

Shankman, M. L., & Allen, S. J. (2008). *Emotionally intelligent leadership: A guide for college students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Reviewed by Rachel Armstrong

## **Introduction**

*Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for College Students* by Marcy Shankman and Scott Allen is a succinct (124-page) compilation of advice for college students on how developing emotional intelligence will improve their leadership on college campuses and beyond. The book is separated into the three major themes: consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others. Each chapter explores a component of one of the themes, using the theoretical basis for including the component in emotionally intelligent leadership, as well as “student voices”—quotes from student leaders across the country that bring the concepts to life for readers.

## **Theoretical Framework**

*Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* is the result of combined influences from transformational leadership, situational leadership, contingency theory, leader-member exchange theory, emotional intelligence, authentic leader development, positive psychology, organizational culture, and organizational behavior. The authors also draw on the work of scholars and organizations, including John Gardner, Howard Gardner, Ronald Heifetz, the Higher Education Research Institute, and Joseph Rost. In addition, the authors note the influence of their years of experience with leadership and leadership development working with college students on various campuses, and surveys from dozens of North American college students who are quoted in the text as “student voices.”

The underlying argument of the book is that leadership is a dynamic relationship among three facets: the self, the context, and others. Leadership is effective, according to the authors, when leaders are aware of how the leader and others interact with and within a context to create this relationship. Leaders must be intentional in seeking to understand and apply this information.

## **Elements of the book (annotate each chapter)**

**Chapter 1: Introduction.** This book was written for college students to use in their campus and other leadership opportunities to practice and develop their skills within “a terrific ‘learning lab’ at their disposal” (p. 1). The authors describe achieving leadership potential as development of dependability, making a difference, personal insights and strong convictions, and inclusivity. Leadership can be learned, and should be continually developed. The introduction outlines theoretical foundations from multiple disciplines, including positive psychology, emotional intelligence, and several leadership theories and approaches. Individual experience also holds great value for this model of leadership—individuals have to want to develop their style and abilities, and *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* will provide them with the tools to do so. Foundational to emotionally intelligent leadership is the idea of emotional intelligence, defined as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189, as cited in Shankman & Allen, 2008, p. 5). Emotionally intelligent leaders understand and acknowledge their own and others’ feelings in order to motivate groups and build relationships. Individuals

can build their capacity for emotionally intelligent leadership by intentionally focusing on elements of the three facets of leadership—consciousness of context, consciousness of self, and consciousness of others. The authors warn that no one capacity should be developed to excess, and the abilities needed to be effective in a particular situation will fluctuate.

**Part One: Consciousness of Context.** The leader is only one of three parts of the leadership dynamic, which also involves followers, and context. Part one of *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* focuses on consciousness of context, or the setting and situation. Settings are organizational structures “in which the leader-follower relationship exists” (p. 12). Situations are the dynamic variables within that structure, including time, place, personalities, and politics. Successful leadership depends in part on our ability to be aware of and adjust to new contexts.

**Chapter 2: Environmental Awareness.** Environmental awareness requires a leader to “observe, in real time, the group dynamics and factors present in the environment” (p. 15). Developing this skill requires resisting the natural urge to react, and taking the time to gather information before responding.

**Chapter 3: Group Savvy.** Developing group savvy is about discovering the unwritten rules and structure of an organization, often encompassed in an organization’s culture. Culture includes four elements. (1) Symbolic elements “represent something of value” (p. 20)—organizational stories, company logos. (2) Role elements are the characteristics of group heroes and villains—the admired, and the rebels. (3) Interactive elements are group behaviors and norms. (4) Context elements are related to the time and place in which an organization exists, and its relationship to the wider environment.

**Part Two: Consciousness of Self.** An emotionally intelligent leader must be aware of one’s abilities, emotions, aspirations, motivations—who you are and what you stand for. Additionally, a leader’s behavior must be congruent with those beliefs and values.

**Chapter 4: Emotional Self-Perception.** The ability to emotionally self-perceive is the ability to identify your own emotions and understand their effects as they are happening. This ability requires higher levels of consciousness—beyond instinct or reaction, to appropriate response.

**Chapter 5: Honest Self-Understanding.** “Know thyself” (p. 33). This chapter addresses the importance of understanding our strengths and weaknesses. We can discover these by seeking feedback from trustworthy others, and being open to positive and negative perceptions, considering each honestly.

**Chapter 6: Healthy Self-Esteem.** Healthy self-esteem is defined as a balance between self-confidence and humility. Self-confidence is about understanding and accepting yourself so you can become the person you are meant to be. Leaders have healthy self esteem which enables them to take risks because their emotional bank account provides a foundation and a safety net for risk and growth.

**Chapter 7: Emotional Self-Control.** Controlling emotions does not mean eliminating or suppressing them, but being aware of and managing them appropriately. We each have “hot buttons” (p. 44)—words, topics or issues that elicit strong emotional reactions. Emotional self-control requires being aware of what triggers us, and responding rather than reacting to those.

**Chapter 8: Authenticity.** Authentic leaders align their values, words and actions—they have integrity. The underlying concept of authenticity is trustworthiness. Trust builds

relationships, which are the foundation for leadership. Authentic leaders know what they can commit to, follow through on those commitments, and do not have hidden agendas.

**Chapter 9: Flexibility.** Leaders who are flexible are able to respond to changing circumstances; seek, accept and use feedback; and achieve versatility without sacrificing values.

Flexibility includes new courses of action for a group, new styles or approaches to leadership, and seeking better solutions.

**Chapter 10: Achievement.** Achievement is “being driven to improve according to personal standards” (p. 59). Leaders have a passion—a source of energy and inspiration—that drives them to achieve. They choose to get involved with organizations that mine this passion and allow them to “click”—enabling them to be both more satisfied and more successful.

**Chapter 11: Optimism.** Optimistic leaders have a positive and realistic outlook on the future. They share a vision of organizational possibilities, see weaknesses as learning opportunities, and have a contagious level of excitement and positive attitude.

**Chapter 12: Initiative.** Stemming from the optimistic vision of the future, great leaders see that the world could be different, and then take action to make that a reality. Leaders with initiative “seek people and resources to assist them along their journey . . . [are] ahead of the curve . . . have a passion for what they are doing . . . [and have] laser-like focus” (pp. 69-70).

**Part Three: Consciousness of Others.** In addition to self and context, a leader must be aware of others in the leadership equation—their styles, values, aspirations, needs, and more. The authors liken leadership to golf: “the best players have the skills to choose intentionally and play effectively with different clubs, given new or changing circumstances” (p. 74). Likewise, the best leaders have, effectively choose, and use multiple approaches to enacting leadership based on the needs and expectations of those with whom they are working.

**Chapter 13: Empathy.** Empathy is perceiving the emotions of others by putting yourself in their shoes and seeking “first to understand, then be understood” (p. 78). Empathy is not just felt, though—it is also demonstrated through your response. In contrast to sympathy, which involves pity, “empathy requires understanding” (p. 78).

**Chapter 14: Citizenship.** Citizenship is defined by the expectations held by and for members within the context of a particular organization. Organizational citizens are “part of something bigger than themselves. Interdependence is recognized as a reality of life in organizations and groups” (p. 82). When leaders are good citizens, they meet organizational expectations, and hold everyone accountable to the same standards of citizenship.

**Chapter 15: Inspiration.** Inspiration moves followers toward the shared vision of the group. Leaders are inspirational when they seek and understand followers’ and organizational values, rather than guessing or assuming they align with the leader.

**Chapter 16: Influence.** Leaders exert influence when they are able to create buy-in among their followers. Leaders create this influence through persuasion, and the five bases of power (reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, referent).

**Chapter 17: Coaching.** Leaders are coaches when they work to develop followers in ways that prepare them to meet the challenges faced by the organization in reaching a common goal. The coach-coached relationship is reciprocal, with each member learning from the other.

**Chapter 18: Change Agent.** When leaders are change agents, they “look for opportunities for improvement or innovation” (p. 97). In order to be effective, change must be purposeful, timely, and take a risk. Good change agents are attuned to their environment and followers, and are able to see opportunities to improve. They are also willing to take responsible risks, and involve others in meaningful ways, in order to succeed.

**Chapter 19: Conflict Management.** Effective leaders see conflict as an opportunity by understanding the roots of conflict, how to work through conflict, and how to hear and respond to all perspectives within the conflict. Conflicts arise for many reasons, with examples outlined by the authors including power struggles, different values/priorities, apathy, time, and leadership style. In order to work through conflict, leaders must have perspective and stay uninvolved. All voices must be heard, and it is the emotionally intelligent leader’s responsibility to ensure this happens.

**Chapter 20: Developing Relationships.** Developing relationships is both a skill and a mindset essential to good leadership. Relationship development takes place through networking when we “ethically and thoughtfully” make connections with others that help us grow in knowledge, skills and influence. Through our broader social network, we are connected with many people, though often these people are similar to ourselves, which limits our diversity, creativity, and leadership potential. We must branch out and intentionally connect.

**Chapter 21: Teamwork.** When leaders focus on teamwork, they care about reaching a successful result as well as how we get there—how well we work with others. Intentionally investing time in members, and in each other, strengthens the organization and individual potential simultaneously. Effective teamwork requires trust, honesty, effective communication, cooperation, collaboration, and conflict management.

**Chapter 22: Capitalizing on Difference.** Emotionally intelligent leaders see difference as a strength, not a liability. When faced with differences in a group, leaders seek to learn for understanding; then seek to “learn to use differences to strengthen individuals and the group” (p. 118).

**Chapter 23: Developing Emotionally Intelligent Leadership.** Foundational to emotionally intelligent leadership is the concept of self-awareness. Developing self-awareness is a process which involves seeking feedback to determine where we need and want to develop our leadership skills. We can best achieve this developmental process when others know we are open to feedback, when we place ourselves in “*edge* experiences” (p. 122), and when we take time to reflect before, during, and after a leadership experience. Development occurs at an optimal level of challenge—we can continue to adjust when we are too comfortable, or too challenged.

### **Best target audience(s)**

*Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for College Students* is suited for a college student audience, though it could be used appropriately in a senior high school program as well. The style of writing, chapter construction, and overall tone of the book are accessible. The book is best geared toward audiences new to leadership education and development, as it presents a high practical, low theoretical, approach. Students advanced in cognitive and leadership development would benefit from continually examining their consciousness of context, self and others through more advanced texts and experiences. *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* is less useful for more advanced students.

## **Uses of book in practice/or/ how this book can be used as part of a student leadership program**

*Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for College Students* could be used with equal effectiveness in structured or unstructured leadership development initiatives. Given the length of the book and ease of reading, *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* would be useful for individual students to read outside of a class or program, for personal development. The concepts are described clearly and related to clarifying examples through the authors' description and student voices. College-level instructors could refer the book to appeal to individual students interested in developing their leadership experience. *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* could also be used as part of a structured student leadership development experience through workshops, mentoring programs, certificate programs, and even selective scholarship or cohort models. The importance of the three themes—consciousness of context, self, and others—necessitates a length of experience that provides time to explore all three concepts. Program directors should consider how effective, for example, a single workshop could be in providing students with the knowledge about these concepts, the motivation to develop their consciousness in these three areas, and the tools for beginning that process.

## **Critique**

**Strengths:** *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* offers a *broad* approach to developing student leadership abilities. Drawing from multiple disciplines, the model addresses capabilities that individuals can develop, regardless of the type of organization or leadership role in which they are engaged, in order to improve their effectiveness. Through the three major concepts, students can identify and target multiple ways they can improve their consciousness of context, self and others. The model is strong in terms of *practical application*. Each chapter provides questions students can ask themselves to reflect on the chapter topic, personal experiences, and emotions. Students can answer the questions based on their own experiences, establishing relevance. The book also provides student voices that illustrate real-life examples of these concepts in action, making it *identifiable* in and *connected* to student leadership.

**Areas for improvement:** The authors do not clearly define leadership at any point in the text, which can be challenging for college students at earlier stages of cognitive development. The use and naming of multiple influences in development of the emotionally intelligent leadership model may help a leadership educator understand the model's development, but the *lack of clarity* for undergraduate students new to leadership is an area for improvement. *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* implicitly defines good leadership or the achievement of leadership potential as effectively engaging with others without establishing what it means by "effectiveness." The reader may struggle to understand the relative importance of process and outcome in assessing effective leadership.

The "student voice" quotes vary in relevance and applicability. While many provide clear and compelling examples of the concepts in action, others are only minimally connected to the chapter, or exhibit less mature and developed thought. Some students made broad over-generalizations, treating them as truths about leadership, when they appear to be nuanced and individualized opinions. The weakness lies in presenting these ideas as leadership wisdom rather than individual interpretations or applications.

## **Reviewer**

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Armstrong, R. (2011). Emotionally intelligent leadership. [Review of the book *Emotionally intelligent leadership: A guide for college students*, M. L. Shankman & S. J. Allen]. National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs. Retrieved from <http://www.nclp.umd.edu>