

Boosting the Mind's Eye

*Visualizing for Social and
Emotional Intelligence*

Erin Phifer, M.A., LPC

Universal Publishers
Boca Raton, Florida

*Boosting the Mind's Eye.:
Visualizing for Social and Emotional Intelligence*

Copyright © 2008 Erin Phifer
All rights reserved.

Cover photo by Steve Visneau

Universal Publishers
Boca Raton, Florida
USA • 2008

ISBN-10: 1-58112-968-8
ISBN-13: 978-1-58112-968-7

www.Universal-Publishers.com

This book is dedicated to my loving husband and
beautiful girls - who have truly taught me the importance of
imagination and emotional intelligence

&

To all individuals seeking the betterment of their abilities
striving for personal success and happiness
throughout their daily lives.

Contents

Foreword.....9

PART ONE:

RESEARCH AND THEORY

1. Introduction.....17
2. Theory of Emotional Intelligence23
3. Dual-Coding Theory32
4. Synthesis and Proposal for Future Research40

PART TWO:

DEVELOPING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE

5. Building the Verbal Abilities.....55
6. Describing the Photo62
7. Building Vocabulary86
8. Vocabulary Acquisition90
9. Identifying & Interpreting Facial Expressions and Body Language98
10. Program Steps for Identifying and Interpreting Facial Expressions and Body Language105

PART THREE:

BOOSTING THE MIND'S EYE

11. Building the Visual Abilities124
12. Imaging a Social Scene.....132
13. Imaging Social Stories and Role Play148
14. Imaging Emotional Discrepancies189
15. Mixed Bag of Emotions.....202
16. Journaling Emotions.....210

PART FOUR:

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER AND THE FAMILY TOO!

17. Family Education and Homework.....219
18. Family Role Play226
19. Multi-Cultural Considerations232
20. Wrappin' it Up!.....238

Appendix 1: Emotional Vocabulary Index	243
Appendix 2: Facial Expression Photos	251
Appendix 3: Social Scene Photos	326
Appendix 4: Social Stories	375
Appendix 5: Emotional Discrepancies	398
Notes	402
References	409
Resources	414

Acknowledgments

My love and thanks to my supportive husband who endured the trials and tribulations of a woman donning the hats of mother, wife, writer, student, and therapist. His consistent encouragement was offered in patience and faith in my abilities. I would also like to thank Patty Biles, my fearless mentor, who possesses exemplary skills when working with children. She will forever be the archetype I aspire to be both professionally and personally. I would also like to thank Dr. Susan Porter-Levy, my post-graduate mentor, for her countless hours of supervisory duties which she performed with energy and insight unsurpassed. Her ideas generated marvelous questions which I have only begun to attempt to answer within this book. I also want to thank my friend and colleague, Ambre Low, who offered encouragement and technical advice whenever I needed a boost of faith and motivation. My special thanks and gratitude extends to the photographers, Alisha Robins Stump and Steve Visneau, who captured the emotions and social scenes within this book breathing life into the concepts I attempted to capture on paper. Their artistic abilities are truly a unique and timeless gift to this program. For further work by Steve Visneau, please visit his website at: <http://www.swvphoto.com>

Foreword

"The outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where only one grew before."

- Thorsten Veblen (1857-1929)

As a budding clinician nine years ago, my professional experiences embarked upon the field of learning therapy offering the opportunity to develop reading, spelling, math, and comprehension skills for individuals with learning differences. I did not predict the enormous impact this particular employment opportunity would produce for both my professional and academic careers. While working in a Lindamood-Bell® clinic, I attended Southern Methodist University earning my Master's in Clinical/Counseling Psychology. Coursework and additional therapeutic experience gained from a non-profit counseling center sparked my desire to research the connections between neurological and emotional processing.

Upon earning my graduate degree, I quickly realized separating my duties as a "learning clinician" and "professional counselor" became both personally and professionally impossible. I felt ethically bound to treat an individual in their entirety - be it the neurological processing associated with learning issues, emotional pain experienced from academic challenge and frustration, or social deficits accompanying learning differences. I had discovered my professional niche and quickly sought the experience and education to properly blend these fields.

My work with individuals presenting learning disorders served as a catalyst for the experience and knowledge-seeking leading to the writing of this program. I avidly researched the fields of education, psychology, and counseling hopeful I would stumble upon a program providing a "marriage" between therapeutic and learning

BOOSTING THE MIND'S EYE

interventions. I consistently fell short of this discovery and was unable to locate an appropriate blend of these modalities for treating an individual's comorbid learning, social, emotional, and behavioral issues. The clients I treated required language processing intervention prior to psychotherapy, as they lacked the ability to comprehend traditional "talk therapy" techniques. I desired to accomplish the simultaneous goal of language intervention and emotional intelligence. But, one question remained: "How?"

Although the field has boomed significantly with cutting edge techniques both well-researched and effective, I continued to search for an entity offering simultaneous imagery stimulation and development of social and emotional skills. Therefore, the motivation behind creating *Boosting the Mind's Eye* remained the necessity for an intervention addressing learning and emotional issues concomitantly using imagery and direct approaches.

This program is appropriate for anyone retaining difficulty comprehending social and emotional concepts. The extent of knowledge and skills ascertained within this program rests upon the needs of the individual. If one requires more extensive social and emotional information, this may be accomplished. In addition, this program addresses subtleties and nuances of social and emotional knowledge based upon abstract concepts. Buffering mental imagery offers heightened comprehension of emotional complexities within a social world.

This program is ageless; therefore, it may be utilized (and tweaked) for any population. However, the sample dialogue contained within is written using children and adolescents. This is due to both my clinical experience and personal goal to service younger generations requiring emotional intervention. Yet, issues involving social and emotional knowledge are certainly not limited to children.

Boosting the Mind's Eye has been created for the use of both parents and professionals alike. Due to my academic

background and clinical experience, the theoretical foundation of this program has been significantly researched and reported in the initial chapters. However, you will find a great deal of sample dialogue and explanation appropriate for all audiences. I believe in the empowerment of the family system and feel program interventions should not be left solely within the hands of professionals. Without the help and cooperation from family members, this program will not prove as effective for the targeted individual.

All individuals deserve an opportunity to accomplish their dreams and desires. In order to do so, people must possess social and emotional skills promoting successful navigation within their social world. Without rudimentary (as well as complex) emotional skills, people may fall short of their expectations resulting in feelings of disappointment and frustration. Developing imaging and verbal abilities promoting emotional intelligence may unlock an individual's hidden potential promoting social awareness and confidence. Striving for personal happiness is achievable; however, one must possess the necessary emotional tools to accomplish their goals when attempting survival and success within a social world.

Research in a Nutshell

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become a more familiar concept amongst the general population. Its popularity has arisen from books relating the importance of emotional savvy comparable to that of intellectual functioning. The Four-Branch Model of EI (explained in greater detail throughout the book) sets forth a thorough and balanced approach to the importance of emotional understanding and functioning.

However, questions arise: How do people process emotional information? What type of cognitive processing occurs allowing the understanding of complex and abstract emotional concepts? Dual Coding Theory (DCT) set forth by

Allan Paivio relays a dual processing system retaining distinct functions for representing concrete knowledge using images, while using verbal representations for abstract information. More importantly, DCT maintains an additive component of processing, such that concrete information may use both imaging and verbal representations allowing for greater recall.

Can the difference between concrete and abstract language processing affect emotional understanding, and therefore, EI? Emotional intelligence and DCT are further explored offering solutions to impediments of abstract emotional understanding. *Boosting the Mind's Eye* provides a step-by-step remediation for individuals lacking comprehensive development within the four aspects of emotional intelligence. These areas include: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions.

A Bit of History

Many of the theoretical concepts set forth in this book are derived from the fields of neuropsychology and psycholinguistics. Through the trials and tribulations of pioneering psychologists, the modern era of eclecticism within the field has been created incorporating collective theoretical and therapeutic approaches. Without a combined approach, an individual's cognition, behavior, emotions, and neuropsychological needs may not be harmoniously addressed.

During a time when children are increasingly diagnosed with an alarming number of learning and developmental disorders, neuropsychological research remains a strong and necessary fixture within the field of psychology. Modern Western society appears fixated upon the medical model of disease and pathology; therefore, brain studies are actively sought to bolster biological and chemical evidence used for drug interventions.

BOOSTING THE MIND'S EYE

Brain studies are vital to understanding human thought processes; however, these studies often evidence biochemical solutions to learning disabilities and abnormal psychopathology. Is it possible the link between brain chemistry and behavior is exploited as a resounding justification thrusting prescriptions down the throats of individuals diagnosed with ADHD, Depression, Anxiety, and other psychopathologies linked to biochemistry?

Current research evidencing support for the brain's language functions demonstrates that individuals may be treated to "rewire" the structures of the brain necessitating additional development. Many insurance companies indicate insufficient research findings disallowing payment for "experimental," "inconclusive," and "educational" services; however, additional research studies may encourage insurance coverage in the future.

Neuropsychological and psycholinguistic interventions addressing language and cognitive development may decrease the number of individuals "requiring" prescription medication for the treatment of inattentiveness/impulsivity (ADHD), depression, anxiety, or emotional issues associated with learning disabilities. When one adequately processes, comprehends, and retains information bombarding their neural networks, their confidence increases, thus appearing less anxious, depressed, and inattentive. Less invasive treatments, such as psycholinguistics blended with cognitive-behavioral psychology, may decrease the number of individuals requiring chemical modifications to the brain. In lieu of adhering a "band-aid" (medication) to the symptoms of a greater issue, professionals can reconfigure neural pathways utilizing multi-sensory mediums creating permanent change for individuals.

Part One:
Research and Theory



~1~ Introduction

Emotional Intelligence

Throughout the ages, intelligence has been classified as a cerebral concept encompassing cognitive ability, logic, reason, and all other “thinking skills” promoting the betterment of human functioning. However, within the last 20 years, the definition of intelligence has experienced a metamorphosis, creating flexibility and inclusiveness within a historically exclusive term. Dr. Stanley Greenspan wisely defined intellectual abilities encompassing more than mastery of impersonal cognitive tasks and analytical thinking historically including: puzzles, math problems, memory, and motor exercises.¹

In addition, Howard Gardner set forth seven distinct forms of intelligence: Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Linguistic Intelligence, Spatial Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Personal Intelligence, and Intrapersonal Intelligence.² David Wechsler created numerous IQ scales that are still widely used today

within the fields of psychology and education. His own conception of intelligence surpassed his testing instruments, as he believed intelligence to encompass the ability to relate to people, job performance, and overall life management.³

Therefore, the idea of what it means to be “intelligent” has experienced an important transition over time. Humans encompass a complex combination of skills, attributes, abilities, mental and emotional processes that cannot be solely recognized through traditional IQ testing. People are more than a mere “cognitive framework” embodying a complex interaction between the logical mind, the emotional heart, and social well-being.

Volumes of literature would be required to discuss the numerous forms of intelligence; therefore, the introduction and foundation of this program are limited to the history, theoretical framework, and analysis of emotional intelligence (EI).

Why is EI an important aspect of human functioning? How does this construct relate to human life and give it the purpose required to conduct further research and inquiry? During the 1980's, an outpour of interest created the platform for the expansion of the term “intelligence.”⁴ Gardner's 7 forms of intelligence paved a foundation for others to conduct research and create conclusive evidence demonstrating that other forms of intelligence exist. Daniel Goldman published a book in 1995 entitled *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*, popularizing the coin-phrase “EQ” (Emotional Quotient) for the general public.

Continued interest in EI has created significant research efforts attempting to uncover and disentangle the intricate web of “intelligence.” A compelling and thorough theory of emotional intelligence called the *Four-Branch Model* of emotional intelligence was set forth by Salovey and Mayer in 1990 and will be further explored in the following chapters serving as a theoretical tenet to *Boosting the Mind's Eye*.

Merely researching EI as an academic exercise into the exploration of its theoretical intricacies does not provide sufficient information to those within the practicing field. Although the ideas and research involving EI remain impressive, the practitioner begs the question: How are theoretical ideas put into practical motion creating positive change within the greater population? In order to address this question, a strong research-based theoretical foundation involving the processes within the human mind will be explored providing support for the techniques offered within this program.

Dual Coding Theory

Dual-Coding Theory (DCT) involves the processes within the brain utilized when receiving and comprehending language. One might ask: Why are specific cognitive processes explored when considering *emotional* aspects of intelligence? Isn't the idea of emotional intelligence to stray away from cognitive aspects of the human mind? Although human intelligence incorporates far more than cognitive ability, EI utilizes various nonverbal abilities (i.e. recognizing facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language) requiring specific types of processing within the brain. Therefore, emotional intelligence cannot be fully separated from one's cognitive processing. Humans must continually receive and express emotional language to effectively communicate within their social world, which requires the ability to retain, process, and verbalize an inordinate amount of language.

Individuals struggling with the comprehension of language may retain difficulty with the social and emotional aspects of life. This hypothesis has been formulated from both the professional experience of working with individuals presenting language comprehension issues (i.e. Asperger's, Autism, Hyperlexia) in addition to the study of research relating social issues with language disorders.

Clinical observation and experience have demonstrated

the notion that individuals with language disorders often maintain difficulty comprehending abstract language. Many of the emotional and social skills one must possess stem from abstract, intangible concepts. For example, one cannot physically touch the concept of "love," but must create a mental representation of it to retain and comprehend this complicated emotion. How does one accomplish this? Is it imagined using a symbol of the heart, or an image of a couple embracing? Or, is the word "love" simply retained in one's verbal memory?

Dual Coding Theory (DCT) states that concrete concepts (or entities with physical properties easily imaged) are represented as images, or pictures within the brain, while abstract concepts (or entities with intangible physical properties) are represented in words. Both the imaging and verbal systems within the brain work together creating one's overall language comprehension.

However, what if an individual cannot process and retain abstract language with relative ease? Will they demonstrate difficulty in processing, retaining, and comprehending the abstract nuances of emotional information? Will they image a concrete symbol for love (i.e. a big red valentine), but not grasp the complex and abstract components associated with love because it is a highly inclusive emotion containing subsets and categories within its definition?

Furthermore, what if an individual were able to identify and comprehend concrete components of EI, such as facial expressions and body language; but were unable to adequately perceive, manage, or interpret more complex and subtle aspects of EI? For example, imagine a person with language processing difficulties witnessing an exchange between two co-workers that from appearances seemed to be somewhat congenial (as both individuals displayed smiles and calm body language). However, upon closer inspection, the two co-workers were actually exchanging sarcastic banter stemming from animosity

towards one another and the smiles they wore were strained expressions of tension. If the person witnessing this exchange were unable to comprehend sarcasm (which is common in individuals with language and comprehension deficits), they would undoubtedly misread this social exchange.

So what if someone is not able to grasp sarcasm and read social exchanges? Why does this matter? Being a passive observer to social exchange may seem relatively harmless; however, social life does not solely encompass mere observation. What if the individual with language deficits were one of the two co-workers and sarcastic remarks were aimed toward them? Would they perceive this situation as benign, or feel slighted and frustrated because they were not able to understand the verbal exchange?

In order to shed light upon an individual's difficulty with abstract information processing in terms of emotional and social issues, Dual Coding Theory (DCT) will be investigated linking knowledge representation with one's level of emotional intelligence. The reasoning behind the analysis of EI in terms of DCT remains two-fold: 1) DCT rests upon the notion that humans encode and process information using an imaging system, as well as a verbal system. Imaging for retention and recall works best with concrete information, while verbal processing allows for the comprehension of abstract information. 2) Many of the foundations of EI are concrete in nature (i.e. facial expression, body language, vocal intonation, etc...); however, a large amount of EI rests upon the comprehension of abstract concepts (i.e. compassion, trust, love, loyalty, etc...). Therefore, one of the goals of this book remains to evaluate both theories, synthesize the findings, and create a theoretical framework explaining the hypothesized differences of EI amongst individuals.

Boosting the Mind's Eye is presented as a program strengthening EI skills using visualization techniques

BOOSTING THE MIND'S EYE

buffering both the abilities to image and verbalize emotional information with greater efficiency. This program has been created in the hopes of improving upon one's skills promoting permanent change within the brain allowing retention of concrete and abstract emotional concepts. Because the ideas offered within this program do not involve rote memorization, individuals are asked to perform tasks that will allow cognitive restructuring and once accomplished, will create a knowledge base applicable throughout daily life.



~2~

Theory of Emotional Intelligence

Brief History of EI

In order to appreciate the modern scholastic definition of EI, a brief glance at the history of EI's conceptualization remains vital. For two millennia, philosophers have debated the relationship between thought and emotion.¹ For thousands of years, emotion has been equated to the weaker of the sexes (yes, unfortunately, they are talking about women), unpredictable behaviors, and in pure opposition to rational thought. However, the Romantic Movement, accentuating art and emotional expression, as well as the much later 1960's political upheaval (flower children generation; "Make love not war!") allowed for the acceptable consideration of emotional expression. As the conception of reason and emotion evolved, a balance between the two was both desired and eventually sought.

The 1960's political movement provided a timely opportunity to begin publicly deliberating the desire to balance people's perceptions between feeling and thought.² Momentum and desire seeking a happy marriage between emotion and reason has carried forth into present times. The current view of emotional intelligence described within this

chapter has evolved from meager beginnings blossoming into a comprehensive paradigm of emotional understanding.

Defining EI

Intelligence can be defined as representing the capacity to carry out abstract thought and the general ability to learn and adapt to the environment.² The association between intelligence and emotion stems from the necessity of humans to adapt to their environment. Therefore, emotions may comprise a myriad of responses to specific situations, the importance of understanding these “responses” remains vital to the ability to behave intelligently. Subsequently, the definition of EI must involve a broader view of what constitutes intelligence. Varying streams of thought exist regarding the structure of EI. A comprehensive and scientifically validated definition of EI is as follows:

... [T]he capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.²

The premise behind this inclusive definition of EI rests upon the link between emotion and thought. Perception, comprehension, knowledge, reflection, reason, and regulation are all concepts included in this definition highlighting the significance of the union between thought processes and emotions. This definition demonstrates comprehensive inclusion of the main components of EI and understanding each component remains fundamental to the awareness of the effects of EI upon human life.

Four-Branch Model of EI

Based upon the aforementioned definition of EI, the

BOOSTING THE MIND'S EYE

Four-Branch model of EI created by Mayer and Salovey will be explored and analyzed. EI retains four main components establishing and measuring one's emotional intelligence.³

Branch 1: Perceiving Emotions involves the ability to accurately perceive one's own and others' emotional states. Accurately decoding facial expressions, tone of voice and emotional signals (such as body language) allows for competency within this specific aspect of EI. If one is not capable of adequately assessing their own emotional state, they will demonstrate difficulty perceiving and identifying the emotional states of others.³ Self-awareness regarding one's emotions remains pinnacle to the perception of another's emotions.

Branch 2: Using Emotions to Facilitate Thought includes the ability to harness one's emotional state to become a more creative and effective decision maker. This concept rests in opposition to traditional theories of intelligence declaring that cognition drives emotion.⁴ However, emotions are capable of prioritizing the cognitive system to attend to the most important task at that moment, as well as utilizing changes within mood to view situations from differing perspectives.³ This ability aids human adaptability within their environment.

Branch 3: Understanding Emotions is based upon one's comprehension of the intricacies of emotional labels and categories. Therefore, understanding the language of emotion, in addition to the flexibility of emotional shifts over time, is dependent upon one's complex symbolic representation of emotions. For example, when viewing the continuum of anger feelings, such as mild irritation escalating from annoyance, frustration, anger and leading to rage necessitates the recognition of the subtle shifts within the human range of emotions.³

Branch 4: Managing Emotions incorporates one's ability to process their own emotions (without repressing them), as well as the emotions of others.³ Self-regulation of emotion becomes a vital adaptive skill to function more successfully