Aristotle’s Challenge
Our Journey

In this book I serve as a guide in a journey through these scientific insights into the emotions. Part One-new discoveries about the brain’s emotional architecture

Part Two-Seeing how neurological givens play out in the basic flair for living called emotional intelligence: being able, for example, to rein in emotional impulse, to read another’s innermost feelings; to handle relationships smoothly. As Aristotle said “to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time for the right purpose, and in the right way.”

Part Three-how these abilities can preserve our most prize relationships

Part Four-shows emotional lessons we learn as children at home and at school shape the emotional circuits

Part Five-explores what hazards await those who, in growing to maturity, fail to master the emotional realm

Chapter 1
What are Emotions For?

Impulses to Action
- With anger blood flows to the hands, making it easier to grasp a weapon
- With fear blood goes to the large skeletal muscles, such as the legs, making it easier to flee
- Among the main biological changes in happiness is an increased activity in a brain center that inhibits negative feelings and fosters an increase in available energy, and a quieting of those that generate worrisome thought.
- Love, tender feelings, and sexual satisfaction entail parasympathetic arousal that generates a general state of calm and contentment, facilitating cooperation.
- Surprise allows the taking in of a larger visual sweep and also permits more light to strike the retina. This offers more information.
- Disgust-something is offensive in taste or smell.

- Sadness brings a drop in energy and enthusiasm for life’s activities, particularly diversions and pleasures, as it deepens and approaches depression, shows the body’s metabolism.
Chapter 2
Anatomy of an Emotional Hijacking

- The brain has two memory systems, one for ordinary facts and one for emotionally charged ones.

Harmonizing emotion and thought
- Strong emotion can create neural static, sabotaging the ability of the prefrontal lobe to maintain working memory. That is why when we are emotionally upset we say we “just can’t think straight”.
- Despite their intact intelligence, they make disastrous choices.
- Cut off from emotional memory in the amygdala, whatever the neocortex mulls over no longer triggers the emotional reactions that have been associated with it in the past—everything takes on gray neutrality. These patients have “forgotten” all such emotional lessons because they no longer have access to where they are stored in the amygdala.
- The emotions, then, matter for rationality.
- In a sense we have two brains, two minds—and two different kinds of intelligence: rational and emotional. How we do in life is determined by both—it is not just IQ, but emotional intelligence that matters. The complementarity of limbic system and neocortex, amygdala and prefrontal lobes, means each is a full partner in mental life. When these partners interact well, emotional intelligence rises—as does intellectual ability.
- The old paradigm held an ideal or reason freed of the pull of emotion. The new paradigm urges us to harmonize head and heart.

Chapter 3
When Smart is Dumb

Can Emotions be Intelligent?
- Knowing one’s emotions: Self-awareness—recognizing a feeling as it happens—is the keystone of emotional intelligence. An inability to notice our true feelings leaves us at their mercy.
- Managing emotions—Handling feelings so they are appropriate is an ability that builds on self-awareness. People who are poor in this ability are constantly battling feelings of distress, while those who excel in it can bounce back far more quickly from life’s setbacks and upsets.
- Motivating oneself—Emotional self-control—delaying gratification and stifling impulsiveness—underlies accomplishment of every sort.
- Recognizing emotions in others—empathy, another ability that builds on emotional self-awareness, is the fundamental “people skill.”
- Handling relationships—skill in managing emotions in others

IQ and Emotional Intelligence: Pure Types
The high-IQ pure type (that is, setting aside emotional intelligences) is almost a caricature of the intellectual, adept in the realm of mind but inept in the personal world. The profiles differ slightly for men and women. The high IQ male is typified—no surprise—by a wide range of intellectual interest and abilities. He is ambitious and productive, predictable and dogged, and untroubled by concerns about himself. He also tends to be critical and condescending, fastidious and inhibited, uneasy with sexuality and sensual experience, unexpressive and detached, and emotionally bland and cold.

By contrast, men who are high in emotional intelligence are socially poised, outgoing and cheerful, not prone to fearfulness or worried rumination. They have a notable capacity for commitment to people or causes, for taking responsibility, and for having an ethical outlook; they are sympathetic and caring in their relationships. Their emotional life is rich, but appropriate; they are comfortable with themselves, others, and the social universe they live in.

Purely high-IQ women have the expected intellectual confidence, are fluent in expressing their thoughts, value intellectual matters, and have a wide range of intellectual and aesthetic interests. They also tend to be introspective, prone to anxiety, rumination, and guilt, and hesitate to express their anger openly (though they do so indirectly).

Emotionally intelligent women, by contrast, tend to be assertive and express their feelings directly, and to feel positive about themselves; life holds meaning for them. Like the men, they are outgoing and gregarious, and express their feelings appropriately (rather than, say, in outbursts they later regret); they adapt well to stress. Their social poise lets them easily reach out to new people; they are comfortable enough with themselves to be playful, spontaneous, and open to sensual experience. Unlike the women purely high in IQ, they rarely fell anxious or guilty, or sink into rumination.

All of us mix IQ and emotional intelligence in varying degrees.

Chapter 4
Know Thyself

- This quality of awareness is akin to what Freud described as an “evenly hovering attention”.
- Such attention takes in whatever passes through awareness with impartiality, as an interest yet unreactive witness.
- Self-awareness, in short, means being “aware of both our mood and our thoughts about that mood.
- Mayer finds that people tend to fall into distinctive styles for attending to and dealing with their emotions.
- Self-aware. Aware of their moods as they are having them. Their mindfulness helps them manage their emotions.
Engulfed. These are people who often feel swamped by their emotions and helpless to escape them. Not very aware of their feelings.

Accepting. While these people are often clear about what they are feeling, they also tend to be accepting of their moods, and so don’t try to change them.
- Two branches
  - Those in good moods so have little motivation to change them
  - Bad moods but accept them with a laissez-faire attitude, doing nothing to change them despite their distress—a pattern found among, say, depressed people who are resigned to their despair.

The Passionate and the Indifferent
- Diener finds that women, in general, feel both positive and negative emotions more strongly than do men. Emotional life is richer for those who notice more.

The Man without Feelings
- Henry Roth in his novel *Call It Sleep* about the power of language, “If you could put words to what you felt, it was yours.”
- Having no words for feelings means not making the feelings your own.

In Praise of Gut Feeling
- While strong feelings can create havoc in reasoning, the lack of awareness of feeling can also be ruinous
- The intuitive signals that guide us in these moments come in the form of limbic-driven surges from the viscera that Damasio calls “somatic markers”—literally, gut feelings. The somatic marker is a kind of automatic alarm.

Plumbing the Unconscious
- Emotions that simmer beneath the threshold of awareness can have a powerful impact on how we perceive and react, even though we have no idea they are at work.
- Once that reaction is brought into awareness—he can evaluate things anew, decide to shrug off the feelings left earlier in the day, and change his outlook and mood. In this way emotional self-awareness is the building block of the next fundamental of emotional intelligence: being able to shake off a bad mood.

Chapter 5
Passion’s Slaves
- The design of the brain means that we very often have little or no control over when we are swept by emotion, nor over what emotion it will be. But we can have some say in how long an emotion will last.
The Anatomy of Rage
- Benjamin Franklin put it well: “Anger is never without a reason, but seldom a good one.”

Anger Builds on Anger
- Anger builds on anger; the emotional brain heats up. By then rage, unhampered by reason, easily erupts in violence.
- The high level of excitation, Zillmann says, “fosters an illusion of power and invulnerability that may inspire and facilitate aggression.

Balm for Anger
- Two main ways of intervening.
  - One – to seize on and challenge the thoughts that trigger the surges of anger.
  - Timing matters; the earlier in the anger cycle the more effective.

Cooling Down
- It’s hard to stay angry when we’re having a pleasant time.
- Get anger to cool to the point where someone can have a pleasant time in the first place.
- A long walk
- Active exercise
- Muscle relaxation
- Tice found that ventilating anger is one of the worst ways to cool down: outbursts of rage typically pump up the emotional brain’s arousal.

Soothing Anxiety: What, Me Worry?
- When fear triggers the emotional brain, part of the resulting anxiety fixates attention on the threat at hand, forcing the mind to obsess about how to handle it and ignore anything else for the time being.
- The worries could be stopped by shifting attention away.
- New solutions and fresh ways of seeing a problem do not typically come from worrying, especially chronic worry.
- Chronic worriers tell Borkovec that worrying helps them like an amulet that wards off some anticipated evil, the worry psychologically get the credit for preventing the danger it obsessed about.

The Work of Worrying

Some simple steps that can help
- The first step is self-awareness-catching the worrisome episodes as near their beginning as possible
- Learn relaxation methods
- Worriers also need to actively challenge the worrisome thoughts.
Managing Melancholy

- Worrying about what’s depressing us, it seems, makes the depression all the more intense.
- Depressed people sometimes justify this kind of rumination by saying they are trying to “understand themselves better”; in fact, they are priming the feelings of sadness.
- Rumination can also make the depression stronger by creating conditions that are, well, more depressing.
- Women, are far more prone to ruminate when they are depressed than are men.

Two Strategies

- One is to learn to challenge the thoughts at the center of rumination
- The other is to purposely schedule pleasant, distracting events

Mood-lifters

- Depression-prone volunteers used other distressing thoughts to distract themselves.
- Distractions break the chain of sadness-maintaining thing.
- Wenzlaff would add that the most effective distractions are ones that will shift your mood
  - An exciting sporting event, a funny movie, an uplifting book.
  - Some distractors in themselves can perpetuate depression. Studies of heavy TV watchers have found that, after watching TV, they are generally more depressed than before they started!
- Aerobic exercise, is one of the more effective tactics for lifting mild depression, as well as other bad moods.
- Cheering oneself up through treats and sensual pleasures.
- A more constructive approach to mood-lifting, Tice reports, is engineering a small triumph or easy success
- One of the most potent is seeing things differently, or cognitive reframing
- Another effective depression-lifter is helping others in need.
- Finally, to find relief from melancholy in turning to a transcendent power. “Praying, if you’re very religious, works for all moods, especially depression.”

Chapter 6
The Master Aptitude

- When emotions overwhelm concentration, what is being swamped is the mental capacity cognitive scientists call “Working memory,” the ability to hold in mind all information relevant to the task at hand.
- To the degree that our emotions get in the way of or enhance our ability to think and plan, to pursue training for a distant goal, to solve problems and the like, they define the limits of our capacity to use our innate mental abilities, and so determine how we do in life. And to the degree to which we are
motivated by feelings of enthusiasm and pleasure in what we do—or even by an optimal degree of anxiety—they propel us to accomplishment.

Foul Moods, Fouled Thinking
- Anxiety undermines the intellect.
- People who are adept at harnessing their emotions, on the other hand can use anticipatory anxiety—about an upcoming speech or test, say—to motivate themselves to prepare well for it.
- Good moods, while they last, enhance the ability to think flexibly and with more complexity, thus making it easier to find solutions to problems, whether intellectual or interpersonal.
- Even mild mood changes can sway thinking
- Being in a foul mood biases memory in a negative direction, making us more likely to contract into a fearful, overly cautious decision.

Chapter 7
The Roots of Empathy
- Empathy builds on self-awareness; the more open we are to our own emotions, the more skilled we will be in reading feelings.
- 90 percent or more of an emotional message is nonverbal.

Chapter 8
The Social Arts
Four separate abilities that Hatch and Gardner identify as components of interpersonal intelligence:
- Organizing groups—the essential skill of the leader, this involves initiating and coordinating the efforts of a network of people. Heads of organizations.
- Negotiating solutions—the talent of the mediator, preventing conflicts or resolving those that flare up. Middlemen or managers.
- Personal connection—That of empathy and connecting. Make good “team players”.
- Social analysis—being able to detect and have insights about people’s feelings, motives, and concerns. Makes one a competent therapist or counselor.

Chapter 9
Intimate Enemies
Gottman uses the apt term flooding for this susceptibility to frequent emotional distress: flooded husbands or wives are so overwhelmed by their partner’s negativity and their own reaction to it that they are swamped by dreadful, out-of-control feelings.
- More men than women react to their spouse’s criticism with flooding
- It takes husbands longer to recover physiologically from flooding
• Just as men are far more likely to be stonewallers, so the women are more likely to criticize their husbands. This asymmetry arises as a result of wives pursuing their role as emotional managers.

His and Hers: Marital Advice
• Men and women, in general, need different emotional fine-tuning. For men, the advice is not to sidestep conflict, but to realize that when their wife brings up some grievance or disagreement, she may be doing it as an act of love, trying to keep the relationship healthy and on course.
• But husbands need to realize that anger or discontent is not synonymous with personal attack—their wives’ emotions are often simply underlines, emphasizing the strength of her feelings about the matter.
• Men also need to be on guard against short-circuiting the discussion by offering a practical solution too early on—it’s typically more important to a wife that she feel her husband hears her complaint and empathizes with her feelings about the matter.
• Husbands who are able to stay with their wives through the heat of anger rather than dismissing their complaints as petty, help their wives feel heard and respected.
• Wives need to make purposeful effort to be careful not to attack their husbands—to complain about what they did, but not criticize them as a person or express contempt.

The Good Fight
• Since feeling hears is often exactly what the aggrieved partner really is after, emotionally an act of empathy is a masterly tension reducer.

Calming Down
• Because the ability to hear, think, and speak with clarity dissolves during such an emotional peak, calming down is an immensely constructive step.

Detoxifying Self-talk
• By catching these thoughts and challenging them—rather than simply being enraged or hurt by them—a husband or wife can begin to become free of their hold.

Nondefensive Listening and Speaking
• The most powerful form of nondefensive listening, of course, is empathy.
• One method for effective emotional listening, is called “mirroring”. When one partner makes a complaint, the other repeats it back in her own words, trying to capture not just the thought, but also the feelings that go with it.
• Finally, respect and love disarm hostility in marriage.
Chapter 10
Managing with Heart

- The worst Way to Motivate Someone
- Criticisms are voiced as personal attacks rather than complaints that can be acted upon.
- Many managers are too willing to criticize, but frugal with praise, leaving their employees feeling that they only hear about how they’re doing when they make a mistake.

- The Artful Critique
- An artful critique focuses on what a person has done and can do rather than reading a mark of character into a job poorly done.
- Be specific. Pick a significant incident. It demoralizes people just to hear that they are doing “something” wrong without knowing what.
- Offer a solution.
- Be present. Critiques, like praise, are most effective fact to face and in private.

Organizational Savvy and The Group IQ

- The single most important factor in maximizing the excellence of a group’s product was the degree to which the members were able to create a state of internal harmony, which lets them take advantage of the full talent of their members.
- Many things people do at work depend on their ability to call on a loose network of fellow workers.
- Just how well people can “work” a network-in effect, make it into a temporary, ad hoc team-is a crucial factor in on-the-job success.
- The future of all corporate life, a tomorrow where the basic skills of emotional intelligence will be ever more important, in teamwork, in cooperation, in helping people learn together how to work more effectively.

Chapter 11
Mind and Medicine

With a Little Help From My Friends:
The Medical Value of Relationships

- Isolation is harder on men than on women: Isolated men were two or three times more likely to die as were men with close social ties; for isolated women, the risk was one and a half times greater than for more socially connected women.
- Men who had originally reported being under intense emotional stress had a death rate three times greater than those who said their lives were calm and placid.
• Having people to turn to and talk with, people who could offer solace, help and suggestions, protected them from the deadly impact of life’s rigors and trauma.
• The more significant the relationship is in your life, the more it matters for your health.

Toward a Medicine That Cares
• Helping people better manage their upsetting feelings-anger, anxiety, depression, pessimism, and loneliness-is a form of disease prevention.
• Many patients can benefit measurably when their psychological needs are attended to along with their purely medical ones.

Chapter 12
The Family Crucible

A child’s readiness for school depends on the most basic of all knowledge, how to learn. Seven key ingredients:
• Confidence
• Curiosity
• Intentionality
• Self-control
• Relatedness
• Capacity to communicate
• Cooperativeness

Chapter 13
Trauma and Emotional Relearning

Emotional Relearning and Recovery from Trauma
• The first step, regaining a sense of safety, begins with helping patients understand that their jumpiness and nightmares, hypervigilance and panics, are part of the symptoms of PTSD-Post-traumatic stress disorder. This understanding makes the symptoms themselves less frightening.
• Another step in healing involves retelling and reconstructing the story of the trauma in the harbor of that safety, allowing the emotional circuitry to acquire a new, more realistic understanding of and response to the traumatic memory and its trigger.
• The therapist encourages the patient to retell the traumatic events as vividly as possible. Put the entire memory into words, which means capturing parts of the memory. By putting sensory details and feelings into words, presumably memories are brought more under control of the neocortex, where the reactions they kindle can be rendered more understandable and so more manageable.
• Finally, Herman finds that patients need to mourn the loss.
Chapter 15
The Cost of Emotional Illiteracy

A direct barometer of dropping levels of emotional competence.
- Withdrawal or social problems.
- Anxious and depressed.
- Attention or thinking problems
- Delinquent or aggressive.

A Cost of Modernity: Rising Rates of Depression

Martin Seligman, the University of Pennsylvania psychologist, proposed: “For the last thirty or forty years we’ve seen the ascendance of individualism and a waning of larger beliefs in religion, and in supports from the community and extended family. That means a loss of resources that can buffer you against setbacks and failures. To the extent you see a failure as something that is lasting and which you magnify to taint everything in your life, you are prone to let a momentary defeat become a lasting source of hopelessness. But if you have a larger perspective, like a belief in God and an afterlife, and you lose your job, it’s just a temporary defeat”.

Short-Circuiting Depression
- “What a child learns in these classes is that moods like anxiety, sadness and anger don’t just descend on you without your having any control over them, but that you can change the way you feel by what you think,” points out psychologist Martin Seligman.

Appendix D
W. T. Grant Consortium: Active Ingredients of Prevention Programs

Key ingredients of effective programs include:

Emotional Skills
- Identifying and labeling feelings
- Expressing feelings
- Assessing the intensity of feelings
- Managing feelings
- Delaying gratification
- Controlling impulses
- Reducing stress
- Knowing the difference between feelings and actions

Cognitive Skills
- Self-talk-conducting an “inner dialogue” as a way to cope with a topic or challenge or reinforce one’s own behavior
• Reading and interpreting social cues-for example, recognizing social influences on behavior and seeing oneself in the perspective of the larger community
• Using steps for problem-solving and decision-making-for instance, controlling impulses, setting goals, identifying alternative actions, anticipating consequences
• Understanding the perspective of others
• Understanding behavioral norms (what is and is not acceptable behavior)
• A positive attitude toward life
• Self-awareness-for example, developing realistic expectations about oneself

Behavioral Skills
• Nonverbal—communicating through eye contact, facial expressiveness, tone of voice, gestures, and so on
• Verbal—making clear request, responding effectively to criticism, resisting negative influences, listening to others, helping others, participating in positive peer groups

Appendix E
The Self Science Curriculum

Main components:
• Self-awareness: observing yourself and recognizing your feelings; building a vocabulary for feelings; knowing the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and reactions
• Personal decision-making: examining your actions and knowing their consequences; knowing if thought or feelings is ruling a decision; applying these insights to issues such as sex and drugs
• Managing feelings: monitoring “self-talk” to catch negative messages such as internal put-downs; realizing what is behind a feeling (e.g., the hurt that underlies anger); finding ways to handle fears and anxieties, anger, and sadness
• Handling stress: learning the value of exercise, guided imagery, relaxation methods
• Empathy: understanding others’ feelings and concerns and taking their perspective; appreciating the differences in how people feel about things
• Communications: talking about feelings effectively: becoming a good listener and question-asker; distinguishing between what someone does or says and your own reactions or judgments about it; sending “I” messages instead of blame
• Self-disclosure: valuing openness and building trust in a relationship; knowing when it’s safe to risk talking about your private feelings
• Insight: identifying patterns in your emotional life and reactions; recognizing similar patterns in others
• Self-acceptance: feeling pride and seeing yourself in a positive light; recognizing your strengths and weaknesses; being able to laugh at yourself
• Personal responsibility: taking responsibility; recognizing the consequences of your decisions and actions; accepting your feelings and moods, following through on commitments (e.g., to studying)
• Assertiveness: stating your concerns and feelings without anger or passivity
• Group dynamics: cooperation; knowing when and how to lead, when to follow
• Conflict resolution: how to fight fair with other kids, with parents, with teachers; the win/win model for negotiating compromise