

Spiritual Intelligence: A Higher Dimension of Intelligence for Enhanced Learning

Richard Griffiths

3Q Institute, United Kingdom

Abstract

Historically, the education system has focused primarily on developing IQ, or intellectual intelligence. IQ manages facts and information, using logic and rational analysis. Less time and attention is given in schools to developing EQ skills. EQ is emotional intelligence, which is necessary to feel and regulate one's emotions, while being sensitive to the feelings of others. Both IQ and EQ are important, but they are not sufficient in themselves to maintain top performance, ensure personal wellbeing, and provide enduring fulfilment. The next dimension of intelligence is also necessary, which is SQ, or spiritual intelligence. SQ is an innate dimension of intelligence that everyone possesses. Spiritual intelligence is not religious. SQ depends not on belief but on direct personal experience beyond the ego. This presentation introduces spiritual intelligence, describes its scientific basis and its mode of operation, and details the need for spiritual intelligence skills. The presentation concludes with an explanation of why spiritual intelligence represents a new paradigm whose time has come.

Keywords: higher intelligence, full potential, enhanced learning

Introduction

At the beginning of the scientific study of intelligence in the early 20th century, the definition of intelligence was restricted to intellectual intelligence (IQ). This narrow definition of intelligence prevailed until the mid 1980's, when emotional intelligence (EQ) was identified as another dimension of intelligence of great importance. Recent advances in psychology and neuroscience identified spiritual intelligence (SQ) as a further dimension of intelligence that is even more significant (Griffiths, 2012 A). Spiritual intelligence is not religious. SQ depends not on belief but on direct personal experience beyond the ego.

We use spiritual intelligence in order to:

- find meaning and purpose
- maintain emotional balance
- sustain mental health
- feel connection to the community
- perform at our best
- attain full potential
- find enduring fulfilment

Scientific Basis

Spiritual intelligence has a scientific basis founded on a general theory of intelligence based on the human operating system, combining findings from four independent fields of scientific research: cognitive psychology, transpersonal psychology, psychoanalysis, and neuroscience (Griffiths, 2012 A):

Cognitive Psychology

Studies in cognitive psychology have established the benefits of Mindfulness training (MBCT), with particular reference to anxiety and depression. These studies confirm that the state of presence can be identified neurologically, experienced repeatedly, and verified intersubjectively. Consequently, such studies have established that the distinct sense of self experienced in presence, associated with being consciousness itself (or the soul), qualifies as a valid subject of scientific investigation.

Psychoanalysis

Early studies in psychoanalysis demonstrated that object-relations are the means by which personal identity is established (Fairbairn, 1952) (Klein, 1921). This observation was originally documented a long time ago by ancient traditions of spiritual wisdom, notably by Vedanta and Buddhism (Bartley, 2013) (Humphreys, 2012). Nevertheless, in the western intellectual tradition, this finding was first confirmed by Freud in his founding work on psychoanalysis at the turn of the twentieth century. More recent psychoanalytic studies of object-relations confirm that the ego grows by means of identifying with states of body and mind at the object-pole of attention (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).

Transpersonal Psychology

Findings in transpersonal psychology, as confirmed by countless meditators over thousands of years, verify that consciousness itself, which is free from identification with objects of

attention, experiences the qualities traditionally ascribed to the soul. The energy of consciousness itself, which is known as spirit, is experienced at the subject-pole of attention in moments of presence, in the form of wisdom, compassion, integrity, joy, love, creativity, and peace (Griffiths, 2013). Spirit is the source of spiritual intelligence (Griffiths, 2012 B).

Neuroscience

Neurological studies have established that the experience of presence is associated with hemispheric synchronisation and whole-brain activation at a frequency of 40Hz (Griffiths, 2012 C). At this frequency part-brain functions from both hemispheres are integrated into the field of the whole brain, thus combining mind, self, and world into a meaningful whole (Griffiths, 2015). 40Hz whole-brain activation therefore correlates neurologically with spiritual intelligence. Neuroscience thus confirms that SQ is hard-wired in the human brain. However, SQ rarely occurs spontaneously. Therefore, it's necessary to activate SQ intentionally, in order to experience the benefits of spiritual intelligence in daily life. The 3Q method instantly activates spiritual intelligence intentionally and can be used in any situation, including in adverse circumstances (Griffiths, 2017).

Human Operating System

Just as a computer and a phone have an operating system, so does our own awareness. The twin poles of attention represent the basic operating system of human awareness. The twin poles of attention are the subject-pole and the object-pole (Griffiths, 2012 D). At the object-pole is everything we are aware of, including thoughts, emotions, beliefs, perceptions, memories, hopes, ideas, self-image, etc. At the subject-pole of attention is consciousness itself. The ego is identified with the object-pole of attention, and the soul is identified with the subject pole of attention.

The ego is the false self. The ego is founded on identification with the body and mind at the object-pole of attention. The ego exercises IQ and EQ but has no access to SQ. The soul is your true self. The soul is founded on identification with consciousness itself at the subject-pole of attention. The soul exercises IQ and EQ with SQ.

Being the ego means identifying with your thoughts and emotions and experiencing yourself as being your body and mind. The ego feels dissatisfied and insufficient, and constantly seeks satisfaction elsewhere, in the next experience, using this moment as a means to the next, and reacting to each moment from a state of lack.

Being the soul means experiencing yourself as being consciousness itself. The native qualities of consciousness itself are experienced at the subject-pole of attention in moments of presence, in the form of wisdom, compassion, integrity, joy, love, creativity, and peace.

Consequently, the soul does not seek satisfaction elsewhere, in the next experience, because the soul is already happy, and therefore does not use this moment as a means to the next. Instead of reacting from a state of lack, the soul responds in each moment from a state of prior fulfilment.

The ego and the soul use IQ and EQ for different purposes. The ego uses IQ and EQ for personal gain, in the constant search for compensation for the inevitable dissatisfaction of being the ego. But the intelligence of the soul has a different purpose. SQ uses IQ and EQ for the benefit of all, to express the native qualities of consciousness itself, which are experienced at the subject pole of attention in moments of presence, in the form of wisdom, compassion, integrity, joy, love, creativity, and peace.

How to Experience Spiritual Intelligence

The 3Q method is a rapid method of experiencing spiritual intelligence that can be used in any circumstances in association with any activity (Griffiths, 2017).

Now and in the Future

Some schools are now beginning to incorporate training in SQ skills, with the introduction of mindfulness and other forms of meditation into the school curriculum. 3Q programs offer the next generation SQ training in the form of Applied SQ Skills.

The Need for SQ Skills

1. Meaning and Purpose

Teenagers have a strong need to understand themselves and understand life. But they no longer have ready-made answers to questions of meaning and purpose, because traditional sources of meaning and purpose (mainstream religion and mainstream culture) no longer offer convincing answers to many young people. Therefore, it is vital that teenagers have alternative tools for finding meaning and purpose in their lives. Consequently, young people need access to the full spectrum of their intelligence: not just their intellectual and emotional intelligence, their IQ and EQ, but also their meaning-making intelligence, their SQ.

2. Self-Esteem

The ego's self-esteem is fragile and unreliable, because it depends on changing circumstances and passing states of mind and emotion at the object-pole of attention. But true self-esteem, based on SQ, is constant, secure and complete, because it depends on the native qualities of the true self at the subject-pole of attention. SQ skills therefore strengthen self-esteem.

3. Self-Confidence

SQ is free of the ego's self-doubt and self-importance, and has instant access to the calm confidence of the true self. Therefore SQ, and not an ego-based self-image, is the real basis for reliable and enduring self-confidence.

4. Empathy

Empathy is a skill of emotional intelligence, and it represents the hope for the future of the world. But EQ cannot sustain empathy for long without access to the source of love and kindness that is inexhaustible, which can only be found beyond the ego. Consequently, without SQ as the foundation, empathy soon burns out, or finds only selective application to a limited circle of family, friends, and associates, and perhaps extending to ethnic group or nation, but

excluding those outside of a restricted circle of care. SQ is therefore necessary to replenish empathy and extend it to all people without discrimination.

5. Relationships

Our brains are wired for love and connection, but the ego rewires them for fear and protection. That's why healthy and harmonious relationships are difficult unless you shift beyond ego. SQ skills are therefore needed to meet the challenges involved in all relationships, especially close personal relationships.

6. Improve Academic Performance

Academic success and achievement are not merely a matter of IQ. It's also necessary to use EQ and SQ for top performance in academic subjects (as in all other activities whether academic or not). SQ improves the application of IQ by improving focus and reducing distractions, and increases EQ by enhancing sensitivity to the whole field of awareness.

7. Full Potential

In order to attain their full potential, teenagers need access to the full spectrum of the dimensions of their intelligence.

8. Social Challenges

SQ boosts self-esteem and self-confidence, and increases emotional intelligence, which makes it easier to meet challenges presented by new social situations that are a normal part of everyday life, especially when growing up.

9. Exam Stress

When you use the full spectrum of the dimensions of your intelligence you can pre-empt stress before it happens, rather than just react to stress after it happens. SQ skills therefore help to reduce the stress of exams.

10. Anxiety

SQ connects to the source of peace and equanimity which is free of fear and worry. The more SQ, the less anxiety. Consistent use of SQ over time rewires the brain by a process of neuroplasticity and results in resetting anxiety to a lower level or even eliminating anxiety altogether.

11. Mental Health

The statistics on teenage depression, anxiety, drug addiction, and suicide have all increased in recent decades. These statistics show a lack of SQ. Access to the full spectrum of intelligence is therefore protective of mental health. This is not surprising. Everything generally works better when all parts operate together. It's the same with the dimensions of our intelligence. Preventative Mental Health programs for teenagers are therefore recommended to include training in SQ in order to develop and balance all dimensions of intelligence for optimal mental health.

12. Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour

SQ skills reduce bullying and other forms of anti-social behaviour in teenagers and adults, both at school and later in the workplace.

13. Reduce Drug Addiction

SQ fosters social connections and reduces the need for substitutes for positive social connections, such as self-prescribed drug use. Training in SQ skills is therefore protective against recreational drug use and drug addiction.

14. Eliminate Existential Anxiety

Mainstream science and mainstream secular education are based on the philosophy of materialism. Consequently, students are taught to believe that everything is fundamentally material, including their own consciousness. The implications are devastating for a deeper sense of meaning and purpose, and inevitably results in a great deal of existential anxiety. By contrast, spiritual intelligence is based on post-materialist science, which eliminates the existential anxiety that is otherwise imposed on students by mainstream secular education. Post-materialist science fosters positive values such as compassion, respect, care, love, and peace, because it promotes an awareness of the deep interconnections between ourselves and each other and nature at large, and highlights the non-material nature of consciousness itself, which is free of the perishable destiny of the material dimension of reality.

15. Reduce Suicide Risk

SQ feels beyond immediate emotional reactions and connects to the deeper inherent reality which is life-sustaining. The experience of SQ is therefore protective against self-harm. Consequently, training in SQ helps to reduce the risk of suicide.

16. Propaganda-Proof

In the absence of life-positive, fulfilling, and credible sources of meaning and purpose, young people are vulnerable to the propaganda of political extremism and religious bigotry, in search of the meaning and purpose that is missing in their lives. SQ makes up for this deficit by providing access to a higher dimension of intelligence beyond the ego.

17. Important Work Skills

SQ skills are increasingly necessary both at school and in the workplace. Students need training during school years in the transpersonal skills required to thrive later in the workplace, in the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous conditions they will encounter.

18. Important Life Skills

SQ skills are necessary during school and after school and throughout the whole of life. SQ is required for achieving full potential and a life of meaning, purpose and fulfilment.

19. Maturity

SQ capabilities are necessary for human maturity. Responding free of ego is the essence of responsibility.

20. Parenting

SQ is the foundation of parenting skills. Selfless love is a basic requirement of caring for children.

21. Citizenship

SQ skills are needed to participate in a democracy. Critical thinking is necessary to discern truth from falsehood. By shifting beyond ego, SQ enhances critical thinking capabilities.

22. Human Rights Protection

SQ skills are needed at a collective level in order to raise the standards of accountability in collective governance. Collective SQ is the foundation and guarantee of a society free of tyranny.

23. Societal Development

The lack of collective SQ retards the development of society. Too many competing egos destroy collective benefits.

24. Cooperation and Tolerance

Collective SQ creates cooperation and tolerance between people at the interpersonal level, and between different groups in society, and between different cultures, religions, and nations.

25. Cultural Evolution

Widespread adoption of spiritual intelligence as a personal code of conduct raises the standard of accountability in collective governance in response to public demand. When standards in governments and corporations are based on spiritual intelligence, the energy of love will turn into a social and political force, as never before in history. The inclusion of training in spiritual intelligence in the school curriculum therefore heralds a new era of human rights and social justice, which are the foundations of shared prosperity and peace.

Conclusion

The New Paradigm Whose Time Has Come

Spiritual intelligence is not religious and does not require beliefs of any kind. Spiritual intelligence is entirely a matter of experiencing the truth of who you are. Consider this: whatever arises to your attention, you are the one who is aware of it. Therefore, you are not your body and you are not your mind. Instead, you are the consciousness of your body and mind, including all the contents of your mind (all thoughts, all emotions, and all perceptions).

Therefore, no matter how sceptical you are, you cannot escape the essential truth that you are not your thoughts and emotions, but you are consciousness itself. Consciousness itself feels inherently peaceful, compassionate and loving. This is the essence of spiritual intelligence.

When we live with spiritual intelligence, it is a liberating experience because it frees us from the perspective of scientific materialism, which reduces human beings to machines and persuades us that life is nothing more than a random accident.

Scientific materialism represents the most painful limitation of the conditioned mind in contemporary mainstream culture. It is responsible for extremes of existential angst that have driven millions of people to inconsolable desperation and despair. The consequences continue to undermine human society, and destroy attempts to create global cooperative community.

This reductionist mentality can no longer be tolerated if human society is to survive and thrive. The remedy can only be found in the light of spiritual truth. This is why spiritual intelligence is emerging now. Spiritual intelligence is the new paradigm whose time has come (Griffiths, 2016).

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