

Toward Better Understanding of Spiritual Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual intelligence is concerned with integrating the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of work in the world. It is essential for both personal and professional development. This paper briefly examines the concept of spiritual intelligence as a basic quality from which all other human abilities arise.

KEYWORDS: *spiritual intelligence, religious intelligence, spirituality*

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INTRODUCTION

Intelligence refers to a biological potential to analyze information in certain ways. It is simply to use what you know in the right way with the right intention. It is largely believed to be inborn and difficult to alter. It can be measured by instruments called IQ tests.

Spiritual quotient (SQ) indicates parallels with IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and EQ (Emotional Quotient). It has been called the ultimate intelligence. As shown in Figure 1, spiritual intelligence is related to other intelligences: physical intelligence (PQ), mental or intellectual intelligence (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ) [1]. SQ is uniquely human. Unlike IQ which computers have, EQ exists in higher mammals. The three dimensions of intelligence are illustrated in Figure 2 [2]. One may be highly developed in one of the dimensions but not in others.

Spiritual intelligence is a phrase that has started to become familiar among educators and psychologists. The term implies awareness of our relationship to the divine. It is a unique ability to feel, understand, and act beyond selfish motives. It expands our capacity to understand fellow human beings at the deepest level. It can be expressed as love, compassion, modesty, wisdom, and service. It enables us to see things as they are. It helps us to make wise choices and learn from our mistakes.

DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

Our search for meaning and purpose in life is the primary motivation. When this need is not met, our productivity suffers. The price is paid in education, where the spiritual

intelligence of children is not developed, and in the work place [3]. Our spiritual intelligence cannot be separated from our being and should be nurtured as we grow. It can be developed with practice. Its attributes include faith, humility, gratitude, and ability to love and forgive [4].

Any discussion of spiritual intelligence is incomplete without addressing spirituality. Religion and spirituality are related. Religion has been defined as beliefs or practices that express spirituality, while spirituality is the intrapersonal experience of the divine. Religious life may consist in church, synagogue or mosque attendance and observance of rituals such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Spirituality deals with our search for meaning and purpose. It is a way of life; it involves intellect, will, and emotion. Although spirituality is a subjective experience which may mean different things to different people, logical reason alone is inadequate in explaining the spiritual experience of individuals. Our personal sense of spirituality guides our choices and enables us to cope with life difficulties. Spiritual people believe in a God or higher source of life. Some have spiritual experience involving direct communion with a higher power. They connect to the divine through prayer, meditation, contemplation, and journaling [5].

Spiritual intelligence reflects the mental flexibility to make adjustments and confront life problems. It increases with age. It is not related to a particular religion or creed. Improving spiritual intelligence may help one become more stable and adaptable.

SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE IN DIFFERENT AREAS

Individuals who are rich spiritually can best express their gifts, intellect, and vision in the world. Scholars have been studying the role of spirituality in different contexts, such as family life, leadership, health care, the workplace, and education.

- **Family Life:** Being spiritually intelligent in a family environment makes one to relate maturely and embrace others. Children learn to appreciate their unique talents and embrace the world with passion. Parents use their spiritual intelligence to discover what is important in life and help their children realize their potential for goodness.
- **Leadership:** What makes a great leader is the ability to provide a clear sense of direction. Spiritual intelligence is essential for authentic leadership. It is based on values, not on profits. It is a global intelligence exemplified by great leaders such as Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela. The family, community, and global business leaders of the future are those who cultivate the skills of spiritual intelligence. Leaders and employees with a higher level of spiritual intelligence often have a higher level of work satisfaction [6]. As shown in Figure 3, Spiritual intelligence manifests itself in leadership as love, giving, excellence, courage, and so on [7].
- **Healthcare:** Spiritual care is a growing topic of interest to health care practitioners. It has been observed that nurses who have more spiritual intelligence are happier than those who have lower spiritual intelligence. Improving spiritual intelligence among the elderly help them attain greater stability and maintain a better quality of life.
- **Education:** Students' spirituality helps them to make good choices and cope with peer difficulties. Teachers need to realize that all students have spiritual intelligence, but differ in the level. This intelligence is not fixed but can be enhanced by educational opportunities [8]. Educating for spiritual development provides opportunities for students to develop their spiritual intelligence and discover what is important in life. It fills the vacuum in people's lives.

CONCLUSION

Spiritual intelligence is the ability to access higher meanings and values and allow these meanings and values live richer

and creative life. It is necessary in making choices that contribute to our well-being. It helps to discover the purpose of life and make sense of living. People are different and they are at different levels of spiritual intelligence. Since spiritual intelligence is relatively new as a research discipline, a single standard for determining spiritual intelligence does not exist. More information about spiritual intelligence can be found in the books in [9-12] and similar books from Amazon.com

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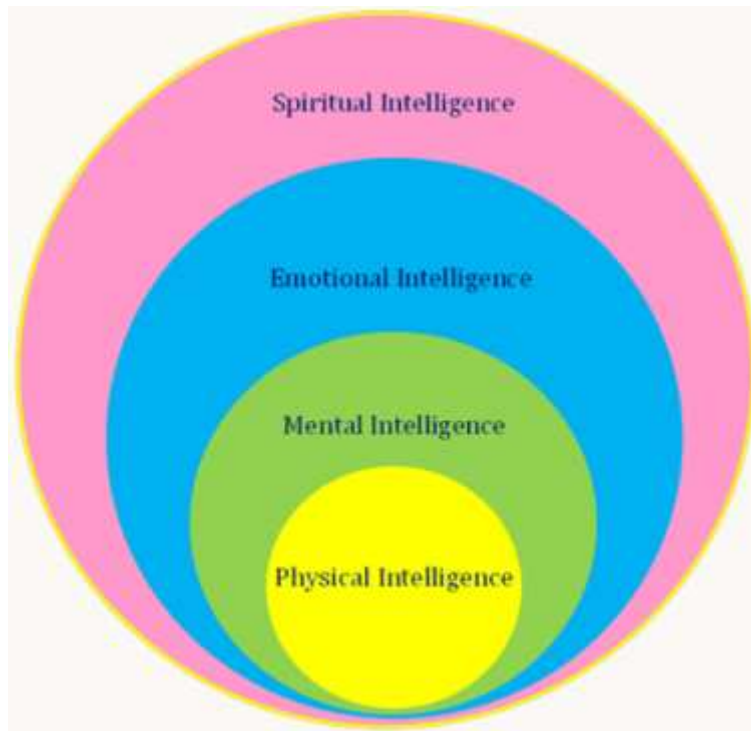


Figure 1 How spiritual intelligence is related to other intelligences [1].

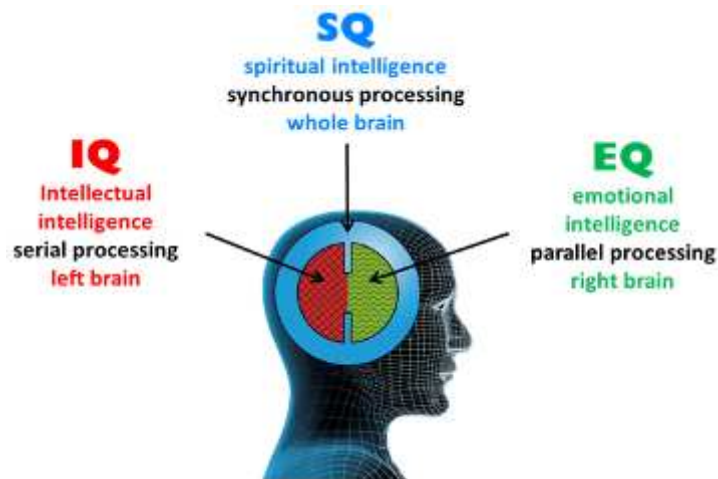


Figure 2 Three dimensions of intelligence [2]



Figure 3 Spiritual intelligence in leadership [7].