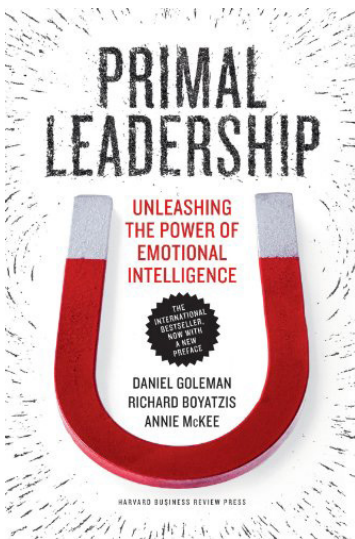


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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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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THE SUMMARY

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. Even if they get everything else right, but fail in this primal task of driving emotions in the right direction, nothing they do will work as well as it could or should.

Dealing with and leading people's emotions is the **primal**, the original and most important, act of leadership. In modern organizations this task is largely invisible, yet it remains the foremost of the many jobs of leadership. Driving the collective emotions in a positive direction, and clearing the toxic emotions in the atmosphere, are the two most important things a leader does.

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. In any human group the leader has maximal power to sway those emotions. When leaders drive emotions positively, they bring out everyone's best. We call this effect *resonance*. When they drive them negatively, leaders spawn *dissonance*, undermining the emotional foundations that let people shine.

The key to making this kind of leadership work is emotional intelligence: how leaders handle themselves and their relationships.

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Our brains are actually designed for emotional connection; our emotional center is an *open-loop* system. In other words, we rely on connections with other people for our own emotional stability. We are strongly affected by the emotions of the people around us, and are affected most by our leaders. Everyone watches the boss, and not just what they say—their expressions, body language, and emotional responses all provide emotional guidance for people in their groups.

How easily we catch leader's emotional states has a lot to do with how expressive they are. The more able leaders are to express their own enthusiasm, the more readily others will feel that same contagious passion. Leaders like that are emotional magnets—people naturally gravitate to them. Think of it this way: no one wants to work for a grouch. Optimistic, enthusiastic leaders more easily retain their people, and their people work harder and more effectively.

When people feel good, they do their best work. The ability of a leader to move a group into an enthusiastic, cooperative mood can determine its success. At the same time, a group with emotional conflicts and a negative atmosphere will bleed attention and energy, and its performance will suffer.

In a nutshell, climate—how people feel about working at a company—can account for 20-30% of performance. And 50-70% of how people experience climate can be traced back to the actions of one person: the leader.

Chapter 2: Resonant Leadership

Some leaders create *dissonance*: out of touch with people's feelings, they drive a group into a downward spiral from frustration to resentment to rage. Others create *resonance*: attuned to people's feelings, they can identify with them and then move people in a positive emotional direction. When resonance is triggered, you can see it in people's eyes: they light up, and the people are engaged.

One sign of resonant leadership is a group of followers who vibrate with the leader's upbeat and enthusiastic energy. 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 those feelings to help a group meet its goals depends on their 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. That kind of resonance builds a team, because it leaves people feeling understood and cared for. Dissonance, on the other hand, dispirits people, burns them out, creates stress, and sends them packing.

If resonance is so important, why is it lacking? Dissonant leaders don't mean to be so discordant; they simply lack the critical EI abilities that would help them lead with resonance. In the extreme, dissonant leaders can range from the abusive tyrant, who bawls out and humiliates people, to the manipulative sociopath. Some are more subtle, using a surface charm or social polish to mislead and manipulate. Those leaders don't truly hold their professed values, or lack empathy and don't care about others.

There are also leaders we call "clueless," who try to resonate in a positive tone but are out of touch with others' emotional registers. People may be feeling angry, anxious, or otherwise unhappy, but the leader is oblivious and sends out an upbeat message that doesn't resonate with anyone.

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Others are just self-absorbed; their mindset is “it’s all about me.” About their ego, ambition, accomplishments, etc. By contrast, emotionally intelligent leaders build resonance by tuning into people’s feelings—their own and others—and guiding them in the right direction.

If the main task of a leader is to generate excitement, optimism, and passion, how does he do it? Or more importantly, what skills does he need to be able to do it?

There are four key areas of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, and each one requires 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).

Self-awareness is the foundation for the rest: without recognizing our own emotions, we will be poor at managing them, and less able to understand them in others. Self-aware leaders know how their feelings affect them and their performance. Instead of letting anger build into an outburst, they spot it and know what is causing it. Leaders who lack self-awareness might lose their temper but have no idea *why* it is happening.

Social awareness, particularly empathy—supports the next step in the leader’s primal task: driving resonance. By being attuned to how others feel in the moment, a leader can say and do what’s appropriate, whether that means calming fears, assuaging anger, or joining in good spirits.

Finally, once leaders understand their own vision and values and can perceive the emotions of the group, their relationship management skills can produce resonance. To guide the emotional tone of a group, however, leaders must first have a sure sense of their own direction and priorities—which brings us back again to the importance of self-awareness.

Chapter 3: The Neuroanatomy of Leadership

Our basic argument is that primal leadership operates best through emotionally intelligent leaders who create resonance. No leader excels in every area of EI; at the same time, any leader can grow, since these competencies are not innate talents but learned abilities.

Let’s take a closer look at the four arenas of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

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 motives. People with strong self-awareness are realistic—neither overly self-critical nor naively hopeful. Rather, they are honest with themselves about themselves. And they are honest about themselves with others, even to the point of being able to laugh at their own foibles.

Self-aware leaders also understand their values, goals, and dreams. They know where they’re headed and why. They are attuned to what “feels right” to them. With a propensity for self-reflection and thoughtfulness, intuition comes naturally to the self-aware leader. Intuition helps a leader make sense of the abundance of data they have to process, and ultimately often leads to better decisions.

From self-awareness—understanding one’s emotions and being clear about one’s purpose—flows self-management, the focused drive that all leaders need to achieve their goals. Without knowing what we’re feeling, we’re at a loss to

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manage our feelings. Instead, our emotions control us. That's fine when it comes to positive emotions like enthusiasm, but no leader can afford to be controlled by negative emotions, such as frustration, rage, anxiety, or panic.

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. This doesn't mean leaders never have bad things happen to them; it does mean they know how to manage the feelings that come so they don't poison the workplace.

Similarly, leaders who can be optimistic and upbeat, even under intense pressure, radiate the positive feelings that create resonance. By staying in control of their feelings they craft an environment of trust, comfort, and fairness. Finally, self-management fosters integrity—the sense that leaders live their values and can be trusted.

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. A leader who lacks empathy will unwittingly be off-key, and then will speak or act in ways that undercut their own leadership.

Note: empathy doesn't mean being controlled by other people's emotions. Rather, it means taking employees feelings into thoughtful consideration and then making intelligent decisions that take those feelings into account.

The first three attributes come together in the final EI ability: relationship management. This is where we find some of the most visible tools of leadership: persuasion, conflict management, and collaboration, for example. Managing relationships skillfully boils down to handling other people's emotions.

Chapter 4: The Leadership Repertoire

There is no "one approach" to leadership that fits every situation. Rather, the most effective leaders act according to one or more of six distinct approaches to leadership, and switch between the various styles depending on the situation.

The first and most effective style is that of the *Visionary Leader*. Visionary leaders articulate where a group is going, but not how it will get there, setting people free to innovate, experiment, and take calculated risks. Knowing the big picture and how a given job fits in gives people clarity; they understand what's expected of them. And shared goals build team commitment, helping leaders retain their best people.

Empathy is particularly important to the visionary leader. The ability to sense how others feel and to understand their perspective means that a leader can articulate a truly inspirational vision. A leader who misreads people finds it difficult to inspire them.

The *Coaching Leader* focuses on personal development rather than on accomplishing tasks. Coaching leaders tend to get great results and generate a positive emotional response, as they take a genuine interest in their people rather than seeing them simply as tools to get a job done. The coach's goal is to help people accomplish their own goals and develop their own strengths, rather than just fulfill someone else's agenda.

The *Affiliative Leader* tends to value people and their feelings, putting less emphasis on accomplishing tasks and goals, and more on employee's emotional needs. They strive to keep people happy, create harmony, and build team

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resonance. While limited as a driver of performance, the affiliative style gets surprisingly positive results, due to the tremendous loyalty and connectedness they develop.

The *Democratic Leader* gets everyone involved in making decisions. A democratic approach works best when the leader is uncertain about what direction to take and needs ideas from able employees. The downside is that, if over-relied upon, no progress is made—just endless discussions that don't reach consensus. At its best, employees “buy in” to decisions because they had a part in making them.

Chapter 5: The Dissonant Styles

Two other leadership styles need to be mentioned, but both should be used with caution. The potential for misuse, and negative results, is high.

The *Pacesetter Leader* holds and exemplifies high standards for performance. He's obsessive about doing things better and faster, and asks the same of everyone. He tends to be so focused on his goals that he can appear to not care about the people he relies on to achieve those goals. When applied poorly, the pacesetter approach leaves employees feeling pushed and used, causing morale to plummet, and sometimes productivity as well.

Pacesetter works best in entrepreneurial situations (when growth is paramount), with highly skilled professionals, or with a team where all the members are highly competent, motivated, and need little direction. In that kind of setting, the pacesetter leader gets great work done on time, or even ahead of deadline.

A final style is the *Commanding Style*. With a motto of “Do it because I say so,” such leaders demand immediate compliance with orders, but don't bother explaining the reasons behind them. These leaders exercise tight control of any situation, require immediate obedience, and any feedback tends to focus on what people did wrong rather than what they did well. This style tends to be the least effective in most situations.

Despite its negative inclinations, there are times when the commanding style can be very effective. When there is a business crisis or an emergency, the “take-control” style can help everyone through the tumult. Also, when all else fails, the style sometimes works when dealing with problem employees.

The more of the six leadership styles a leader can deploy, the better. Leaders who master four or more, especially the resonance-building styles, foster the best climate and the best performance. Moreover, style switching is used both by seasoned veterans, who know what they are doing and why, and by entrepreneurs who claim to lead by “gut” alone.

Chapter 6: Becoming A Resonant Leader

How does someone become a “resonant-building leader?” The most common approach is to take a course or enter a training program. Unfortunately, while there is a “honeymoon period” where new skills are exercised, most of them are usually lost over the next three to six months. The familiar cycle goes like this: a person leaves the program enthusiastic and committed to improving. But, back in the office, dozens of e-mails, letters, and calls await him. The boss and a subordinate have each called with an emergency, and he is sucked into a swamp of demands. All of the new learning slips away as old, knee-jerk responses take over. Soon he is acting the way he always has...and the honeymoon comes to an abrupt end.

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When it comes to building leadership skills that last, motivation and how a person feels about learning matters immensely; people learn what they want to learn. Leadership development that works is self-directed learning: intentionally developing an aspect of who you are or who you want to be. Self-directed learning involves five “discoveries” that build on each other in an orderly way.

People who successfully change in sustainable ways cycle through the following series of discoveries:

First is discovering an *ideal vision* of yourself. That is, you see the person you want to be. And that image is powerful enough to evoke passion and hope, providing motivation for growth.

The second discovery is your *real self*—seeing yourself as you actually are. Some of that may include parts of your ideal self; other parts will represent gaps between who you are and who you want to be. This realization of your strengths and gaps prepares the way for changing and growing your leadership abilities.

The third discovery is a *plan of action* that provides detailed guidance on what new things to try each day to move closer to your ideal.

The fourth discovery comes in *practicing* new leadership skills. This is an ongoing process.

The fifth discovery may occur at any point in the process. It is that *you need others*—to identify your ideal self, your real self, to discover your strengths and gaps, to develop an agenda for the future, and to experiment and practice. Without others’ involvement, lasting change won’t occur.

Chapter 7: The Motivation to Change

The first two discoveries—the ideal self and the real self—provide motivation for change.

Connecting with one’s dreams releases passion, energy, and excitement about life. Changing habits is hard work; without motivation it is almost impossible. Getting hold of your ideal self, at a gut level, provides that kind of motivation. It helps us overcome the obstacles that are sure to happen.

Identifying our ideal self sounds easier than it really is. Many of us get seduced by the idea of money, power, or fame, and don’t discover, or lose sight of, our core values. At other times we are told by a parent, spouse, boss, or teacher what *they* think we should be. If we try and live that out, it becomes a box that traps and limits us. Discovering our own ideal self means taking time to uncover what our core values are, what our operating philosophy is, and what our strengths and weaknesses are.

Note: people’s dreams and aspirations change as their career unfolds, reshaping what they consider important in life and work. This is why one often sees leaders in middle age jump ship to start another career.

The other discovery that provides motivation is identifying our real self—also easier said than done. It requires an honest evaluation of ourselves, and honest feedback. The most emotionally intelligent leaders actively seek out two kinds of feedback:

1. **Negative Feedback.** They understand that it’s much harder to get negative feedback than positive; for this reason they actively seek it out. If a leader knows what he needs to improve, he knows where to focus his attention.

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2. 360 Degree feedback. Your boss won't see you the same way a subordinate will, or the same way a peer will. In a very real sense, you are a different person with different people in different kinds of settings. To get a complete picture you need to get feedback from a wide variety of people.

Chapter 8: Metamorphosis—Sustaining Leadership Change

The final three discoveries are keys to sustained change. Nothing is more common than good intentions that never actually happen.

Having a learning agenda is step #3. Setting goals and creating plans to achieve them is nothing new. Research has shown that there is a science to the process. Although these may seem obvious, they are not common practice:

1. Goals should build on one's strengths, not on one's weaknesses.
2. Goals must be a person's own—not goals that someone else has imposed.
3. Plans must be feasible, with manageable steps.
4. Plans must fit smoothly into a person's life and work.

Learning plans that lay out concrete, practical steps and very specific goals yield the most powerful improvement. At the same time, the greatest mistake that people make when setting goals is committing to activities that are difficult to do in their current lives and work style. Action plans need to fit into the rhythm and structure of your life.

Developing a new skill requires repetition and practice; it is hard to learn leadership in a classroom. And, unless a new habit is practiced to the point of mastery, a relapse happens—people return to their old ways of doing things. (You know you've actually mastered a new skill when you are able to sustain the new response long into the future). It takes real effort over time to develop a new leadership style, especially if you have primarily been using the same style for years.

The key ingredient that makes success possible is having supportive people involved in the process. Experimenting and practicing new habits requires finding safe places and relationships. This kind of support offers not just the hope of change, but the *confidence* to embrace that hope. Cultivating special relationships, whose sole purpose is to help you along your path, is crucial to continuing development. Studies have consistently shown that the most effective leaders had mentors or coaches who took them under wing and helped them develop.

Chapter 9: The Emotional Reality of Teams

Just as individuals have emotional realities, so do teams. And, the emotional awareness and health of a team will often determine whether it functions as a high-performing team or becomes a loose collection of people working together. The leader's primary job is to manage this health and awareness.

In the last few decades much research has proven the superiority of group decision-making over that of even the brightest individual in the group. However, this is only true if the group is in harmony and has the ability to cooperate. If the group is lacking in these, both the quality and the speed of decision-making suffer. In other words, groups are smarter than individuals only when they exhibit the qualities of emotional intelligence.

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Not surprisingly, a group's emotional intelligence requires the same capabilities that an emotionally intelligent individual expresses: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Groups have moods and needs, just like individuals; just think of the last time you walked into a meeting late and could actually feel the tension in the room.

Whereas with individuals the process of becoming emotionally intelligent starts with identifying the "ideal self," with groups the process begins with taking a hard look at reality. The first task of the leader is to help the group identify its own ground rules and norms—what are the unspoken rules that govern how the group operates? What are its guiding principles?

The leader needs to help the team raise its collective self-awareness. This is the true work of the leader: to monitor the emotional tone of the team and to help its members recognize any underlying dissonance. Only when a team can confront its emotional reality will it feel moved to change. This can be as simple as acknowledging a shared sentiment like "I don't like how it feels around here."

Some of this will include uncovering unproductive norms and unhealthy emotional realities. Getting people to have an honest conversation about what is working and what is not is a critical first step to creating a more resonant team. Such conversations bring to life the reality of what an organization feels like and what people are actually doing.

The problem is, these conversations are hot, and many leaders are afraid to start the dialogue. Too often, unsure of their ability to handle the emotions that arise when people talk honestly about what is going on, leaders stick to the safe topics: strategy, plans, goals, etc. They find it too difficult to be honest with each other, which causes dissonance. Everyone can feel when things aren't right. By not taking on the problem, the leader actually magnifies it. It takes courage, and an emotionally intelligent leader, to guide a team.

One of the biggest mistakes a leader can make is to ignore the realities of a team's ground rules and collective emotions and assume that the force of his or her leadership alone is enough to drive people's behavior. It happens all the time: a leader walks into a new job, ignores the power of the group's established culture, and pretends that feelings don't matter. The leader tries to steamroll results, and ends up creating a toxic and rebellious environment.

On the other hand, the results of helping a team become more emotionally intelligent are threefold. First, a new legitimacy develops around speaking the truth and assessing things honestly. Second, the very act of engaging in this way creates new habits, and third when people see that their leaders are searching for truth, they begin to emulate it, and begin taking the risk of speaking the truth as well.

Chapter 10: Reality and the Ideal Vision

For many years, Shoney's restaurant chain had a close-knit group of executives at the top—people who knew each other well, shared a history and beliefs, etc. The problem is that it was also an "old-boys" network of white, male senior executives that promoted people from the buddy system and left out people of color.

In 1992 the company was forced to pay \$132 million in a class action suit related to discrimination in its hiring and promotion practices. Since then, a new group of leaders has changed the company's culture, to the point that the company made *Fortune* magazine's "Top 50 Companies for Minorities."

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None of that changed overnight. The process began with a wake-up call (the lawsuit) regarding the *reality* of the company's culture. Then, the new leaders entering the scene had to identify an *ideal vision* to guide them in the future. Finally, the organization had to embrace the new vision—become *emotionally attuned* to it, in order for lasting change to occur.

The first step to change for an organization is always to identify current reality. This doesn't have to come from a crisis (like a lawsuit). A process called *dynamic inquiry* can also be used.

Dynamic inquiry involves focused conversations and open-ended questions intended to get at people's feelings. This may seem like it isn't "business-related," but it's only when people talk about their feelings that they begin to uncover root causes of problems in the culture (as well as what inspires them). And, authentic conversations tend to reveal a high level of agreement about what's working and what's not.

Themes become apparent, and people usually develop a sense of ownership of the problems, the dream, and the process of getting there. When people talk about what is and isn't working, they naturally also talk about what they want to see, and a vision begins to emerge—one that people are attuned to.

Leaders often talk about getting people "aligned" with their strategy. That word suggests a mechanical image of getting all the pieces in the right place, pointing in the same direction. An equally important issue is *attunement*—alignment, but with the kind of resonance that moves people emotionally. The challenge is to *attune* people to your vision, and then to your strategy, in a way that arouses passion.

Attunement results in a collective excitement for a vision. It starts with involving people deeply in the process of looking at current reality, and then at the ideal, and the gap between the two. The final step is to put people in charge of—make them responsible for—the change process.

Chapter 11: Creating Sustainable Change

How does a leader create sustained resonance in an organization? It's a challenge, but it is possible. It has to be seen throughout the organization as important, which happens when the top leader is personally driving it. To succeed, leadership development needs to be *the* strategic priority of the enterprise, an issue that is galvanized and managed at the highest levels.

Even this doesn't guarantee success. The culture of the organization can be resistant to change and hinder progress. To counteract this, change cannot be approached one person at a time (individuals can get lost in the larger organization). For example, Unilever recognized that change was needed, and engaged in a process that took years. They began by taking the top 100 leaders in the company on a kick-off retreat. Then they expanded to the next 500 leaders via a series of seminars, and then gradually included each successive layer until the changes permeated the organization. What they didn't do was try to change one person at a time.

The process is not focused on getting more clarity on strategy or goals—leaders have enough of that. What makes the difference is finding passion for the work/strategy/vision, and engaging hearts. People change when they are emotionally engaged and committed, and that is the primary task of the leader. That is what Primal Leadership is all about.