

Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for College Students

By Marcy L. Shankman and Scott J. Allen

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Reviewed by

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One of the best new books to be published by Jossey-Bass is *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership*. The book is a great addition to any leadership collection and is highly relevant to our work with students. Authors Marcy Levy Shankman and Scott J. Allen provide a clear and easy-to-understand foundation of their model of emotionally intelligent leadership by encouraging students to think more critically about leadership while also enhancing their leadership potential.

The model of emotionally intelligent leadership (EIL) is deeply rooted in two major bodies of research and theory: leadership and emotional intelligence. It is based on the author's own experiences of numerous years of working with college students on a variety of different types of campuses. They have also fused a group of leadership theories and ideas from transformational, situational, and contingency theories to authentic leadership development, positivist psychology, organizational culture, and behavior to support their work. Finally, they have relied upon the assistance of numerous students across the country who were willing to share their thoughts and experiences with the authors through surveys. These student stories which are infused throughout the book provide powerful

insight and purposeful comments.

Foundations of the Model

Drs. Shankman and Allen begin in much the same way that many of us begin our orientation programs—by framing the campus as a large learning laboratory rich with opportunities to learn about self and others. They contend that no matter where you are, leadership and learning is right in front of you; thus, the campus is a continuous learning laboratory.

The model of emotionally intelligent leadership is simply defined as understanding and increasing one's level of consciousness about self, others, and the context in which interactions occur. The book is organized around these themes.

The Environment in Which One Leads—"Consciousness of Context"

Leadership, as we all know, involves leaders and followers; equally important in this equation is the environment in which a situation occurs. Emotionally intelligent leaders know and understand the role the environment plays, and leaders must intentionally practice the skill of managing the context in which leadership occurs. Coupled with this, leaders must be savvy diagnosticians. They must understand the culture of their organization while making time to recognize and appreciate the different personalities of those within the group. This skill set is one that can only be developed over time and through experience; however, it is vitally critical in understanding the complexities and idiosyncrasies of the organization.

"Consciousness of Self"

Those of us working on college campuses realize the abundant opportunities for personal growth and development that make working with college students one of the most enriching vocations one can experience. However, we also know these same students face challenges and uncertainties. This is the first time most students have had independence from their parents and communities. The concept of "consciousness of self" involves knowing what you care about, what you stand for/value, what you are passionate about, what you are good at, and how you respond or react emotionally to others, and then living a life that is congruent with these values and beliefs. We all know this is probably easier said than done and can be far more complicated for new students than those who are graduating.

In any given situation individuals behave differently. Knowing how you think about others, how you feel at different times, and how you might respond in different situations is the idea of emotional self-perception. Being aware of these feelings and acknowledging how you might react is self-understanding. The authors suggest that emotionally intelligent leaders acknowledge their perceptions

while also seeking feedback to increase their self-understanding.

For those familiar with leadership theory, it is universally understood that before one can lead others it is important to know one's self, strengths, and limitations. Emotionally intelligent leaders are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and regularly seek out feedback from others to help them improve their skills. Leaders that know and understand themselves will also be more likely to have well balanced self-esteem. They are more self-confident and comfortable with whom they have become and are continuing to become.

Critically important to having an understanding of one's self is the ability to keep your emotions and actions in check. This is accomplished in the EIL model by maintaining emotional self-control, by being authentic and trustworthy in your actions and deeds, and by being agile enough to change when the situation warrants it.

The final components of the consciousness of self cadre include traits which are closely linked with the emotionally intelligent leader's attitude and motivation. The authors discuss the importance of feeling like you are making a difference, finding a passion for the things you are involved in and experiencing "flow," or simply getting lost in the moment of doing something that you truly enjoy. EI leaders ooze optimism; through their inspiration and positive attitude, they help others to see possibilities that weren't previously obvious.

"Consciousness of Others"

It is often said that if you know how to work with people, you can do just about anything. College is no different. Relationships are at the heart of a successful college experience; and being aware of these interactions and attuned to others' feelings, needs, and behaviors is critical to being a leader who will be able to affect change.

Having an understanding of where others are coming from is essential for emotionally intelligent leaders. Leaders that are able to listen with their heart, acknowledge others' feelings, and demonstrate that they care and understand are characterized as empathetic leaders.

The concept of "citizenship" involves working toward positive change for the sake of others. As such, leaders set aside selfish interests and work for the good of the organization and/or community. We often see examples of this in our orientation and transition programs as we adjust programs to benefit all students rather than the special interests of a few. The authors contend this is easier said than done, but it is vitally important for healthy and vibrant organizations.

Beyond empathy and citizenship, the authors suggest that the ability to motivate others is essential. Great leaders have a propensity to be visionaries; coupled with this, emotionally intelligent leaders are able to both inspire and influence others toward a shared vision. These leaders are connected to their organizations and have an acute understanding of the needs and wants of their followers. They are in sync with one another, and the leader works to inspire and create shared ownership for the vision. Emotionally intelligent leaders also wield

influence within the organization. This influence is apparent in their convictions to the organization, their willingness to take action, and their commitment to moving forward together. For many college students being involved and assuming a leadership role is nothing new. For others it will be their first time in such a role. EI leaders are aware of their feelings and those of the others, and they understand in order to be successful they must be able to inspire others while also influencing them toward a shared vision.

Student leaders show conviction, passion, and commitment on our campuses every day. Those involved in orientation programs probably display these qualities more so than others. Allen and Shankman suggest that these leaders are successful because of the way in which they influence and motivate others. EI leaders understand that the simplest way to get things accomplished is by gaining the support of those they are leading by inspiring a shared vision, having an optimistic attitude, and gaining the confidence and trust of those they are leading.

Finally, the authors suggest that being a good leader also involves a certain amount of coaching, openness to conflict, and a willingness to embrace change. As in any athletic team, a good leader is also a good coach. In this capacity, leaders must reach out to assist those who are at different levels of the organization to ensure that they not only have the right amount of challenge but also the support they need to be successful. The brutal reality of life and leadership is that not all members necessarily want the same things or the same level of challenge; the EI leader must be able to sort out these challenges and adjust accordingly. And when conflict erupts, and it will, the authors suggest that the most important thing EI leaders can do is listen to others and make sure that everyone feels that his or her voice has been heard.

Emotionally Intelligent Leadership presents a clearly articulated and appealing view on leadership. It is straightforward and simply suggests that leadership is about knowing yourself, those with whom you are working, and the environment in which these interactions occur. It is about our beliefs, our attitudes, the relationships we have with others, and the context in which all of this occurs. I would strongly suggest this book for student leaders, student affairs staff, and anyone who works with students on our campuses. It's a must read!