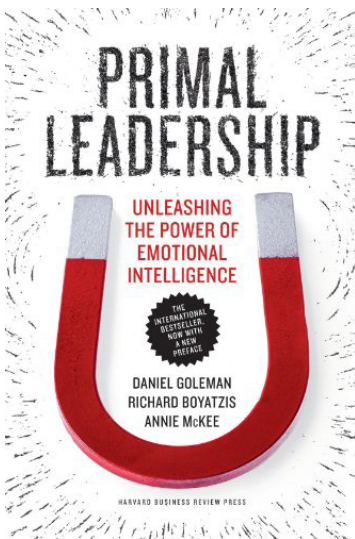


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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Primal Leadership

THE NUTSHELL

Great leaders move us; they inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy and vision. But the reality is more primal: Great leadership works through the emotions. No matter what leaders set out to do, their success depends on *how* they do it.

Dealing with and leading people's emotions is the primal, the original and most important, act of leadership. If people's emotions are pushed toward the range of enthusiasm, performance can soar; if people are driven toward rancor and anxiety, they will be thrown off stride.

The glue that holds people together in a team, and that commits people to an organization, is the emotions they feel. How well leaders manage and direct these feelings, to help a group meet its goals, depends on the leader's level of emotional intelligence (EI). If something has happened that everyone feels angry or sad about, the emotionally intelligent leader not only empathizes with those emotions, but also expresses them for the group. This kind of resonance builds a team, because people feel understood and cared for. Dissonance, on the other hand, dispirits people, burns them out, creates stress, and sends them packing.

There are four key areas of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness (empathy), and relationship management; each one adds a crucial set of skills. These areas are closely intertwined (a leader can't manage his emotions if he has little or no awareness of them).

Simply put, self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one's emotions, as well as one's strengths and limitations and one's values and

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Daniel Goleman

Daniel Goleman is author of the international bestseller Emotional Intelligence.

Richard Boyatzis

Richard Boyatzis is a professor at the Weatherhead School of Management and has coached leaders for fifteen years in the area of emotionally intelligent leadership.

Annie McKee

Annie McKee is on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and consults with businesses and organizations worldwide.

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motives. People with strong self-awareness are realistic—neither overly self-critical nor naively hopeful. Rather, they are honest with themselves about themselves.

From self-awareness, understanding one's emotions and being clear about one's purpose, flows self-management. This is particularly important because emotions are so contagious. Leaders who let their negative emotions run amok can't also lead the group into a positive register, where the best work gets done.

After self-awareness and emotional self-management, resonant leadership requires social awareness or, put another way, empathy. Empathy is crucial for driving resonance. By being attuned to how others feel in the moment, a leader can say and do what's appropriate, whether it is to calm fears, assuage anger, or join in good spirits.

As the leader increases his emotional intelligence, several things happen. He becomes able to vary his leadership style based on the needs of the moment: sometimes he will be a visionary, other times a coach or counselor; sometimes he will operate in a democratic manner, other times as a bit of a dictator. He will be able to change his style, and will know what he is changing and why he is changing.

Developing different leadership skills and styles is a learning process. While not always easy, any motivated person can do it. Typically, an individual will go through a recognizable development process. First they will identify their "ideal self," or who they want to be, and then identify their real self—who they are in reality. This often requires getting feedback in order to see clearly, especially negative feedback. Leaders who become emotionally intelligent go after negative feedback intentionally, because they won't hear it otherwise. Once they see the gap between the ideal and real, they can make plans to grow, and can begin to practice new skills until they are natural.

It takes an emotionally intelligent leader to build an emotionally intelligent organization—one where people are in harmony with each other and with the overall vision and strategy. This doesn't just mean an intellectual agreement or practical alignment; it includes an emotional *attunement*—an emotional commitment and connection that results in passion, energy, and enthusiasm. Any organization with high morale and an emotional attunement to the vision will be more effective than one lacking these things. The primary job of the leader is to build this into an organization. That is their primal task, and it is fundamentally emotional in nature.