

## Teaching Emotional Intelligence to Law Students

In *Mindfulness in the Law School* (Scott Rogers, ed.)

Successful lawyering requires not just analytical ability but a broad array of other skills, commonly described as emotional intelligence. Skills like managing emotions and handling relationships play a huge role in life satisfaction and professional advancement. Accordingly, they deserve attention in law school.

Learning emotional intelligence differs from learning substantive law. The focus is not so much on content as on process. Emotional intelligence is not reducible to cognitive knowledge. It is experiential and individualized. It does not fit into neat categories and is unbounded, extending beyond the classroom to everyday life. Acquiring emotional intelligence is uncomfortable, requiring us to break familiar patterns.

Unlike doctrinal courses, emotional intelligence does not convey information to be filed away for future reference. Its tools can be used right away across many domains of life. It can make a difference now.

Emotional intelligence is not so much a matter of book learning as lived experience. Most learning occurs outside the classroom. I have taught these skills for over fifteen years. I use class exercises and homework assignments, which students record in a journal. Progress requires continuous work, feedback and accountability. I read and comment on journals weekly and have seen the learning process first hand. I am in the course along with the students, not simply presenting materials but applying the exercises to my own life as well.

This chapter offers some thoughts, which I hope will be valuable not just to instructors explicitly teaching one or more skills in a dedicated unit, but also to those seeking to cultivate emotional intelligence in other courses and contexts.

Teaching emotional intelligence presents three challenges: selecting material, getting clear, and encouraging engagement. The last is the most important, underlying success in the course and life generally. I will discuss each of these in turn.

### **Challenge One: Selecting Material**

The first challenge in teaching emotional intelligence is selecting material to be covered. I assembled an eclectic array of tools and present them in a fashion that is thematically coherent and scientifically sound. I offer six substantive modules. In this chapter, I can only briefly describe my materials and exercises. For more detail, see the references at the end.

#### *Stress Reduction.*

The first module is stress reduction. Here I offer three tools to alleviate anxiety. One tool is the relaxation response, a meditation in which one focuses on a mental device, typically the word “one.” I supplement this meditation with a second tool, abdominal breathing, and deep and slow. The third tool is a cognitive strategy: reframing threats as challenges, seeing life obstacles

as something to be welcomed, not feared. These tools are mutually reinforcing. Meditation and deep breathing calm us sufficiently so that we can reframe our thinking.

These simple tools pave the way for deeper work during the semester. Stress is a generalized, fight or flight, reaction and much of the remainder of the course applies contemplative and cognitive tools to more specific emotions and contexts. In a sense, the entire course is about stress reduction.

When I teach a brief introduction to emotional intelligence I focus on stress reduction, which is the most immediate pressing concern for most students, and if I am going no further, I make a couple adjustments. First I replace the relaxation response with visualization of a “happy place,” which students generally find more relaxing. Second, I substitute the triple column technique for reframing threats as challenges. Both are described below.

### *Self-Knowledge and Mindfulness*

The next module is self-knowledge. The self is the central organizing principle of our psyche and know thyself is the foundation of emotional intelligence, the prerequisite to managing emotions and handling relationships. I explore three senses of self: (1) the conceptualized self, based on language and categories, (2) ongoing self-awareness, the fluid, continuous knowledge found in the present moment and (3) the observing self, not content based, but experientially boundless. The first provides a framework for how to interact with the world; the second and third are important to ongoing monitoring of emotional states.

Western psychology works with the conceptualized self. I ask students to take the big five personality test and use its results to improve their relationships. I also ask them to adopt a different persona in a social situation. I assign excerpts from Ellen Langer’s research into mindlessness behavior and beliefs, which she attributes to factors such as expertise, repetition, a belief in limited resources and a focus on outcome rather than process. Her work identifies blind spots in the conceptualized self.

The second and third senses of the self are explored through mindfulness meditation, derived from Buddhism, which is concerned with reducing suffering, understood as resistance to physical and emotional pain. I emphasize that mindfulness is not about relaxation or reducing stress but about being attentive to “what is.” Sometimes that entails discomfort.

Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as intentionally paying attention in an open accepting way. Subsumed within this definition are several components: attention regulation, body awareness, emotional regulation (reappraisal and extinction) and changed perspective on the self. Kabat-Zinn developed the mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) program, which is the standard protocol in most mindfulness studies. A substantial commitment, this eight-week program contains lengthy body scans, hatha yoga and progressive meditations, culminating in mindfulness of thought, a challenging exercise.

I offer students readings describing MBSR, but they have not pursued the program. I have therefore offered more accessible alternatives, some drawn from acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). These ease suffering by breaking the link between language and experience. One

exercise repeats a word or phrase over and over again until it loses meaning. Another objectifies thoughts and sensations as having size, color, shape and texture.

In addition to ACT, I have drawn upon traditions that explicitly to offer separate meditations for concentration and awareness. To my surprise, students are enthusiastic about “boring” concentration practices such as breath counting, perhaps acknowledging the distractions of our digital age. They initially struggle with awareness practices, which direct attention to the observer, but many get a taste of awareness by the end of the semester.

A foundational skill, mindfulness only begins the learning process. The question then becomes “mindful of what?” The answer is, of course, emotions, and the remaining modules delve more deeply into what that means.

### *Identifying and Evoking Emotions*

The third module offers a comprehensive map for identifying and managing emotions. Every emotion has three components: physiology (sensations and movements of the body), focus (an object of attention) and meaning (the narrative associated with that object). For example, performance anxiety consists of certain sensations and movements (butterflies in the stomach, sweaty palms, shallow breathing), a focus on an object (a frightening image of oneself or others) and a meaning attached to that object (a story about the risk of failure).

These three elements distinguish the different emotions and allow us to utilize the valuable information they contain. Anger, fear, sadness and happiness each have distinctive physical manifestations and implicit narratives. Appreciation of these differences allows us to access the message of the emotion. Uneasiness, for example, is a sign that something is wrong.

The elements also provide potential points for intervention: we can move our body, shift focus, or change the meaning attached to the situation. Moving one’s body has an immediate, generalized impact. Gross motor movements like jumping and power poses affect arousal. Facial expressions provide access to the seven or so primal emotions. The larger the movement, the greater the impact.

Focus adds detail. Our reality is determined by what we pay attention to. Visualization is an especially powerful method for shifting focus. We can relax by imagining a happy place. We can reduce the emotional impact of a traumatic event by visualizing it differently. We can improve performance by mental rehearsal. Powerful visualization utilizes all the senses (sight, hearing and feeling) and fine tunes them for maximal impact, e.g., increasing the size of an image, the volume of a sound, and the intensity of a touch.

Meaning is the most specific element, distinguishing among a wide range of emotional responses. Altering meaning can result in lasting emotional change. Simply adopting different language has an effect. We can substitute weaker words for negative states (“disturbed” instead of “furious”) or stronger words for positive states (“great” instead of “okay”). More specific changes in meaning occur through writing a new story. The erratic driver may not be selfish or stupid but stressed or lost. I adopt this strategy in my teaching, reminding myself that the backlogged student may not be lazy but consumed by more pressing concerns.

A powerful tool for working with focus and meaning is asking questions. Questions guide attention and convey implicit meaning. Some of us go through life asking whether we are competent or loveable. Recognizing that question and adopting another transforms the quality of our life.

These three elements run through the course. Meditation, for example, combines all three elements: a posture of alertness, typically sitting with a straight spine, legs grounded; an object of attention, often the breath; and a meaning, sometimes the deliberate cultivation of states such as relaxation, alertness or joy. The three elements pave the way for deeper work with negative moods and positive emotions.

### *Managing Negative Moods*

A fourth module is managing negative moods. Quick interventions like controlled rapid breathing and the emotional freedom technique disrupt anger, fear, and sadness. Pranayama yoga radically alters physiology and tapping of acupuncture points releases negative thoughts.

More lasting change requires creating new meaning. Here, the gold standard is cognitive therapy, which directly challenges the habitual thoughts that give rise to unwanted emotions. Developed by Aaron Beck, cognitive therapy was popularized by David Burns. Burns offers the triple-column technique, which involves listing automatic thoughts, identifying their distortions, and formulating rational responses. For example, the thought “I never do anything right” is an overgeneralization, to which the response might be “I do plenty of things right.” Highly rigorous, this analysis is particularly well suited for law students. It turns critical thinking against itself.

Cognitive therapy is one of the big takeaways of the course. I supplement the triple column technique with an exhaustive list of reframing questions as well as instructions for working with compulsive behavior. An important insight is recognizing that seemingly negative thoughts serve a positive intention and to use that intention to reframe our thoughts. By asking what we truly want, we can better fit our behavior to our needs.

### *Cultivating Happiness*

The fifth unit, cultivating happiness, draws upon Martin Segal’s work on positive psychology. Segal distinguishes three classes of happiness. The first is the pleasures, which are fleeting, sensory experiences. Evanescent, they usually end suddenly. They are subject to habituation and are potentially addictive. I ask students to develop personalized strategies for savoring and use them during a daily vacation. Common strategies include anticipation, surprise, comparing, counting blessings, spreading out, sharpening perception, building memories, sharing with others, and appreciation of the fleeting quality of pleasure. Visualization can also be used to enrich and absorb a positive experience.

The second class of happiness is the gratifications, which do not habituate and engage us fully. We become immersed in them and lose self-consciousness. This state, known as flow, requires a balancing of challenge and skill. The challenge must be great enough to prevent boredom but not so difficult as to create anxiety.

The third class of happiness is the virtues. A virtue is an act of will, a trait or habit, valued in its own right, which elevates and inspires others. We yearn for the satisfaction of doing the right

thing. We want to deserve our good fortune. Students value an A in a hard course more than an A in an easy one. Virtues are ubiquitous and cross cultural. They can be exhibited whatever the circumstances.

### *Social Intelligence*

The sixth module is social intelligence, consisting of identifying other's emotions and handling relationships. This module is the pinnacle, the most challenging and important skill. Emotions are inextricably interwoven with our social life and our strongest emotions arise in relationship. Many would say that the whole point of developing emotional intelligence is to connect more deeply with others.

Social intelligence falls along a spectrum from largely unconscious reactions to highly cerebral self-conscious evaluations. Progress can be understood as climbing rungs in a ladder. At the lowest rung is primal empathy, which occurs at an unconscious level. Our motor neurons mimic another's expression, resulting in our catching their emotions.

Primal empathy facilitates smooth nonverbal interaction, resulting in synchrony, an unconscious subtle dance. When people converse, their postures, gestures, expressions, pacing, and even breathing mirror one another. Physical mimicry creates rapport.

Further up the ladder are semiconscious processes that influence people, often exploited by advertisers. Chief among these are reciprocation, the natural impulse to return gifts. We only dimly recognize the urge to return a gift. In class, we build upon this impulse by forming a reciprocity ring, an activity in which participants make requests to a group, recognizing that the person fulfilling the request may not be compensated in return. The ring generalizes the reciprocity norm from bilateral relationships to the entire community.

More conscious yet is verbal communication. Descriptively, communication can be understood as an exchange of information through listening and speaking. Listening consists of hearing the other's message, without criticism or judgment. Reflective listening does not express agreement but confirms that the speaker has been heard. Speaking is part of a feedback loop in which the speaker limits herself to what she knows: objective behavior and its effects on her. Obvious as they seem, these limitations are often ignored. Much of our communication is devoted to speculating about other's intentions, something we cannot know.

Not only is such speculation useless, it also undermines meaningful feedback. People withhold information for fear of being judged and they regard the feedback they do receive as a moral attack. Nor is this fear unwarranted. We commonly speak not to share information but to coerce a response. We scold others in order to change their behavior. In the course, I offer Marshall Rosenberg's nonviolent communication, in which we renounce judgment and efforts to control others. The request is a plea for help. The problem is ours, not theirs.

Nonviolent communication involves four steps. First is observing without evaluating. Next is identifying and expressing feelings. Feelings are not thoughts, nor are they statements about our identity or about how others regard us. Third is taking responsibility for our feelings. Another's behavior may stimulate our feelings but do not cause them. Our judgments of others are expressions of our own unmet needs. Last is requesting that which would enrich life. The request should be in clear, positive concrete action language and should not be a veiled demand: do this or else. We point

to the dirty dishes in the sink, share our feeling of frustration, describe a need for a clean environment, and ask for help washing them.

A more deliberate use of language is positive communication, which treats words not simply as descriptive but as a generative. Our language creates our reality. Complementing and encouraging changes the other's identity. Expressing appreciation for another's thoughts, feelings and actions creates a common ground.

Appreciation paves the way for the highest rung in the ladder: concern and caring. We do more than understand another's view, we affirmatively adjust ours to take theirs into account. In representation, a lawyer adopts the client's interest as her own. In negotiation, a lawyer seeks a broader perspective which encompasses both parties' concerns, creating a win-win resolution.

All this is done in a loving spirit, explored in various contemplations. In freeze frame, we consult the physical and emotional heart. In lovingkindness meditation, we cultivate good will towards others. In gratitude exercises, we appreciate our good fortune. In compassion, a practice known as toglen, we affirmatively exchange our good fortune for the pain of others.

Complete caring, however, entails something more than contemplation. Forgiveness, for example, often involves consistent, long term work. That work can remove the sting of a painful memory and pave the way to a restored relationship.

Handling relationships is crucial to lawyering. This module provides a foundation for lawyer as friend. Clients value caring over technical expertise. The practice of law is ultimately about people, not analysis.

### *Weaving the Modules Together*

Each module can be taught alone. If more than one is taught, judgments must be made about how to weave them together. I generally cover the modules in the order described above, but I introduce some aspects of social intelligence early in order to give students an opportunity to work with relationships over the semester. I create the reciprocity ring at the beginning to foster community within the class. I also make adjustments to prepare students for the project, described below.

I teach the descriptive model of communication immediately after mindfulness. Like mindfulness meditation, reflective listening does not engage the contents of thoughts. We simply acknowledge what was said. Like mindfulness mediation, nonviolent communication distinguishes between our experience and our speculations about it. We restrict ourselves to what is undeniably true: what happened and our reaction to it. I teach positive communication later in the course, after discussing how meaning creates reality.

Meditation is a recurrent thread running through the course. I ask students to plan and pursue a contemplative practice customized to their personal needs. I emphasize that meditation is not one thing, a single activity performed in a vacuum. Just as the structure of a physical exercise training program depends upon whether we want to increase strength, endurance or flexibility, so also a meditation practice requires that we decide whether we want relaxation, insight or mental rehearsal. Effective use depends upon our intention.

Like all categorizations, this framework emphasizes some facets more than others. It does not regard emotions as sources of information to be used in our reasoning process. Nor does it address tensions among the skills. Stress reduction can undermine performance. Empathy helps us understand others but at the risk of emotional overwhelm. I acknowledge possibilities in coaching students.

### **Challenge Two: Getting Clear**

The second challenge in teaching emotional intelligence is getting clear. We commonly describe our life in mushy generalizations. Much substantive material offered in the course makes ordinary understandings more precise. Mindfulness is not about thinking or remembering but “paying attention in an open, accepting way.” Emotions are not just vague feelings but states with specific physiology, focus, and meaning. Effective communication entails not just saying what’s on your mind, but speaking into another’s understanding.

Clarity is also critical to the learning process in the course itself. To become more emotionally intelligent, we need to be specific about what is occurring, what we want to accomplish, and why we want it. I introduce this need in the first class, when I ask students to declare their objectives for the course and how they will know that they have met them. A common answer is “stress reduction” and “I will know it when I feel it.”

Such a response will not get us very far. Stress reduction is a negative goal, without direction, and feelings are ephemeral and difficult to track. Better is “meeting deadlines” and “more hours of sleep,” assuming those are desired. Identifying and tracking objectives is not done once and for all. Rather it is a continuous process of refinement and adjustment. Objectives change throughout the semester.

#### *The Project*

I work with process most explicitly by requiring students to complete a project, which brings the course into daily life. Our lives are full of projects, and the purpose of this assignment is to provide a framework for designing a productive and happy life. As such, it can dramatically improve well-being.

The blueprint for the project is a template in which students adopt a vision, which provides the foundation for goals and actions, in that order. This reverses our habitual pattern. We typically undertake a project only when there is a problem, and when we do, we focus mostly on actions and perhaps goals. The project builds upon happiness and performance materials, which I introduce early in the course to permit prolonged work.

The template begins with the realization that something is wrong, however painful that might be. Human beings rarely embark on something new unless they experience pain, but a successful project requires more than avoiding pain. Pain can be avoided through distraction and denial, behaviors that do not advance our objectives. Furthermore, pain avoidance does not provide a positive direction. It initiates the project but does not sustain prolonged effort. We lose steam as the pain abates.

Thus, identifying a problem is only step one in the template. It is critical to have a positive direction that promises pleasure. Here, the happiness literature points to importance of both values

and goals. Values are chosen life directions. They are freely selected, apply in all domains of our life and are always available in any situation. Values underlie virtue, which can be understood as living according to our values.

By contrast, goals are physical outcomes in the world. Goals allow us to measure progress. They improve performance and provide the condition for experiencing flow. Happiness comes from making progress towards a goal, not achieving it.

### *Vision*

The distinction between values and goals underlies the next two steps in the template. Step two is to create a positive vision of the future. This vision applies values to a specific situation. Students sometimes struggle with this. “Family,” for example, is not a value but a group of people. The vision require more, perhaps a “loving family.” Also, cultivating personal qualities like “confidence,” and “calmness” are more means to an end than a direction.

The vision provides ongoing inspiration. It constitutes an exciting possibility that is always available, whatever happens. You cannot fail. The vision pulls you into the future and gives others a reason to participate in your project.

### *Goals*

Step three in the template is to set a goal, an observable, measurable result by a specific date. Goals may be sequential, with short-term goals bringing you closer to your ultimate goal. They are proxies for our vision. Tangible goals make our projects real to us and others.

Goal setting makes us accountable for events outside our control. Accordingly, we sometimes resist setting goals because they create the possibility of failure. Yet without them, we cannot succeed. If we do not meet our goals, we simply return to our vision, which provides the basis for making revisions. In our projects, we are constantly adjusting goals for changes in circumstances and clarification of our vision.

Imbalance in life results from a failure to incorporate both vision and goals into our projects. Work projects dominate because they generally require measurable results, but often are experienced as deadening for lack of an inspiring vision. Relationship projects often fail for lack of a measurable result. Specifying such a result requires creativity. One possibility is to ask for others’ feedback, uncomfortable as that may be.

### *Actions*

The fourth step in the template is action. Actions need to be sufficiently specific so that they could be delegated to someone else. “Set Boundaries” is not an action intelligible to others. Call me only after 5 pm is.

Actions are instrumental. They are the means through which we achieve our goals. They are not valued for their own sake. We take medicine to heal; we do not take it if we are well. We change actions as necessary to achieve our goals.

Actions are within our control. The distinction between an action and goal depends on the circumstance. For an experienced runner, running a kilometer may be an action; for a novice, it may be a goal. Some actions are more challenging than others.



The project template can be used throughout life. One obvious application is in counseling students searching for a job. Getting a job involves actions (submitting resumes), sub goals (getting an interview), and goals (getting an offer), based on a value (perhaps making a professional contribution). The template makes the process smoother and facilitates adjustments, in employers, specialties, location, pay, and the like.

### *Life Design*

The project is demanding assignment. Some of its benefits can be achieved through less ambitious exercises. One simply is to ask students to mentally review a comprehensive to do list and notice how they feel. Then, ask students to focus on their results and purpose. The difference is obvious. Problems depress, solutions energize.

As homework, students to annotate their to-do lists. They arrange their list in three columns: the first column describes specific actions; the second, the positive outcome of the action; the third, the purpose underlying the outcome, reasons linked to values. The first columns provides specificity; the second, direction; and the third, motivation. The second and third columns provide adaptability, allowing us to substitute actions or even goals.

Systematic work with life design entails tracking time spent on daily activities and reallocating the time to the most important activities. Such work addresses a common student concern, procrastination, which can be understood as spending inordinate time on unimportant activities. Deep work with life design entails behavior modification and strong commitment. I have chosen to devote more time to the project.

### **Challenge Three: Encouraging Engagement**

The final challenge in teaching emotional intelligence is encouraging engagement. In grading, I look for effort and initiative. Some students simply go through the motions, looking for easy credits. Others work hard, conditioning behavior and developing empowering rituals. They grapple with the material and go beyond it. They try what is offered, make adjustments, and develop alternative approaches. The course is a microcosm of law school and life itself.

Throughout the semester I offer material on optimal performance. Robert Kelly's research at Bell Labs demonstrates the importance of initiative to workplace success. Studies of achievement reveal the importance of long hours of deliberate practice. Animal studies show that conditioning forms habits. We react to language like Pavlov's dogs to the sound of a bell. Sports psychologists emphasize the importance of ritual in practice

Engagement in learning involves staying open, taking responsibility, and finding meaning.

### *Staying Open*

Learning begins with openness. The most receptive students recognize that there is always something to be learned. To foster openness, I lead meditations and discuss the benefits of mindfulness. As Langer demonstrated, mindfulness generates new categories, new information, and multiple perspectives.

I also discuss Carol Dweck's research on mindsets. She describes two mindsets, fixed and growth. Regarding traits and abilities as limited, a fixed mindset creates an urgency to prove oneself. Mistakes are proof of incompetence and are therefore to be avoided. By contrast, a growth mindset regards traits and abilities as malleable, and capable of cultivation through effort. Mistakes are welcomed as learning opportunities. A growth mindset opens us to experience; a fixed mindset shuts us down. Dweck demonstrated that a growth mindset improves educational achievement.

Throughout the course, I remind students to maintain a growth mindset. They need to follow instructions but should not worry about getting a result. Results are just feedback, a learning opportunity. One cannot "fail" in our efforts to develop emotional intelligence. The whole point is to see something new. I also remind myself to maintain a growth mindset in my teaching. The various glitches, mistakes, mishaps, and lapses that inevitably occur are all opportunities for my learning.

### *Taking Responsibility*

A second component of engagement is taking responsibility. The most excited students take ownership of their experience and look for ways to make the course work for them. This is because taking responsibility promotes emotional intelligence. Taking responsibility reduces stress because we are no longer victims of circumstance. Taking responsibility increases happiness and improves performance by encouraging participation in life's activities. Taking responsibility enhances relationships because we stop blaming others.

At the same time, taking responsibility is frightening. It makes us accountable and susceptible to criticism. We look away because we are afraid of what we will see. We play the victim to preserve our self-esteem.

The fear of taking responsibility arises early in the course. We do not ask for feedback because of what we might hear. We threaten because we do not want to admit our feelings and needs. We shy away from declaring objectives and measurable goals because we do not want to "fail."

Later in the course, I offer exercises specifically designed to encourage students to take responsibility. One is identifying rackets. A racket is an unconscious thought pattern that shifts blame, a game similar to those described in Eric Berne's transactional analysis. More specifically, it consists of a persistent complaint linked to a fixed way of being. A common example in my class is "Miami drivers are terrible." To understand the racket, we must first uncover its payoffs and costs. In broad terms, the payoff to the complaint is being right and the cost is being alive. The complaint about other bad drivers justifies us at the cost of cutting us off from life. Grumble, grumble. Once we uncover the payoffs and costs, we can decide whether to give up the racket. We usually do.

One way to give up a racket is to apologize, which itself is an important practice for taking responsibility. In apologizing, we deliberately assume guilt for a wrong done to another. We disarm unilaterally, without expecting forgiveness or reciprocity. An apology involves recognizing that the incident occurred, expressing remorse or regret, admitting wrongdoing, taking

responsibility, and making a credible promise for the future. Apologizing is terrifying and exhilarating. It values the relationship over winning.

At the most general level, our failure to take responsibility is a product of projection, in which a trait, attitude, feeling, or bit of behavior which actually belongs to our own personality is attributed to objects or persons in the environment and then experienced as directed toward oneself by them instead of the other way around. Projections are most obvious when we react to an emotionally charged stimulus, but potentially apply to our entire inner life. All our life stories can ultimately be viewed as projections of inner reality.

Perhaps the most fertile ground for taking responsibility is the course itself. Students invariably have persistent complaints, often about grading, which they have not voiced. Prompted by the above exercises, some recognize a racket, request more feedback, and maybe apologize. And eventually, it dawns upon them that the resistance encountered in the course is the same resistance encountered in daily life.

Taking responsibility is also important for me as the teacher of the course. I recast critical feedback as requests. I give up rackets about student performance. I apologize for deficit teaching and hurtful comments.

### *Finding Meaning*

Engagement requires motivation. The most persistent students want something more than a grade. The strongest motivation is serving a purpose outside our personal agenda. Students are much more likely to adhere to a practice such as meditation if it does something more than just enhance their own well-being. After all, meditation was developed as a spiritual discipline. Even in its secularized form, meditation contains a germ of theology.

It seems, then, that human beings naturally crave greater purpose. Such purpose is often rooted in ultimate meaning, which is beyond the purview of the course. Descriptions of ultimate meanings are more the province of philosophy and religion than psychology and self-help. Meaning is not just about using tools for self-development but about living the good life, a larger moral imperative.

Nonetheless, the course invites us to be less self-centered. Applied inwardly, mindfulness undermines the idea of the self entirely, leading to transcendence or nirvana, depending on one's theology. Cognitive therapy invites challenges to the notion of a unified self and internal family systems therapy posits multiple selves. Likewise, applied rigorously, the theory of projection rejects any firm distinction between self and other. Inside and outside realities mirror one another. All is the play of the universe.

At the same time, the course points us outward to other people. It hints that ultimate meaning is found in serving others. Generous tit-for-tat, in which we forgive occasional lapses, is a winning strategy. Happiness is associated with viewing life as a win-win and exemplifying socially valued virtues. Social intelligence culminates in concern for others, even to the extent of prioritizing their needs over ours.

Although the course does not resolve issues of ultimate meaning, it prepares students to grapple with personal meaning. In the last week, I ask them to develop an individual mission statement that pulls together the themes of the course and provides a quick reminder that can guide them after the semester. The statement represents the deepest and best within the person, fulfills unique gifts, transcends ordinary concerns, addresses human needs, draws upon principles that improve the quality of life, deals with all significant roles in life, and inspires. Many exercises can be used to prepare such a statement. It is best to produce a concise, general statement that is easily memorized and recited.

Engagement underlies success and fulfillment in legal education and beyond. Staying open converts life's vicissitudes into learning opportunities. Taking responsibility makes us masters of our fate. Finding meaning prompts forward movement.

### **Conclusion**

As this chapter attests, teaching emotional intelligence is challenging. The course is inherently personal, raising emotional issues for the instructor as well as the students. Teaching the material requires humility and vulnerability. I have plenty of opportunities to confess my shortcomings throughout the semester, something I do in my other courses as well.

Also, writing and reading journals is time consuming. Students are surprised that there is so much work for such a "light" course. Grading every weekend, I find that the course consumes more time than all my other courses combined.

I have found, however, that the course is worthwhile, perhaps even essential. I am in the course as well, grappling with the same issues as the students. Every year, I feel renewed, and my friends remark on my improved mood. More importantly, no other course can make such an immediate, lasting impact in student lives. Is there any greater reward?

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