously admit it, even to myself. If I am violent towards others, or I can’t demonstrate the personal responsibility and self-discipline needed to live by the laws of society, I will need to take a “extended time out” from other people.

However, and this is the mother of all however’s, we don’t have to judge ourselves or others as wrong or bad for our choices. While guilt can be a powerful tool for creating ethical behavior,



particularly when we are less mature, each shock from the cattle-prod of guilt leaves a silent scar of insecurity and pain, which needs to be healed by acceptance **and** self-discipline (and self-forgiveness, but that is another topic). We heal and grow as we simultaneously accept all of our past choices, and learn how to make better choices for the future.

We all carry a long list of “shoulds” around with us. “He shouldn’t have cut me off in traffic.” “She shouldn’t gossip about me behind my back.” “I shouldn’t have eaten that third pint of Ben and Jerry’s.” In my circles, one of the favorites is “George Bush shouldn’t have been elected

president.” Well, is it true? Are these “shoulds” accurate? Arguing with reality is like arguing with gravity. We will only lose – every time. As Byron Katie so beautifully puts it in her same-titled book, life is a process of Loving What Is – and as we love and accept it, this gives us the emotional freedom to develop the strength, courage, and self-discipline to change it for the better. **The gap between our expectations on how reality “should” be, and how reality is, consists of pain.**

Which brings us to the second poison – pain. We all carry around a legacy of pain, both conscious and unconscious, from every time that a standard we held was violated. This pain is then automatically covered up with fear – and all our other defense mechanisms, from repression to anger, from projection to arrogance – all of our other defenses are reactions to this fear. Like pain and self-judgment, fear is first and foremost a gift for our survival – but it is also one of the most fundamental challenges for us to overcome, in order to reconnect with the love, peace, and joy that are our true nature, and our deepest desires.

Think of the classic example of a young child touching a hot stove. When this happens, the child **learns** not to do that again! The experience of pain automatically creates a fearful association, so that any time we come near that stove again, we avoid touching it. I had a lot of dental work done as a young child, including cavities and pulled teeth. Between the guilt of not brushing my teeth well enough, and the pain of the dentist’s drill, I developed a serious fear, bordering on phobia, of going to the dentist. Like many, I developed a pattern of waiting until something REALLY hurt before going to the dentist – because only then would the pain I felt be greater than my fear of pain.

You know, this pretty much sums up the basis of most human suffering. Here are the Cliff notes. Violated expectations lead to self-judgments, which lead to pain in the form of guilt and shame. When combined with physical pain and grieving, we develop fears to protect us from this pain, and then we develop a whole myriad of sophisticated (and largely unconscious) defense mechanisms to protect us from the things we are afraid of. However, the world keeps demanding that we change, and “upping the ante” until we do so. So, we resist until the pain gets larger than our fears – tapping in to all manner of anesthetics and addictions along the way – whereupon we finally learn and grow to the next level, and the process repeats.

It sounds painful, and it is. And, while the solution I finally came up with for dealing with my fear of dentists (Valium and laughing gas!) isn’t widely practical, there is another way.

Secret 7: We Are Deathly Afraid Of Deep Change

Which brings us to the last of the seven secrets. We are all, every single one of us, deathly afraid of deep change. And I’m not speaking metaphorically. We are **literally** scared to death of change – or perhaps more accurately, **deep change evokes our fears of death**. Freud stated that our greatest fear was the fear of death, and while there are some other fine contestants in that game, it is at least a top contender for the title. What we don’t tend to realize is that we must face this primal fear not just at the end of our life, but throughout it.

“Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother.”

- Khalil Gibran

To understand this, we need to take a brief look at identity. You know, that old hoary chestnut, “Who Am I?” To look at this question, let’s do a quick thought experiment. We’ll start with a question – “Are you your hair?” If you get a good hair cut, there doesn’t tend to be much grieving for the lost locks – although if you lost all your hair as a result of chemotherapy, there likely would be. However, you probably wouldn’t be grieving the actual loss of your hair – you don’t **really** need it for survival, do you? – but rather you would be mourning the loss of a treasured piece of your self-identity. Unless we’re named Seal and proudly shave our head, our hair likely **means** something to us. Although we may not realize it until that hairline starts receding or the first strands start going gray, part of our self-image is deeply attached to the color, length and pattern of a mop of string-like, nerveless cells, propped on top of our head, with almost no survival function.

At the emotional and psychological levels, the answer to the question “Who Am I?” is equal to the sum total of our definitions of who we think we are – and of who we should be. Imagine that your self-image is a plant, like the beautiful palm plant I have in my living room (named Audrey, after The Little Shop of Horrors, of course). Each leaf is a piece of how you define yourself.

One leaf may be your hair, another your tennis abilities. Your leaves might include the money you have, your spouse, your eyesight, having well behaved kids, or having the most Christmas lights in the neighborhood. Now, while I can’t speak for Audrey’s feelings, I know that for us humans, when we lose one of our leaves – **when we lose one of the pieces of how we define ourselves – it feels like a piece of us is dying.** And this is why we are all deathly afraid of change – of the deep changes that redefine our sense of who we are. At the deepest possible levels, we all tend to resist

“We live in a tumultuous time. Change is everywhere, and we are surrounded by circumstances that seem to demand more than we can deliver. We are all regularly lured into playing the role of the powerless victim or the passive observer. In such roles, we become detached, and our sense of meaning decays. We look at everything in a superficial way. We see little potential and have little reverence. To choose to play either of these roles is to choose meaninglessness or the slow death of the self. We have always been embedded in a dilemma. We have always had to agonize over the choice between making deep change or accepting slow death.”

- Robert E. Quinn
Deep Change

the turning of the seasons; we resist the coming of the cold, barren winters that make possible the new birth of spring. And yet, even for those of us in sunny California, life demands that we either grow or die, change or rot – that we either willingly embrace the process of evolution and learning that is part of our deepest purpose, or experience pain, pain, and ever more pain until we

finally change because we have no other choice. Again, neither approach is right or wrong – but one certainly feels a lot better than the other!

And this brings us to the sticky question of free will. We like to think that we have free will, and are in command of our own destiny, but any study of genetics, sociology, psychology or anthropology quickly reveals how embedded we are in a rich, ecologically complex web of relationships, cultures, biology, and chance. Yes, we have free will, but **our free is a very limited resource** – much more so than we would like to think.

We are like mighty icebergs, and our conscious awareness reveals just the tip of who we are. Underneath the water line is a vast range of deeply programmed habits and self-identifications. As John Dryden said, *“first we make our habits, and then our habits make us.”* These habits build up tremendous momentum, and become protected by many layers of unconscious defenses, because they become the foundation of who we think we are. So we arrive at a deep paradox. **The most effective and efficient way to get almost anything we most want in life is to embrace a process of deep change – but this is also the hardest psychological task we face, because it brings up our deepest fears.** The fastest way to release our fears is by doing exactly what we are afraid of – while we are afraid of it. This is the definition of courage – but if we create courage by overcoming our fears, and if the process of overcoming fear requires courage – then how do we create more courage than we already have?

Let’s face it. If the changes we want were easy, or if our existing courage was greater than the fears that stand in our way, we already would have made them! So how do we cut this Gordian Knot? Part of the answer is **persistence**. Courage is like a muscle, and we can build our “deep change muscle” bit by bit, and day by day. While we tend to vastly overestimate the change we can accomplish in a day, the autobiography of any great hero testifies that we also tend to vastly underestimate the change we can accomplish in a decade, or in a lifetime.

The other part of the answer is **commitment**. The power of commitment acts like a magnifier for our existing courage, and is the fundamental choice that allows us to grow. **Deep change requires that our commitment be larger than our fears.** However – and this is key – we don’t have to make this commitment on our own. Perhaps the single most powerful tool for deep change is to reach out and commit to support structures whose power to call forth our innate greatness is larger than our resistance and fear.

*“The difference between involvement and commitment is like a ham-and-eggs breakfast – the chicken was involved, the pig was **committed**.”*

- Anonymous

As one example, we have Tony Robbins’ quote, *“if you want to change your life, change your friends.”* Or enroll yourself in one of his courses, or in one of the other life-changing transformational educational programs that



have been developed in the last 30 years. Or join a religious organization that works for you. Or get married and have kids (talk about a structure that is larger than our resistance to change!)

Or, find a life coach or executive coach that resonates with you, and co-create a commitment and support structure that will rock your world.

The bottom line – just do **something**. **Your dreams are waiting!**

About the Author

Brian serves as a coach, author, speaker and facilitator. By the age of 30, he had received a Ph.D. in C.S. from U.C. Berkeley, raised \$20 million for two startups, become an internationally known speaker and academic, made and lost millions – and burnt out twice. This was followed by six years of deep inner work and a M.A. in Spiritual Psychology from the University of Santa Monica, and he now focuses on the integration of spirituality, psychology and business. With his new focus on servant leadership, he is committed to delivering exceptional value to each client.

For More Information

Please feel free to visit www.corecoaching.org to explore how Core Coaching services could create exceptional value for you, your team, and your company.