

## **Developing Emotional Intelligence**

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Beyond the benefit of understanding oneself, the appeal of the concept of emotional intelligence is the hope for development. Many researchers of this concept contend that a person can develop the characteristics that constitute emotional intelligence. But few have taken the time to rigorously evaluate change efforts. In this paper, a model is presented of individual change based on years of research on development of the characteristics now called emotional intelligence. This evidence offers hope that emotional intelligence competencies can be developed. It has emerged from multiple sources, but three in particular. First, the research of David McClelland, David Winter, and colleagues on developing achievement and power motivation from the 1960's and 1970's. Secondly, the work of David Kolb and colleagues on self-directed behavior change from the 1960's and early 1970's. Thirdly, the work of numerous doctoral students and colleagues at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University in the late 1980's and throughout the 1990's in competency development. The research is reviewed as evidence of a model or theory of individual, sustainable change.

### **Emotional Intelligence Can Be Developed**

In this paper, as in all the pieces in this volume, emotional intelligence is defined as the composite set of capabilities that enable a person to manage himself/herself and others (Goleman, 1995, 1998). It is more accurate to say that the frequency with which a person demonstrates or uses the constituent capabilities, or competencies, inherent in emotional intelligence determine the ways in which he/she deals with themselves, their life and work, and others (Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee, 2000). Although the specific labels and conceptualizations of these competencies may vary, they are a set of competencies addressing: (a) Self Awareness, including Emotional Self-awareness, Accurate Self-assessment, and Self-confidence; (b) Self Management, including Achievement Orientation,

Adaptability, Initiative, Trustworthiness, Conscientiousness, and Self-control; (c) Social Awareness, including Empathy, Service Orientation, and Organizational Awareness; and (d) Social Skills, including Leadership, Influence, Communication, Developing Others, Change Catalyst, Conflict Management, Building Bonds, Teamwork and Collaboration (Goleman, 1998; Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee, 2000).

### **Can a Person Improve on These Competencies**

Decades of research on the effects of psychotherapy (Hubble et. al., 1999), self-help programs (Kanfer and Goldstein, 1991), cognitive behavior therapy (Barlow, 1985), training programs (Morrow, Jarrett, and Rupinski, 1997), and education (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Winter, McClelland, and Stewart, 1981) have shown that people can change their behavior, moods, and self-image. But most of the studies focused on a single characteristic, like maintenance of sobriety, reduction in a specific anxiety, or a set of characteristics often determined by the assessment instrument, such as the scales of the MMPI. For example, the impact of Achievement Motivation Training was a dramatic increase in small business success, with people creating more new jobs, starting more new businesses, and paying more taxes than comparison groups (McClelland and Winter, 1969; Miron and McClelland, 1979). The impact of Power Motivation Training was improved maintenance of sobriety (Cutter, Boyatzis, and Clancy, 1977).

The current conceptualization of emotional intelligence poses a challenging question: Can a person change on the set of competencies that constitute emotional intelligence which have been shown to determine outstanding job performance in many occupations, including management and professional jobs?

A series of longitudinal studies underway at the Weatherhead School of Management of Case Western Reserve University have shown that people can change on these competencies over two to five years. MBA students, averaging 27 years old at entry into the program, showed dramatic changes on videotaped and audiotaped behavioral samples and questionnaire measures of these competencies, as summarized in Figures 1 and 2, as a result of the competency-based, outcome oriented MBA program implemented in 1990 (Boyatzis, Baker, Leonard, Rhee, and Thompson, 1995; Boyatzis, Leonard, Rhee, and Wheeler, 1996; Boyatzis, Wheeler, and Wright, in press).

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Four cadres of full-time MBA students graduating in 1992, 1993, 1994, and 1995, showed strong improvement (i.e., statically significant improvement in multiple years of evidence with multiple measures of the competency) on 71% (5 of 7) of the competencies in the Self-Management cluster (i.e., Efficiency Orientation, Planning, Initiative, Flexibility, Self-confidence), 100% (2) of the competencies in the Social Awareness cluster (i.e., Empathy, Social Objectivity), and 50% (3 of 6) of the competencies in the Social Skills cluster (i.e., Networking, Oral Communications, Group Management). Meanwhile the part-time MBA students graduating in 1994, 1995, and 1996 showed strong improvement on 71% of the competencies in the Self-Management cluster (i.e., Efficiency Orientation, Initiative, Flexibility, Attention to Detail, Self-confidence), 50% of the competencies in the Social Awareness cluster (i.e., Social Objectivity), and 83% of the competencies in the Social Skills cluster. In a follow-up study of two of these graduating classes of part-time students, Wheeler (1999) showed that during the two years following graduation they improved, statistically significantly, on an audiotaped, behavioral measure of

the other competencies in the Social Awareness and Social Skills clusters (i.e., Empathy and Persuasiveness) on which they had not shown strong improvement during the MBA program.

This is in contrast to MBA graduates of the WSOM of the 1988 and 1989 traditional MBA program who showed strong improvement in only one competency in the Self-Management Cluster (i.e., full-time students in those two cadres showed improvement in Self-confidence while part-time students in those two cadres showed improvement in Flexibility). It is also worth noting that full-time students graduating from the competency-based MBA program showed strong or “some” evidence of improvement in 100% or all of the emotional intelligence competencies assessed and part-time students showed strong or “some” evidence of improvement in 93% of the competencies assessed (i.e., some evidence is defined as statistically, significant improvement in one year or with one measure). In a longitudinal study of four classes completing the Professional Fellows Program (i.e., an executive education program at the Weatherhead School of management), Ballou, Bowers, Boyatzis, and Kolb (1999) showed that 45-55 year old professional and executives statistically, significantly improved on Self-confidence, Leadership, Helping, Goal Setting, and Action skills. these were 67% of the emotional intelligence competencies assessed in this study.

### **If People Can Change, Why Would They Change?**

There are three reasons why a person might want to develop their emotional intelligence. First, a person may want to increase their effectiveness at work, or increase their potential for promotion. This could be called a career or professional development objective. Second, a person may want to become a better person. This could be called a personal growth objective. Third, a person may want to help others develop emotional intelligence or pursue either of the objectives mentioned above.

Effectiveness and success, which are not synonymous, require a good “fit” between the person (i.e., his or her capability or competencies, values, interests, and so forth), and the demands of a specific job or role, and the organizational environment, as shown in Figure 3 (Boyatzis, 1982). In human resource management, common practice is to identify the competencies needed for effective job performance and then either find people with those competencies and hire them for the job or develop them in people already in the organization (Boyatzis, 1996). The link between the emotional intelligence competencies and performance was reviewed and summarized in Goleman (1998).

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Unfortunately, competencies, even those empirically determined to lead or relate to outstanding job performance are *necessary but not sufficient* to predict performance, including the emotional intelligence competencies (Goleman, 1998). They help us understand *what* a person is capable of doing, and what they have done in the past, but not what they will do. In this way, competencies explain and describe *how* we perform but not *why* we perform or not. We need to know more about the person’s motivation and values to ascertain how their commitment to the organization and their compatibility with the vision and culture of the organization will affect their desire to utilize competencies they have. It will also affect their desire to develop or enhance other competencies. In some approaches to competency research, researchers will incorporate “intent” in the definition, such as Boyatzis (1982), Spencer and Spencer (1993), and McClelland (1973). Although this helps make the competency profile needed for maximum job performance more comprehensive, it still does not address the “will or desire” to use one’s capabilities, develop and enhance others. Looking at competency needs

for superior performance in jobs and roles in life, we are continually drawn back to the need for intentionality; what is the person's intention or reason for using the behavior and ability?

It is the same with behavioral change. Adults change themselves, especially regarding sustainable behavioral change. In other words, adults decide what or how they will change. This is also evident in terms of learning. People learn what they want to learn. Other things, even if acquired temporarily (i.e., for a test), are soon forgotten (Specht and Sandlin, 1991). Students, children, patients, clients, and subordinates may act as if they care about learning something, go through the motions, but they proceed to disregard it or forget it—unless, it is something which they want to learn. Even in situations where a person is under threat or coercion, a behavioral change shown will typically extinguish or revert to its original form once the threat is removed. This does not include changes induced, willingly or not, by chemical or hormonal changes in one's body. But even in such situations, the interpretation of the changes and behavioral comportment following it will be affected by the person's will, values, and motivations.

In this way, it appears that most, if not all, sustainable behavioral change is intentional. *Self-directed change is an intentional change in an aspect of who you are (i.e., the Real) or who you want to be (i.e., the Ideal), or both. Self-directed learning is self-directed change in which you are aware of the change and understand the process of change.*

The process of self-directed change and learning is graphically shown in Figure 4 (Boyatzis, 1999). This is an enhancement of the earlier models developed by Kolb, Winter, and Berlew (1968), Boyatzis and Kolb (1969), Kolb and Boyatzis (1970a and b), and Kolb (1971). The description and explanation of the process in this paper is organized in four sections. Each section starts with a point of discontinuity. That is, a part of the process that may not and often does not occur as a smooth, linear

event. It occurs with surprise. The person's behavior may seem to be stuck for long periods of time and then a change appears quite suddenly. This is a discontinuity. Throughout the paper, concepts from complexity theory are used to describe the model of self-directed change and learning. A person might begin the process of self-directed change and learning at any point in the process, but it will often begin when the person experiences a discontinuity, the associated epiphany or a moment of awareness and a sense of urgency.

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This model describes the process as designed into a required course and the elements of the MBA and executive programs implemented in 1990 at the Weatherhead School of Management. Experimentation and research into the various components have resulted in refinement of these components and the model as discussed in this paper. For a detailed description of the course, read Boyatzis (1995, 1994).

### **The First Discontinuity: Deciding Who I Am and Who I Want to Be**

The first discontinuity and potential starting point for the process of self-directed change and learning is the discovery of who you are and who you want to be. This may occur as a decision among the choices as to your Real Self (i.e., Who am I?) and your Ideal Self (i.e., Who do I want to be?).

### **Catching Your Dreams, Energizing Your Passion**



Our Ideal Self is an image of the person we want to be. It emerges from our ego ideal, dreams, and aspirations. The last twenty years has revealed literature supporting the power of positive imaging or visioning in sports psychology, appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, 1990), meditation and biofeedback research, and other psycho-physiological research. It is believed that the potency of focusing one's thoughts on the desired end state of condition is driven by the emotional components of the brain (Goleman, 1995). Relying on earlier research on approach versus avoidance drives (Miller, 1951) and the power of conscious volition (James, 1892), it has been thought that your dreams and aspirations carry with them unconscious drives that are more powerful than conscious thought. The Ideal Self is a reflection of the person's intrinsic drives. Numerous studies have shown that intrinsic motives have more enduring impact on a person's behavior than extrinsic motives (Deci and Ryan, 199 ).

Our aspirations, dreams, and desired states are shaped by our values, philosophy (Boyatzis, Murphy, and Wheeler, 2000), life and career stages (Boyatzis and Kolb, 1999), motives (McClelland, 1985), role models, and other factors. This research indicates that we can access and engage deep emotional commitment and psychic energy if we engage our passions and conceptually catch our dreams in our Ideal Self-image.

It is an anomaly that we know the importance of consideration of the Ideal Self, and yet often, when engaged in a change or learning process we skip over the clear formulation or articulation of our Ideal Self image. If a parent, spouse, boss, or teacher, tells us something that should be different, they are giving us *their* version of our Ideal Self. They are telling us about the person *they* want us to be. The extent to which we believe or accept this image determines that extent to which it becomes part of our Ideal Self. Our reluctance to accept others' expectations or wishes for us to change is one of many reasons why we may not live up to others' expectations or wishes, and not change or learn according to

their agenda! In current psychology, others' version of what our Ideal Self should be is referred to as the "Ought Self."

We may be victims of the expectations of others and the seductive power of popularized images from the media, celebrities, and our reference groups. In his book, The Hungry Spirit: Beyond Capitalism, A Quest for Purpose in the Modern World (1997), Charles Handy describes the difficulty of determining his ideal. "I spent the early part of my life trying hard to be someone else. At school I wanted to be a great athlete, at university an admired socialite, afterwards a businessman and, later, the head of a great institution. It did not take me long to discover that I was not destined to be successful in any of these guises, but that did not prevent me from trying, and being perpetually disappointed with myself. The problem was that in trying to be someone else I neglected to concentrate on the person I could be. That idea was too frightening to contemplate at the time. I was happier going along with the conventions of the time, measuring success in terms of money and position, climbing ladders which others placed in my way, collecting things and contacts rather than giving expression to my own beliefs and personality. (pg. 86)" In this way, we allow ourselves to be anesthetized to our dreams and lose sight of our deeply felt Ideal Self.

### **Awareness of the Real: Am I a Boiling Frog?**

The awareness of the current self, the person that others see and with whom they interact, is elusive. For normal reasons, the human psyche protects itself from the automatic "intake" and conscious realization of all information about ourselves. These ego-defense mechanisms serve to protect us. They also conspire to delude us into an image of who we are that feeds on itself, becomes self-perpetuating, and eventually may become dysfunctional (Goleman, 1985).

How does this happen in reasonably intelligent, sensitive people? One aspect is the slow, gradual development of the perception of my self-image.

The "boiling frog syndrome" applies here. It is said that if one drops a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will jump out with an instinctive defense mechanism. But if you place a frog in a pot of cool water and gradually increase the temperature, the frog will sit in the water until it is boiled! These slow adjustments to changes are acceptable, but the same change made dramatically is not tolerated. As a more direct example, people gaining weight or losing their sense of humor often do not see the change in their current, real self because it develops from small steps and iterative adjustments. In the recent action-adventure film, Fire Down Below, Steven Seagal (the hero) is asking a local resident in the hills of West Virginia about smoke pouring out of the ground from an abandoned coal mine. When she tells him that it has been that way for 12 ½ years, he says, "Does that ever concern anybody that the earth's on fire in the ground?" She replies, "No, no matter how strange something is, you give it enough time and it becomes normal!"

The greatest challenge to an accurate current self-image (i.e., seeing yourself as others see you and consistent with other internal states, beliefs, emotions, and so forth) is the boiling frog syndrome. Several factors contribute to it. First, people around you may not let you see a change. They may not give you feedback or information about how they see it. Also, they may be victims of the boiling frog syndrome themselves, as they adjust their perception on a daily basis. For example, when seeing a friend's child after two years, you may gasp as to how fast they have grown. Meanwhile, the parent is only aware of the child's growth when they have to buy new shoes, clothes, or a sudden change in the child's hormonal balance leading to previously unlikely behavior.

Second, enablers, those forgiving the change, frightened of it, or who do not care, may allow it to pass unnoticed. Our relationships and interpersonal context mediate and interpret cues from the environment. They help us interpret what things mean. You ask a friend, “Am I getting fat?” To which she responds, “No, you look great!” Whether this is reassuring to the listener or not, it is confusing and may not be providing feedback to the question asked. Of course, if she had said, “No, it is just the spread of age or normal effects of gravity” you may not have more useful information either.

In a likely attempt to be nice or defend themselves against similar information about themselves, others may foster or perpetuate a delusion about your current real self-image. Here is a test: Is there something about yourself that you said, when you were young, you would never let happen, but has? Do you find yourself gradually taking on more characteristics and mannerisms of one of your parents? Transitions in life or careers may lead to changes in your behavior that may go unnoticed until they abruptly interfere with daily functioning.

In counseling sessions with effective CEOs and Managing Directors of not-for-profits, I have often been surprised by their lack of seeing themselves as leaders. Others may see them as leaders. Sometimes humility blocks this perception. Sometimes, it is the interpersonal or cultural context. When you are just one of the Gods on Olympus, everyone has these super-powers. On the planet Krypton, Superman was just another citizen without “supernatural” power. This lack of admitting that which is obvious to others to yourself can also occur when you have prolonged spiritual blackouts, losing sight of your core values and your philosophy.

### **Challenges and Paths to Awareness of Your Real and Ideal Self**

There are two major “learning points” from this section helpful in engaging the self-directed change and learning process:

- 1) *Engage your passion and create your dreams; and*
- 2) *Know thyself!*

Both of these learning points can be achieved by finding and using multiple sources for feedback about your Real and Ideal.

The sources of insight into your Real Self can include systematically collecting information from others, such as 360 degree feedback currently considered fashionable in organizations. This is a form of construct validity. That is, in collecting information about how you act and appear to many others (i.e., supervisor, peers, subordinates, clients/customers, family and spouse, and so forth), you are forming a consensually validated image of yourself. Whether this consensus is an image of *the real you* is based on two assumptions: (1) these others see, observe, and interact with you; and (2) you reveal yourself to them. Other sources of insight into your Real Self may come from behavioral feedback through videotaped or audiotaped interactions, such as collected in Assessment Centers. Various psychological tests can help you determine or make explicit inner aspects of your Real Self, such as values, philosophy, traits, motives, and such.

Sources for insight into your Ideal Self are more personal and more elusive than those for the Real Self. Various exercises and tests can help by making explicit various dreams or aspirations you have for the future. Talking with close friends or mentors can help. Allowing yourself to think about your desired future, not merely your prediction of your most likely future, is the biggest obstacle. These conversations and explorations must take place in psychologically safe surroundings. Often, the implicit norms of one’s immediate social groups and work groups do not allow nor encourage such discussion.

In this case, you may want to search for groups who are considering changing their lives in an academic program, career development workshop, or personal growth experience.

### **The Second Discontinuity: The Balance of Preservation and Adaptation**

The second discontinuity and potential start of self-directed change and learning is to determine the personal balance between the aspects of yourself you want to preserve, keep, relish, and those you would like to change, stimulate to grow, or adapt to your environment and situation. The awareness, or realization of these components and the balance is your readiness to change.

### **Strange Attractors of Change and Continuity (Adaptation and Preservation)**

The strange attractors of Preservation and Adaptation, or Change and Continuity, constitute a Yin/Yang balance and interaction regarding ourselves. That is, for a person to truly consider changing a part of himself or herself, you must have a sense of what you value and want to keep. Likewise, to consider what you want to preserve about yourself involves admitting aspects of yourself that you wish to change or adapt in some manner. Awareness of these two and exploring them exist in the context of each other.

All too often, people explore growth or development by focusing on the “gaps” or deficiencies. Organizational training programs and managers conducting annual “reviews” often commit the same mistake. There is an assumption that we can “leave well enough alone” and get to the areas that need work. It is no wonder that many of these programs or procedures intended to help a person develop result in the individual feeling battered, beleaguered and bruised, not helped, encouraged, motivated, or guided. The gaps may get your attention because they disrupt progress or flow (Fry, 1998).

Exploration of the yourself in the context of your environment (How am I fitting into this setting? How am I doing in the view of others? Am I part of this group or organization or family?) and examination of your Real Self in the context of your Ideal Self both involve comparative and evaluative judgements. A comprehensive view includes both strengths and weaknesses. That is, to contemplate change, one must contemplate stability. To identify and commit to changing parts of yourself you must identify those parts you want to keep and possibly enhance. In this way, adaptation does not imply or require “death” but evolution of the self.

Your willingness to change, or readiness to change relies on articulation of this balance and *both* of these factors. In various conceptualizations of readiness to change, Guglielmino (1978) and Guglielmino, Guglielmino, and Long (1987) focus on personal characteristics that precede change and appear to help move the process along. But in the model presented in this chapter, one’s readiness to change and even the desirability and commitment to the change is affected by the balancing of the articulation of elements of preservation and of adaptation.

The model presented in this chapter describes the change process. The noun or subject of the model is not “change.” Change itself is not the object. The ideal, or desired end result is the object of the change process. This desired end result may include aspects of the current Real Self as well as aspects of the Ideal Self not as yet achieved.

This involves juggling the present and future at the same time. That is, preservation and adaptation are present and future oriented, respectively. Preservation is “preserving the core”, stability, or in Fry’s (1993) terms the “continuity.” This is the part of ourselves that we value, enjoy, want to keep is often built into a part of our identity, self-image (self-schema), persona, and possibly even our public image. It is, in this sense, the present! Our “continuity story” tells us about the core. You can use a life

history, or autobiography to generate your “core.” Meanwhile, adaptation is “stimulating change”, change or growth, and in aspiring toward some Ideal Self is pursuing something in the future. This is analogous to the forces of adaptation and preservation which Collins and Porras (1994) documented as critical to organizations changing and surviving.

### **Challenges and Paths to Your Readiness to Change**

There are two major “learning points” from this section helpful in engaging the self-directed change and learning process:

1. *Identify or articulate both your strengths (those aspects of yourself you want to preserve) and your gaps or discrepancies of your Real and Ideal Selves (those aspects of yourself you want to adapt or change); and*
2. *Keep your attention on both characteristics, forces or factors—do not let one become the preoccupation!*

Some organizational cultures will, as mentioned earlier, encourage a preoccupation with the “gaps.” Some individuals have philosophies, or value orientations, that push them to focus on areas of improvement (i.e., a Pragmatic Value Orientation or philosophy, Boyatzis et. al., 2000, or a dominant underlying motive of the Need for Achievement, McClelland, 1985). Some individuals have such a low level of self-confidence or self-esteem that they assume they are unworthy and distrust positive feedback and focus on negative issues and the gaps.

To achieve these learning points, build strengths into any Development or Learning Plan on which you are working. At the same time, prevent overuse of a strength as a way to deny or avoid adaptation and change.



### **The Third Discontinuity: The Decision to Change**

The third discontinuity and potential start of the process of self-directed change and learning is the decision to change. Prochaska et. al. (1992) called this movement from contemplation to preparation to change. It is the emotional and/or intellectual next step beyond awareness of your strengths and weaknesses, discrepancies and congruencies between your Real and Ideal, that which you want to preserve and that which you want to adapt. It is during the part of the process that the direction and intention of the change effort is articulated and made explicit (i.e., conscious).

The setting of goals and creating plans to achieve those goals has been an integral part of models and theories of change processes and in particular self-directed processes for several centuries (Kolb and Boyatzis, 1970b). William James described the importance of conscious volition in helping one to change. Of course, even earlier Benjamin Franklin outlined a process for becoming a virtuous person by setting daily and weekly goals to increase one's virtuous behavior. McClelland (1965) formulated a motive acquisition process that included goal setting and planning, and then proceeded to establish the effectiveness of these steps in motive change studies among entrepreneurs (McClelland and Winter, 1969; Miron and McClelland, 1979, McClelland, Davis, Kalin, and Wanner, 1972). Kolb, Winter, and Berlew (1968), Kolb and Boyatzis (1970 a and b), Boyatzis and Kolb (1969), and Kolb (1971) began to elaborate the points in the process when goal setting and planing are essential for change to occur. Integration of McClelland's steps in motive acquisition and the Kolb and Boyatzis models resulted in a model called competency acquisition process (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer and Spencer, 1993).

As part of one of the longitudinal studies at the Weatherhead School of Management, Leonard (1996) showed that MBAs who set goals desiring to change on certain competencies, changed significantly on those competencies as compared to other MBAs. Previous goal setting literature had shown how goals affected certain changes on specific competencies (Locke and Latham, 1990), but had not established evidence of behavioral change on a comprehensive set of competencies which constitute emotional intelligence.

### **Challenges to Deciding to Change**

The one major learning point from this section helpful in engaging the self-directed change and learning process is: *Create your own, personal learning agenda!*

Others cannot tell you how you should change—they may tell you but it will not help you engage in the change process. Parents, teachers, spouses, bosses, and sometimes even your children will try to impose goals for change or learning. People only learn what they want to learn!

The late 1960's and early 1970's were witness to a widespread program in organizations called Management by Objectives. It was so popular that it spread to other arenas-- you could find books and workshops on Learning by Objectives, Teaching by Objectives, and so on and so forth. In all of these programs, there was one and only one approach to goal setting and planning taught. It specified development of behavioral specific, observable, time-phased, and challenging goals (i.e., involved moderate risk). Unfortunately, the one-size fits all approach lacked a credible alternative until McCaskey (1974) suggested that some people plan by “domain and direction setting.” Later, as part of the Weatherhead longitudinal studies, Renio (nea McKee) (1990) studied how MBA graduates planned personal improvement. She discovered four different styles of planning: objectives-oriented planning;

domain and direction planning; task (or activity) oriented planning; and “present-oriented” planning. The latter appeared as an existential orientation to one’s involvement in developmental activities, and could be considered a non-planning style.

The major challenge or threat to engaging in goal setting and planning is that people are already busy and cannot add anything else to their lives. In such cases, the only success with self-directed change and learning occurs if people can determine what to say “no” and stop some current activities in their lives to make room for new activities.

Another potential challenge or threat is the development of a plan that calls for a person to engage in activities different than their preferred learning style or learning flexibility (Kolb, 1984; Boyatzis, 1994). In such cases, a person commits to activities, or action steps in a plan that require a learning style which is not their preference or not within their flexibility. When this occurs, a person becomes demotivated and often stops the activities, or becomes impatient and decides that the goals are not worth the effort.

### **The Fourth Discontinuity: The Decision to Act**

The fourth discontinuity and potential start of self-directed change and learning is to experiment and practice desired changes. Acting on the plan and toward the goals involves numerous activities. These are often made in the context of experimenting with new behavior. Typically following a period of experimentation, the person practices the new behaviors in actual settings within which they wish to use them, such as at work or at home. During this part of the process, self-directed change and learning begins to look like a "continuous improvement" process.

To develop or learn new behavior, the person must find ways to learn more from current, or on-going experiences. That is, the experimentation and practice does not always require attending "courses" or a new activity. It may involve trying something different in a current setting, reflecting on what occurs, and experimenting further in this setting. Sometimes, this part of the process requires finding and using opportunities to learn and change. People may not even think they have changed until they have tried new behavior in a work or "real world" setting. Rhee (1997) studied full-time MBA students in one of the Weatherhead cadres over a two-year period. He interviewed, tested, and video and audio-taped them about every six to eight weeks. Even though he found evidence of significant improvements on numerous interpersonal abilities by the end of the second semester of their program, the MBA students did not perceive that they had changed or improved on these abilities until after they returned from their summer internships.

Dreyfus (1990) studied managers of scientists and engineers who were considered superior performers. Once she documented that they used considerably more of certain abilities than their less effective counterparts, she pursued how they developed some of those abilities. One of the distinguishing abilities was Group Management, also called Team Building. She found that many of these middle-aged managers had first experimented with team building skills in high school and college, in sports, clubs, and living groups. Later, when they became "bench scientists and engineers" working on problems in relative isolation, they still pursued use and practicing of this ability in activities outside of work. They practicing team building and group management in social and community organizations, such as 4-H Clubs, and professional associations in planning conferences and such.

The experimentation and practice are most effective when they occur in conditions in which the person feels safe (Kolb and Boyatzis, 1970b). This sense of psychological safety creates an atmosphere

in which the person can try new behavior, perceptions, and thoughts with relatively less risk of shame, embarrassment, or serious consequences of failure.

Our relationships are an essential part of our environment. The most crucial relationships are often a part of groups that have particular importance to us. These relationships and groups give us a sense of identity, guide us as to what is appropriate and "good" behavior, and provide feedback on our behavior. In sociology, they are called reference groups. These relationships create a "context" within which we interpret our progress on desired changes, the utility of new learning, and even contribute significant input to formulation of the Ideal (Kram, 1996). In this sense, our relationships are mediators, moderators, interpreters, sources of feedback, sources of support and permission of change and learning! They may also be the most important source of protection from relapses or returning to our earlier forms of behavior. Wheeler (1999) analyzed the extent to which the MBA graduates worked on their goals in multiple "life spheres" (i.e., work, family, recreational groups, etc.). In a two-year follow-up study of two of the graduating classes of part-time MBA students, she found those who worked on their goals and plans in multiple sets of relationships improved the most and more than those working on goals in only one setting, such as work or within one relationship.

In a study of the impact of the year-long executive development program for doctors, lawyers, professors, engineers, and other professionals mentioned earlier, Ballou et. al. (1999) found that participants gained self-confidence during the program. Even at the beginning of the program, others would say these participants were very high in self-confidence. It was a curious finding! The best explanation came from follow-up questions to the graduates of the program. They explained the evident increase in Self-confidence as an increase in the confidence to change. Their existing reference groups (i.e., family, groups at work, professional groups, community groups) all had an investment in them

staying the same, meanwhile the person wanted to change. The Professional Fellows Program allowed them to develop a new reference group that encouraged change!

Based on social identity, reference group, and now relational theories, our relationships both mediate and moderate our sense of who we are and who we want to be. We develop or elaborate our Ideal Self from these contexts. We label and interpret our Real Self from these contexts. We interpret and value Strengths (i.e., aspects considered our core that we wish to preserve) from these contexts. We interpret and value Gaps (i.e., aspects considered weaknesses or things we wish to change) from these contexts.

### **Challenges to the Decision to Act**

The major learning points from this section helpful in engaging the self-directed change and learning process are:

- (1) *Experiment and practice and try to learn more from your experiences!*
- (2) *Find settings in which you feel psychologically safe within which to experiment and practice! and*
- (3) *Develop and use your relationships as part of your change and learning process!*

### **Comparison to Other Models of Individual Change**

The proposed model, or theory of self-directed change is consistent with other approaches to understanding how people change. There have not been many models, or theories of individual change in the professional literature based on empirical research or conceptual meta-analysis. In Figure 5, this

model is compared to McClelland's twelve propositions for motive acquisition and change (1965), Proshaska's model (1992), and the model of "best practices" in developing emotional intelligence by the Research Consortium of Emotional Intelligence (Cherniss, et. al., 2000). The latter is a synthesis of the practices in 14 model programs found to have published evidence of positive impact on emotional intelligence and studied by members of the consortium.

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insert Figure 5 about here

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### **Concluding Thought**

Our future may not be entirely within our control, but most of what we become is within our power to create. Hopefully, the self-directed change and learning process described in this paper can provide a roadmap and guidance for how to increase the effectiveness of your change and learning efforts. As a concluding thought, I offer a few lines from the 1835 John Anster translation of Goethe's Faustus: A Dramatic Mystery. In the Prologue to the Theater, he says:

**"What you can do, or dream you can, begin it,**

**Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!"**

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Figure 1. Value-Added to Full-Time Students from the Old Vs. the New MBA Programs

Evidence of Value-added	Old Program			New Program		
	Goal and Action Mgt.	People Management	Analytic Reasoning	Goal and Action Mgt.	People Management	Analytic Reasoning
<b>STRONG EVIDENCE</b>		Self-Confidence	Use of Concepts Systems Thinking Quantitative Planning Analysis Use of Tech. Written Comm.	Efficiency Orientation Oral Comm. Initiative Flexibility	Self-confidence Networking Pattern Recognition Empathy Group Mgt.	Use of Concepts Systems Thinking Pattern Recognition Social Objectivity Quantitative Analysis Use of Technology Written Comm.
<b>SOME EVIDENCE</b>	Efficiency Orientation Initiative Flexibility	Empathy Networking	Social Objectivity	Self-control Attention to Detail	Developing Others Persuasiveness Negotiating	
<b>NO EVIDENCE</b>	Planning (Attention to Detail & Self-control were not coded)	Persuasiveness Negotiating Group Mgt. Developing Others Oral Comm.				
<b>NEGATIVE EVIDENCE</b>			Pattern Recog. (verbal)			

Figure 2. Value-Added to Part-Time Students from the Old Vs. the New MBA Programs

Evidence of Value-added	Old Program			New Program		
	Goal and Action Mgt.	People Management	Analytic Reasoning	Goal and Action Mgt.	People Management	Analytic Reasoning
<b>STRONG EVIDENCE</b>	Flexibility		Systems Thinking Quantitative Analysis	Efficiency Orientation Initiative Flexibility Attention to Detail	Group Mgt. Self-confidence Networking Oral Comm. Developing Others Negotiating	Use of Concepts Social Objectivity Use of Technology Pattern Recognition Quantitative Analysis System Thinking Written Comm.
<b>SOME EVIDENCE</b>	Efficiency Orientation	Negotiating	Written Comm. Social Objectivity	Planning	Empathy	Persuasiveness
<b>NO EVIDENCE</b>	Planning Initiative (Attention to Detail & Self-control were not coded)	Persuasiveness Self-confidence Networking Group Mgt. Oral Comm. Developing Others	Use of Concepts Pattern Recognition	Self-control		
<b>NEGATIVE EVIDENCE</b>		Empathy	Use of Tech.			

Figure 3.

## CONTINGENCY THEORY OF ACTION &amp; JOB PERFORMANCE (Boyatzis, 1982)

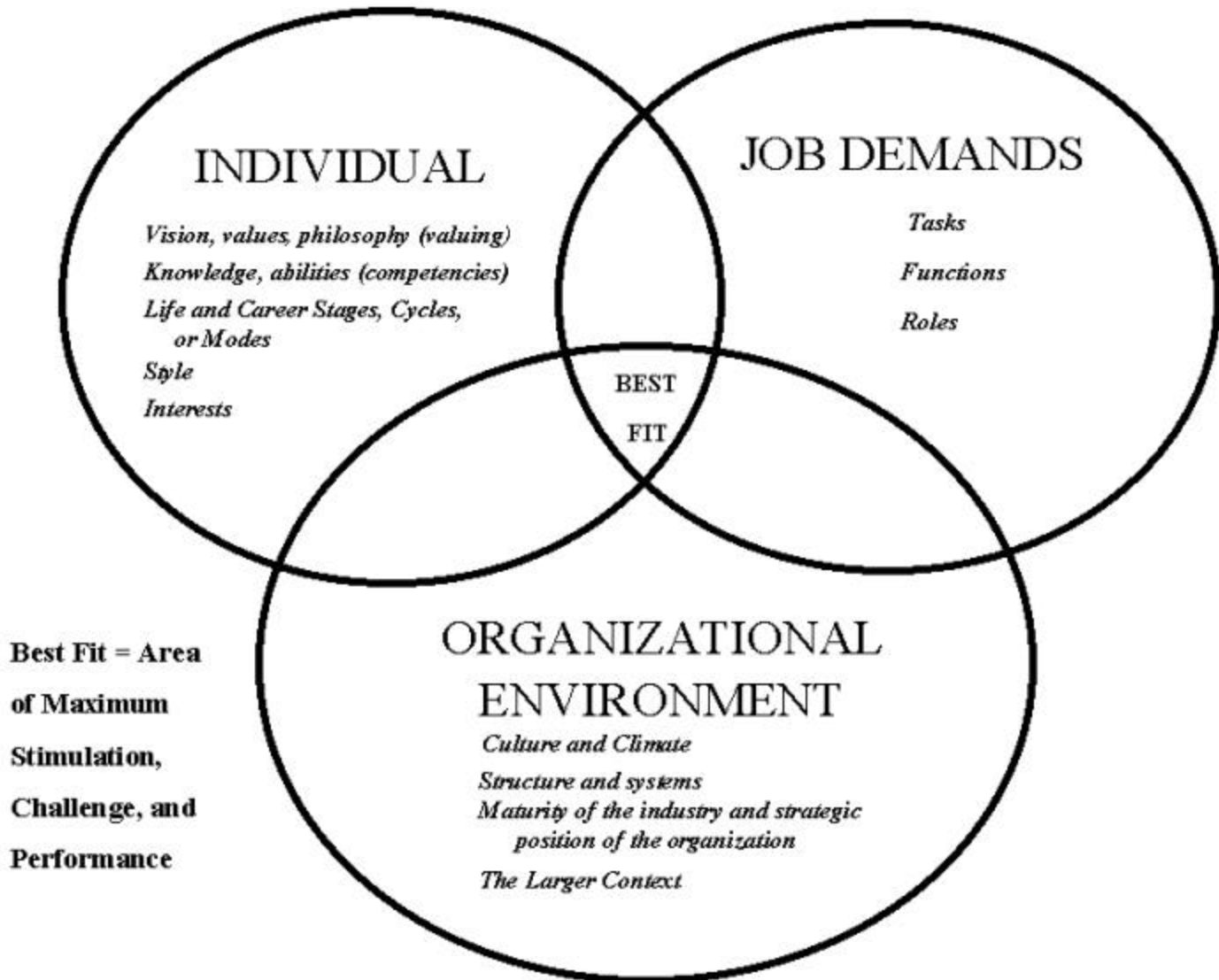
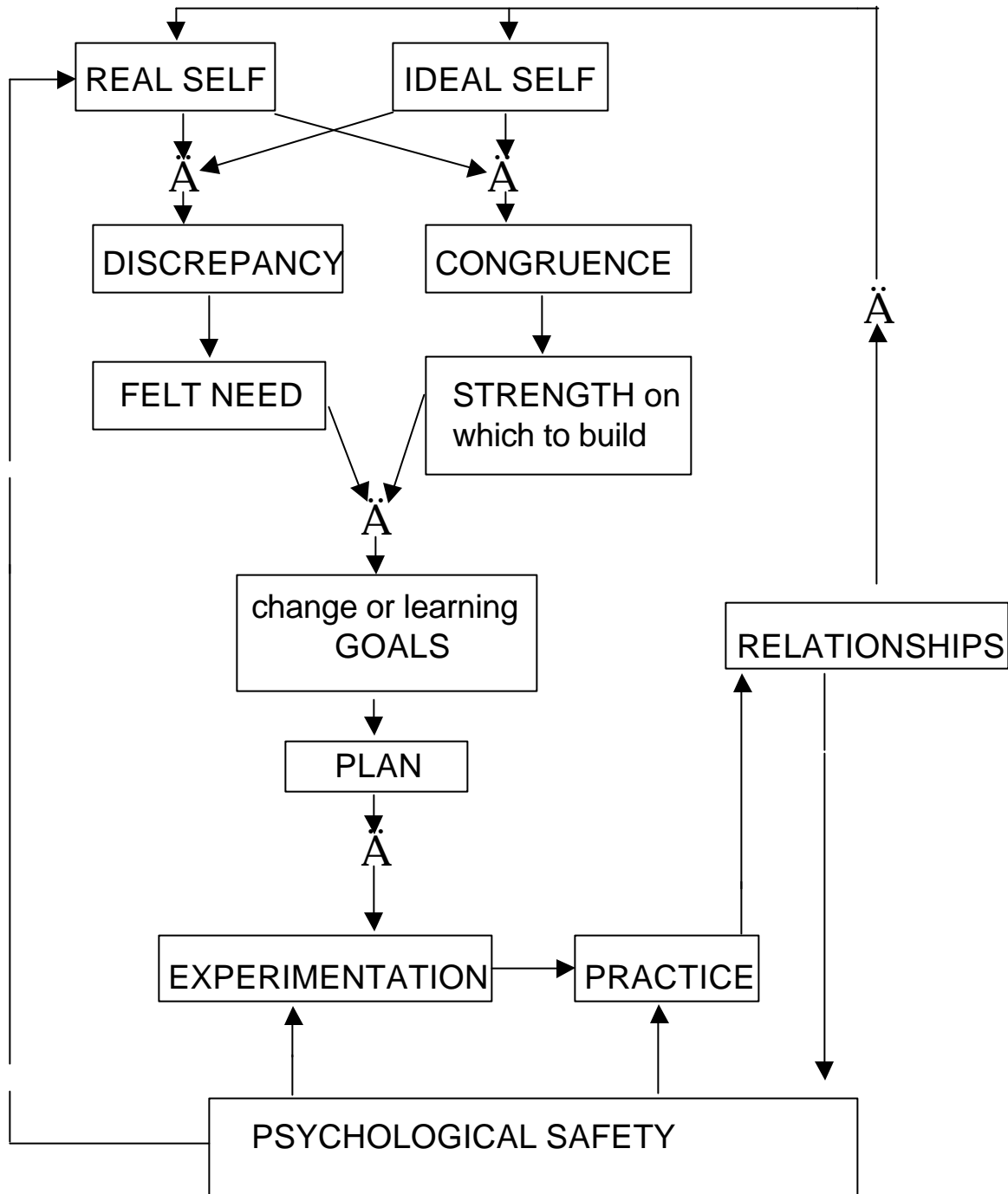


Figure 4. Self-Directed Change and Learning Process





**Figure 5. Comparison of Individual Change Models**

<u>Elements of SDC Process</u>	<u>McClelland's Motive Acquisition<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>EI Consortium Best Practices<sup>b</sup></u>	<u>Proshaska's Model<sup>c</sup></u>
Aware of Real Self	Improvement in self-image	Gauge readiness of learners Conduct on-going evaluation research	Precontemplation
Aware of Ideal Self	Belief that change can, will, should occur Consistent with demands of external reality Improvement on prevailing cultural values	Build positive expectations	Precontemplation
Realize discrepancies or gaps Realize congruencies or strengths		Assess individuals and deliver results with care	Contemplation Contemplation
Identify goals	Clearly conceptualizes changes as improvement in self-image Commits self to achieving goals	Make learning self-directed Set clear, meaningful, manageable goals	Preparation
Articulate a Plan	Link desired change to actions Link to events in everyday life		Preparation
Experiment and Practice	Keeps a record of progress Setting dramatizes self-study and lifts it from everyday life	Provide practice and feedback Rely on experiential methods Use "live" models	Action
In context of relationships and psychological safety	Within an interpersonal atmosphere of warmth, honest support, and respect Persistence of change if new behavior is a sign of membership in a new reference group	Foster a positive relationship between trainer and learner Inoculate against setbacks Create an encouraging environment Build in support	Maintenance

<sup>a</sup> McClelland (1965); <sup>b</sup> Cherniss and Adler (2000) also includes a number of guidelines addressing assessment and preparation of the organization for the development program or effort; <sup>c</sup> Proshaska (1992)