

## Emotional Intelligence, Gen X and Y and Quarter Life Crisis

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*This paper pens my personal journey to Emotional Intelligence, and it also reflects the social and organizational journey of Emotional Intelligence.*

*The last of human freedom is the ability to choose attitude.*

— Victor Frankle

### INTRODUCTION

As I sit to pen down a paper for EI Global Forum 2010, what strikes me is the truth of this wisdom. And what I see around me in the younger generations is the choice of this attitude. Some of it I like, some I question, some I'm still unable to understand. And yet, it is very refreshing to see them exercising their power of choosing an attitude. I also envy them, as I feel I've grown up in era of social and personal hypocrisy. I never had the courage to say how I feel, what I feel and choose yes or no. (That is why may be the investment of 15 years of research in EI!) What I've now gained as life's wisdom, this generation is somewhere born with it. And I call it short cut to wisdom- my definition of EI.

What is true of our personal life is also reflected in organizational reality. The average age of team leader, manager, and even CEO/COO/MD have come down 10-15 years. At 22 when I was still following my heart and enrolling for Masters in Literature, these young kids are taking up roles in BPOs and Call Centers. Most people in my generation lived to work; most of this Gen Y is working to live. While I certified by 6 Seconds in Emotional

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Intelligence, I was touched by their model of Know-Choose-Give. The Give part relates to Noble Goals, taking us beyond our selfish needs. However, I felt that adopting this model to our Indian culture, Give needs to be replaced by Live. Somehow Give has been a part of our tradition too long, even at the cost of Living. We generally skip the step of living which has to be experienced before we give. And therefore I Indianized the 3 step model as Know-Choose-Live.

Henry Miller said this long time ago, “The aim of life is to live and to live means to be aware, joyously, drunkenly, serenely, divinely, aware....” My journey of Emotional Intelligence has been one from fear driven to Joy driven. This is what my programs are all about and this is where I feel the Gen X and Y are rebelling on a personal and organizational level. They do not want to live with fear as a driving force, and are therefore coming across as a challenge to our own emotional intelligence to outgrow our outdated scripts and face life with new perspective.

*Our lives and work are shaped by moments, not days*

— Robert Cooper.

Let us introspect a little. What have we created for our next generation? Terrorism? Nuclear waste in environment? Ecological disasters creating Climate Refugees? Economic crisis due to unethical practices and greed? This is how the last millennium described by Management Gurus-

- “The Age of Discontinuity” -Peter Drucker
- “Crazy Times” -Tom Peters
- “Living in Chaos” -Charles Handy
- “The Age of Anger and Resentment”

I’ve also heard Human Resources Directors glorify the last millennium and talk about how we have generated wealth, how our kids are dreaming much bigger than us, how the world has become smaller due to technology. Yes, it is there. However at what cost? What most Baby Boomers experienced as only transition to 20 something, and experienced a mid-life crisis much later in their lives, this young affluent tech savvy Gen Ys are experiencing as a Quarter Life Crisis. This is the price they are paying for Speed and Greed of our generation.

## **WHAT IS QUARTER LIFE CRISIS (QLC)?**

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Most 20 something are experiencing these symptoms:

- Loneliness, depression, anxiety, confusion
- Self- doubt, low self esteem, constant need to prove
- Need for validation, emptiness, imbalance between personal and professional life
- Shallow relationships, blunt/honest, not hypocritical
- Not willing commit long term, wanting to live in and enjoy the present

- Want to retire early , live closer to nature , don't want to live long (100 yrs is no more a target)

Can be observed in:

- Early physical maturation ,
- Stress related diseases: Diabetes and Heart problems
- Single parenthood
- Late marriages and early divorces
- Mindless entertainment and shopping
- Addictions to artificial gratifiers
- Search for meaning and spiritual solace, health consciousness

I encourage you to look at the negative aspects as well as the silver lining when you re-read the above two paragraphs. QLC is not just generation gap; it is reflection of our legacy to this generation. High competition, pressure from parents/peers, organizations, increased responsibilities at early age, burden of decision making. Within organizational work culture there is less difference between ages of boss/subordinate. Therefore, *more wisdom without life experience is expected.*

QLC can be seen as spiritual crisis and emotional revolution. If we believe in Evolution, then younger generation is 'wiser' than older generation. Let us see if they also are wiser as they go through their QLC.

"Who am I?" is asked more often at earlier age. How do we become a part of their process of discovering answers to life? Most of us when we questioned our parents, we were told, 'you will understand when you grow up.' Let us be honest, have we really understood what life is when we have grown up? So continue the same cycle with our kids. QLC forces us to question beliefs and stories that are fed in minds and hardwired. For example, 'Is the real world bad, untrustworthy, jungle? Does one have to be a warrior and see others as enemies?' A new branch in Psychology called Evolutionary psychology is bringing out insights that help us understand how our brains are hardwired with outdated stories. However, information does not create transformation. Therefore body/brain/mind/spirit have to work together to unlearn. And this is why QLC survivors are the ones who turn to Yoga, Buddhist meditations, self reflective new age practices. They go through the depth of depression and bounce back with resiliency. The old 'R's of reading, writing, arithmetic are not enough to sail or surf through life. They were only the survival tools that our generation has over glorified.

## **FOUNDATION OF THE SELF-SCIENCE- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

This generation needs Personal mastery and excellence is essential to success, even survival. Hence 3 step process of **Knowing, Choosing and Living with Respect, Rhythm, and Responsibility** - 3 'R's.

## KNOW

**Causes of Emotional Incompetence- what beliefs have led to this crisis?**

- We have seen Self as product, not dynamic process
- False sense of separation, superiority and independence from Nature and other individuals - Lack of perspective
- Constant chatter of mind, going in pendulum movement of past and future, not mindful of present - Lack of attention and involvement
- Collection of Life impressions and reacting out of these memories, our brain is hardwired - Lack of perception

## CHOOSE

**Paradigm Shift- what can we do now?**

- Slow down
- Live deep rather fast
- Breathing – 3Step Rhythmic Breathing
- Clock vs. compass- direction first
- Step Back- pause before reacting

I'll share The Mother's quote on stepping back as this is one of the most powerful technique to become Emotionally Intelligent. "You must always step back into yourself-learn to go deep within-step back and you will be safe. Do not lend yourself to superficial forces which move the outside world. If someone is angry with you, do not be caught in his vibrations but simply step back and his anger, finding no support or response, will vanish.

Always keep your peace, resist all temptation to lose it.

Never decide anything without stepping back, never speak a word without stepping back, and never throw yourself into action without stepping back."

## The Mother

LIVE- the choices we make will now help us live differently.

Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence are interlinked, integrated and integral. My own definition of emotional Intelligence is **Emotional Intelligence is short -cut to wisdom, however, there is no shortcut to emotional intelligence.**

When we step back we realize that there are only two primal emotions that have become our **Driving Forces: FEAR-SURVIVAL-INTELLECT** and **JOY-GROWTH-INTELLIGENCE**. **As we live by conscious choices, Joy and Love become our driving forces. Our scriptures have also always claimed that**

- Anand Paramo Dharma
- Prem Paramo Dharma

## CONCLUSION

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Let me conclude that as we live better, we create Emotional Empowerment. As my mentor has said, “We must create a society in which a person does not have to betray inner sensitivity, inner essence. Each of us needs opportunities to unfold the essence of being. Then the sensitivity becomes fountain of strength, of peace, of joy.”

Vimala Thakar

May us all live emotional empowered life, and let the Gen X-Y surf through their QLC coming out with empowerment rather than committing suicides through helplessness. They are connecting with their inner Joy, are we?