

Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development

Volume 15 | Number 15

Article 10

2016

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Recommended Citation

Morris, Morgan K. (2016) "Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for Students (Second ed.)," *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*: Vol. 15 : No. 15 , Article 10.
Available at: https://pillars.taylor.edu/acsd_growth/vol15/iss15/10

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Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for Students
(Second edition)

M. Levy Shankman, S. J. Allen, & P. Haber-Curran, 2015
San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass

Reviewed by Morgan K. Morris

88

Numerous books exist regarding emotional intelligence and even more concerning leadership. However, few books address both emotional intelligence *and* leadership. Fortunately, Marcy Levy Shankman, Scott J. Allen, and Paige Haber-Curran combine these topics exceptionally in *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for Students*. These scholars argue that research in emotional intelligence and leadership should be synthesized, as emotional intelligence is critical in leadership.

This text defines emotionally intelligent leadership (EIL) as “an intentional focus on three facets: consciousness of self, consciousness of others, and consciousness of context” (p. 9). These three elements outline the text and frame the authors’ argument of the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership. I found the book unique, significant, and worth reading, as it provides insights and tools to equip students—and those working with students—to embrace emotionally intelligent leadership in their lives and work.

Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for Students begins with an introduction explaining the background and format of the book. Following the introduction, the text divides into the three facets of emotionally intelligent leadership. The chapters within each of the facet sections describe capacities of that specific consciousness as related to emotionally intelligent leadership. For example, “Emotional Self-

Perception” is a chapter within the Consciousness of Self section of the text. Each chapter not only includes content but also additional resources to help readers better understand the connection between emotional intelligence and leadership.

The first facet of emotionally intelligent leadership and the focus of the first section of the text is consciousness of self. Shankman, Allen, and Haber-Curran argue that “[d]emonstrating emotionally intelligent leadership means being aware of yourself in a number of ways, especially being deeply in tune with your emotions, values, strengths, limitations, and worldview” (p. 21). Throughout this section, readers are challenged to analyze and better understand how their leadership is affected by their perceptions, self-esteem, attitudes, achievements, and other personal influences.

The second facet of emotionally intelligent leadership, consciousness of others, is addressed next in the text. To introduce this facet, the authors remind readers: “By nature, leadership is interpersonal” (p. 111). Therefore, it is crucial to understand others in order for self to lead well. Furthermore, the authors believe that “[b]y being conscious of other people’s abilities, emotions, and perceptions, you can better inspire, connect with, work with, and influence others” (p. 111). This section encourages readers to assess the value of inspiring, coaching, working with others, and other relational factors with regard to leadership.

The third and final facet of emotionally intelligent leadership addressed in the text is consciousness of context. Consciousness of context refers to “paying attention to how environmental factors and internal group dynamics affect the process of leadership” (p. 209). This section focuses on the importance of setting and situation. Within this facet, setting “refers to the environment and structure of the group or organization” (p. 209), and situation “includes the many different forces of a particular time and place” (p. 209). Utilizing these definitions, the facet analyzes how setting and situation create context and influence leadership.

Together, these facets draw clear connections between emotional intelligence and leadership. Such connections are furthered through the authors’ incorporation of resources including a variety of references, “student voices,” and reflection questions. Each chapter includes its own list of references citing resources regarding both emotional intelligence and leadership. Synthesizing these resources validates the claimed connection between emotional intelligence and leadership.

“Student voices” incorporates student insights regarding the topic of each chapter. This portion includes quotes directly from students relating their own thoughts and experiences. These quotes often reveal students’ natural exposure to the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership. Most students have not received training in emotionally intelligent leadership, and yet many reference these concepts as a part of their experience.


The authors end each chapter with a set of reflection questions. Open space is even provided after each question to allow readers to engage and write personal responses. The questions help students and professionals connect their own experiences to the text. Moreover, the questions provide an opportunity for readers to begin drawing their own ties between emotional intelligence and leadership.

The material covered in the book, paired with these resources, creates an excellent argument for the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership. Shankman, Allen, and Haber-Curran not only utilized their own insights but also incorporated the experiences of hundreds of students, researchers, and scholars in interviews, quotes, and references throughout the text to make their case. The broad reach of resources included in the research establishes the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership with significance and merit that cannot be ignored.

The concept of emotionally intelligent leadership is certainly worth discussing, and it is crucial for Christians to begin learning about this topic. Although *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for Students* and the argument it makes are not specifically Christian, they coincide well with a Christian worldview. Christians view mankind as whole beings comprised of physical, mental, spiritual, and *emotional* elements. It is crucial for us to analyze these elements and how they affect other aspects of our lives, such as our leadership.

90

Furthermore, as Christians in higher education, we view students as whole beings in the process of holistic development. We should always be searching for new means to invest in and develop students. In many ways, we probably already invest in students with regard to leadership and maybe even emotional intelligence. However, we now have a wonderful tool to help students learn how these concepts are connected.

With this outstanding resource supporting the connection between emotional intelligence and leadership, we should be encouraged to embrace and practice emotionally intelligent leadership. *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for Students* can be utilized individually or in groups, with students or with colleagues. In the concluding chapter on developing emotionally intelligent leadership, Shankman, Allen, and Haber-Curran remind readers that we will never be finished with this work. Students and professionals alike are constantly growing and learning; may we now begin to grow and learn in our pursuit of emotionally intelligent leadership. 

Morgan K. Morris will complete her Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development from Taylor University in May 2016.