

## CHAPTER 1

# Your Emotional Mind

*After the first few classes and discussions about emotional intelligence, the learning community students became committed to performing the tasks at hand, and they got into a habit of conducting interactive peer group activities. They used their emotional skills vocabulary in discussion groups regarding their learning experiences. They set realistic goals. Most importantly, they did not "disappear" from the campus; they became comfortable with instructors and peers, and they used the resources on campus. They made meaningful connections.*

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## Preview

**E**motions are a major part of your personal experience, and few people know, at a practical level, the difference between a thought and a feeling. In fact, many people think that they are opposites and say, "Don't think about it, just do what you feel" or "Follow what your heart says, not your mind." Most people believe that emotions just happen and that there is little they can do about the emotions they experience. Some even go a step further and use emotion as an excuse for their behavior. For example, a college student, explaining to a police officer why he was driving recklessly over the speed limit, said he did it because his girlfriend had made him angry.

**2** Chapter 1

The knowledge and skills that you develop to accurately identify and express your emotions are essential to living a long and healthy life. Your physical health is directly related to your ability to regulate and express strong emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness. Although you may not be able to choose your emotions, you can learn to choose how to express them. Regulating the intensity and duration of your strong emotions is a necessary life skill.

**THE EMOTIONAL SYSTEM****What Is an Emotion?**

An emotion is a feeling state: It is a physiological and physical reaction that is subjectively experienced as strong feelings and physiological changes that prepare the body for immediate action. Emotions are impulses to act. Learning and practicing emotional intelligence (EI) skills allow you to self-direct the impulsive behaviors in a self-valued direction.

**Where Do Emotions Come From?**

The origin of emotion is the brain. You might say that there are two minds—one that thinks (the thinking mind) and one that feels (the emotional mind). Think of thoughts and emotions as two different mechanisms for knowing and making sense of the world. The two minds are not adversarial or physically separate; rather, they operate interactively to construct your mental life. Passion (the heart) dominates reason (the mind) when feelings are intense.

The amygdala is a structure in the brain that plays an important role in emotion and is where emotional memories are stored. It is the brain's sentry—the first to warn of impending danger. The body's neural pathways for emotions may bypass the neocortex and go directly to the amygdala. This neural shortcut allows the amygdala to receive direct input from the senses and begin a response before the information has reached the neocortex.

**What Is the Difference between a Thought and a Feeling?**

The ability to distinguish between a thought and a feeling is the foundation of emotionally intelligent behavior. Changing emotional reactivity into self-valued

**EXHIBIT 1.1** WHAT ARE THE EMOTIONS THAT WE FEEL?

*Circle all the words that identify emotions.*

anxiety	pride	anger	pity	contentment
love	excited	tension	satisfied	depressed
hostility	devoted	fear	embarrassed	thrilled
melancholy	friendliness	revenge	laughter	kind
despair	annoyed	sadness	happiness	jealous
worry	confused	apprehensive	dread	delight
envy	gloomy	irritable	concerned	sorrow
outrage	anguish	bliss	panic	shy
frustration	joy	startled	stress	hate
grief	shame	infatuation	boredom	content
nervous	loneliness	trusting	envy	

*How many words did you circle?*

behavior is a skill called intentionality. The emotional mind is childlike, associative, and often makes mistakes about time. When some features of an event seem similar to an emotionally charged memory, the emotional mind reacts to the present situation as though it was the past. What are the emotions that we all feel and easily recognize? Look at the list of words in Exhibit 1.1 and circle those that identify emotions.

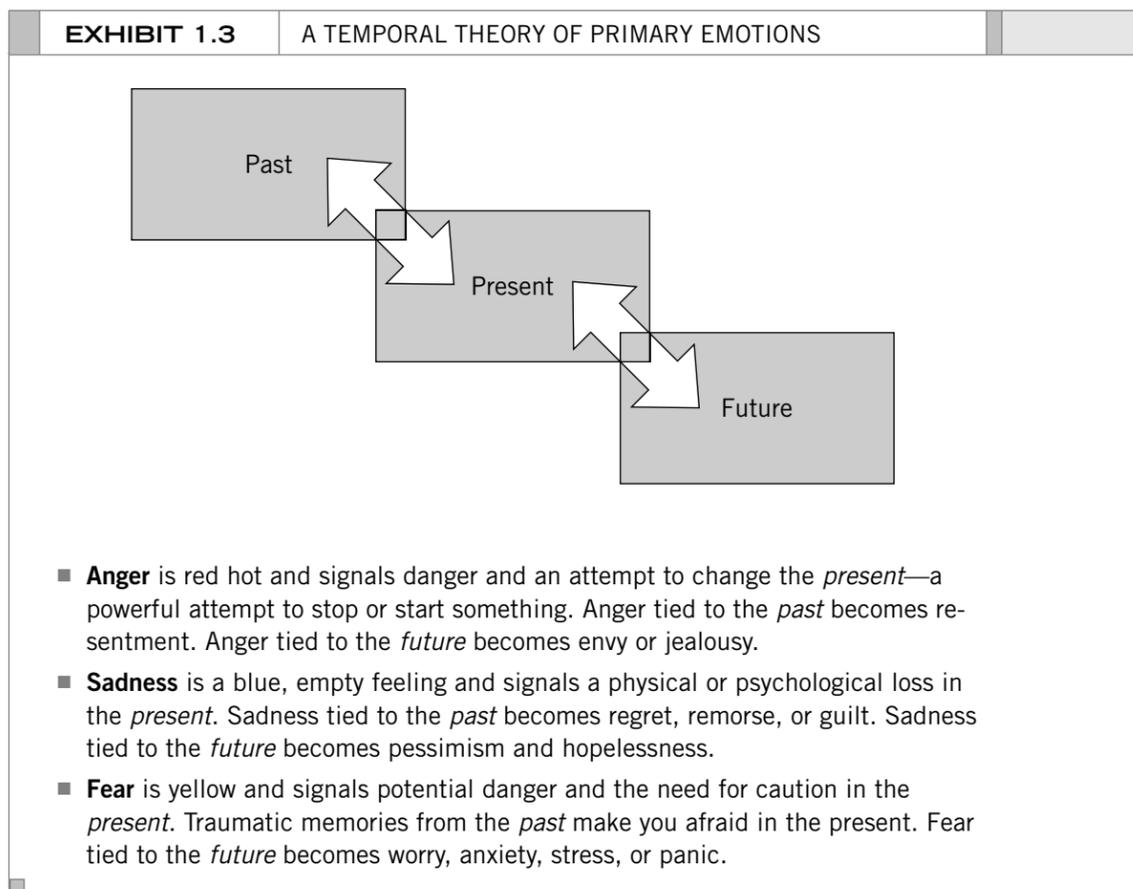
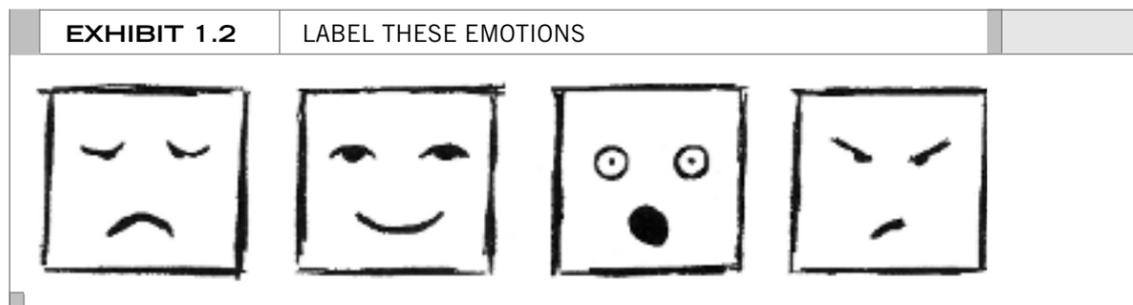
**What Are Primary Emotions?**

We consider the primary human emotions to be those that everyone in the world recognizes. Look at Exhibit 1.2 and name the emotion expressed by each face.

The four emotions that you labeled are considered primary emotions—those that are universally recognized. Because feelings are important sources of information from the emotional mind, accurately identifying a feeling is calming and frees you from emotional reactivity.

Emotions are experienced in the *present*, and if they are labeled quickly and correctly, you can choose how to behave. Three of the primary emotions—anger, sadness, and fear—can be applied to the diagram shown in Exhibit 1.3.

4 Chapter 1



When you have a clear understanding of how the emotional system works and can accurately identify emotions as they are being experienced, you are developing emotional intelligence. The purpose of exploring and developing emotional intelligence is to learn how to achieve self-valued changes in your emotional system.

### **BREAKING THE EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY HABIT**

Most people agree that it is wise to think before you act—thinking is a rational process that improves your ability to behave effectively. At times, you experience strong, almost automatic, emotions that make clear thinking difficult and block constructive or productive behavior. Emotions that are too intense and have a long duration erode your physical and mental health and contribute to self-defeating behavior. The emotional mind is childlike and learns as fast as a developing child. The emotional mind learns through associations and responds to primary emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness. An emotion is a feeling state that is uniquely experienced. Emotions are impulses to act and include both psychological and physical reactions. The tendency to act is a part of the emotional response. It is important to remember that emotions are not neutral. A key aspect of emotional intelligence is to learn how to self-direct and self-monitor your emotional mind.

Emotions are different from thoughts; emotions lead to actions. Without intelligent self-direction and monitoring, emotions naturally lead to a habit of reactivity. Reacting to strong emotions can and often does result in difficult and problematic circumstances. Learning and practicing emotional intelligence skills allows you to self-direct impulsive (quick) behaviors in a self-valued direction. Everyone must have a simple and practical process to understand and deal with strong emotions.

Use the step-by-step ELS process described in Exhibit 1.4, *Dealing with Strong Emotions*, to understand, identify, label, and express your strong emotions. Practice the process until it becomes a natural, learned response to strong emotions. Remember, strong emotions are an important source of information to be used to improve your behavior—they are neither negative nor positive.

The three emotions that cause people the most difficulty are anger, sadness, and fear. Practicing the step-by-step ELS process will help you change the emotional reactivity habit. Mastering this skill allows you to distinguish between thinking and feeling and to plan and choose self-directed

**EXHIBIT 1.4** DEALING WITH STRONG EMOTIONS

*Create a personal and truthful model for understanding your emotional Self.*

1. Develop emotional self-awareness:
  - Complete the emotional skills assessment process.
  - Clarify your emotional skill strengths and areas to be changed.
  - Self-monitor your emotional responses and patterns.
  - Remind yourself *how* the emotional mind works.

*Feelings signal important experiences.*

2. Relabel strong emotional responses as an important early warning system that indicates something important is occurring:
  - Feelings (emotions) occur for a reason.
  - Some emotional responses do not have easily accessible cognitive components and occur quickly and automatically.

*Emotions are neither negative nor positive; they are human.*

3. Nonjudgmental validation of your feelings or emotions:
  - Learn and use positive self-talk.
  - Develop empathic self-assertion (I am having an important feeling, and I can decide how to express it).

*Identify the feeling that you are experiencing.*

4. Accurately identify and label the emotion:
  - I am happy, sad, angry, or afraid (self-statement).
  - An accurate identification calms the emotional mind (may be due to the involvement of the brain's left lobe, which controls language and logic).

*Decide how to express the emotion in a way that is healthy for you and those around you (self-valued change).*

5. Personal goal setting or problem solving:
  - Establish clear goals based on value-congruent behaviors.
  - Create options, explore solutions, and choose a behavioral course of action.

(intentional) behaviors instead of reacting to the cues from others or the environment. Research has indicated that self-directed behavior is essential to high levels of achievement, career excellence, and good physical and mental health.

## HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

A healthy learning environment is one in which you learn best—you feel excited about learning and are challenged to think. To create such an environment, you must accept responsibility for your own motivation and learning. Although professors can share their knowledge and information with you, help you identify important concepts, and introduce you to new ways of thinking and solving problems, they cannot teach you anything that you are not willing to learn. Students who wait to be motivated by their professors often wait a very long time. Those students describe themselves as “bored” or “unmotivated”—they’ve slipped into a reactive mode while waiting for some external force to motivate or excite them.

When you have passion (feeling for and interest in) about an idea or subject, learning is rapid, effortless, and personally satisfying. This is the work of the emotional mind—it is always easier to learn about things that you like and enjoy. Those subjects or areas that you have little interest in are more difficult to learn and require a different learning strategy. Become aware of how you learn best by identifying your unique learning style, then seek out learning resources on campus that can help you master the difficult or uninteresting assignments. You might organize a group of friends supportive of academic excellence, join organizations that provide learning resources and stress academic success, find a mentor who is interested in your goals, or seek help from professors who model scholarship and value lifelong learning.

Drive and motivation are internal processes that you must learn to access and direct to achieve meaningful goals. Although a master teacher can help create a learning environment that engages and challenges you, it is ultimately up to you to develop your mind to its fullest potential.

## STRESS, BURNOUT, AND BOREDOM

Stress is an unavoidable part of living and can be either positive or negative. Finishing high school and making the transition to college is a major source of stress. For some students, the transition’s stress and excitement are somewhat

**8** Chapter 1

overwhelming—they forget to go to class and to study. They excel at the university's covert curriculum, but are graded on the cognitive. They have a great time—but only for a short period. A student's ability to manage stress is a key emotional intelligence skill because negative stress (distress) and intense emotions experienced over a long period of time are physically harmful. Moderate anxiety (fear) about an upcoming quiz may motivate you to study the material instead of spending time with a friend. Some anxiety serves a beneficial purpose when it warns of impending danger—too much anxiety, however, can hinder your performance and lower your achievement. Emotionally reactive students experience burnout and boredom. They lack the energy to focus on challenging assignments that require long periods of concentrated effort.

When your parents and friends waved good-bye as you left for college, many of them said, "Take good care of yourself." What they meant was "have a good time and learn to manage the stress you will experience from the change." The best buffer against negative stress is a positive, supportive relationship. Everyone is occasionally overwhelmed by stress when demands are greater than available internal resources. We sometimes lack the emotional, physical, or financial resources necessary to manage and solve an immediate crisis. Involve yourself in friendships. Establish a relationship with a mentor who values you as a person and who will encourage and support you during times of personal crises.

**COLLEGE SUCCESS FACTORS**

The transitions from high school to college and from college to career can be exciting times for you. These are the transitions that are essential to your personal, academic, and career success. How you manage these changes is directly related to how you manage yourself in response to the demands and pressures of academic work and career challenges.

A well-kept secret for over 200 years is that colleges and universities have *two* important curricula. One curriculum is cognitive and focuses on academic content areas, grade point averages, semester hours, and academic honor societies. It is this curriculum that most students describe when asked what constitutes "higher education"—the mastery of course content and the accumulation of semester hours. Each discipline has its own content that is divided into courses that are completed one at a time. When enough courses are finished, a degree is awarded. The other curriculum is covert (less visible) and is not as rational, focused, or organized—we call it the emotional or

**EXHIBIT 1.5** THE EMOTIONAL CURRICULUM ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

- Achieve a balance between the cognitive and the emotional mind.
- Develop active listening skills.
- Identify and use your primary learning style.
- Use campus resources to improve your reading speed and comprehension.
- Develop time-management and self-management skills.
- Set personal goals (Drive Strength).
- Be organized, punctual, and dependable (Commitment Ethic and Time Management).
- Be assertive with yourself, friends, and professors (Assertion).
- Effectively manage and express strong emotions (Stress Management).
- Appreciate and value difference (Empathy and Positive Influence).
- Focus on your strengths (Self-Esteem).
- Establish and maintain healthy relationships (Social Awareness and Decision Making).
- Recognize and express emotions effectively (Anger and Anxiety Management).
- Be flexible (Positive Change).

covert curriculum. It is, however, just as important to your academic and career success as the cognitive curriculum.

The covert curriculum is not primarily based on what you are supposed to do; rather, it is based on relationships, social activities, fun, adventure, recreation, collegiate sports and organizations, and what you want to do at any particular time. The emotional curriculum consists of skill-related attitudes and behaviors that occur both inside and outside the classroom (see Exhibit 1.5).

These attitudes and behaviors comprise a major part of your experience as a student. When you know how your emotional mind works and how to apply emotional intelligence skills, you are on your way to personal, academic, and career success.

Briefly scan Exhibit 1.6, College Success Factors. How many are related to the covert curriculum, requiring emotionally intelligent decisions and behaviors? Emotional intelligence behaviors are transferable lifelong skills—employers look for them during interviews, and they are necessary to develop healthy interpersonal relationships.

**EXHIBIT 1.6** COLLEGE SUCCESS FACTORS

- Establish a positive, supportive relationship with a person (mentor) who is interested in you and your success.
- Know how to locate and access campus resources.
- Establish meaningful personal goals related to successful college completion.
- Create a daily schedule and track your progress.
- Commit to your primary “career” by being a good student.
- Identify, maximize, and expand your personal learning style.
- Form a study or support group.
- Initiate contact with professors, teaching assistants, and high-achieving students.
- Develop critical-thinking skills.
- Choose classes with professors who support your learning style.
- Know how and where to get information.
- Improve your writing and speaking skills.
- Learn the career life-planning process and visit the career center.
- Build friendships with peers who are committed to academic and career success.
- Learn, practice, and strengthen assertive communication skills.
- Get involved in a campus organization that supports your interests.
- Improve your physical wellness skills.
- Become computer literate and build your word-processing skills.
- Attend all classes.
- Increase your personal expectations with each success.

**HIGH ACHIEVEMENT AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING**

Students who reach high levels of academic and career achievement are self-directed learners who master both the cognitive and emotional curricula. Sternberg (1995) characterized successful intelligent people as those who:

- Are initiators who motivate themselves
- Learn to control their impulses and delay gratification
- Know how to persevere and seek to surmount personal difficulties

- Translate thought into action and do not procrastinate
- Complete tasks and follow through
- Are not afraid to risk failure, accept responsibility, and reject self-pity
- Are independent and focus on personally meaningful goals
- Balance their thinking (cognitive with emotional)
- Possess self-confidence and positive self-efficacy

Our research, conducted over the past 30 years, has supported Sternberg’s description—a description that reflects the essential characteristics or skills of the emotionally intelligent student. Learning to apply and model these skills greatly enhances your chance for success.

Exhibit 1.7, *An Emotionally Intelligent Student’s Characteristics*, sets forth the attitudes and behaviors necessary for academic and, ultimately, career success. Remember, emotionally intelligent students are proactive—not reactive.

Emotionally intelligent behavior involves understanding your immediate experience and learning to think constructively about your behavior choices; it requires exercising good judgment and acting wisely (intelligent self-direction). The Emotional Learning System (discussed in Chapter 2) provides a model for learning emotional skills and applying them in active, integrative, and personally meaningful ways.

**EXHIBIT 1.7** AN EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT STUDENT’S CHARACTERISTICS

<b>Emotionally Reactive Student</b>	<b>Emotionally Intelligent Student</b>
Overwhelmed too often	Resilient
Reactive to stress	Proactive, planned responses to stress
Emotionally driven behavior	Intentional reflective behavior
Self-doubting	Self-confident
Deficit and weakness focused	Strength focused
Resistant to change	Flexible; open to change
Aggressive, nonassertive communicator	Assertive communicator
Performance decreases under stress	Performance improves under stress
Pessimistic, sarcastic, negative focus	Optimistic, positive, hopeful focus
Relies on reactive habits	Relies on positive habits
Continually makes the same mistakes	Learns from experience

## TWELVE IMPORTANT LESSONS

We have researched and studied the effect and impact of personal and emotional skills on human performance and blended that information with our own professional experience as college educators and consultants to business and industry—the result was the development of 12 lessons that have major implications for the way we study, work, and live on an everyday basis. Emotional learning and emotional intelligence make significant contributions to high achievement, career excellence, personal leadership, and quality performance. You can benefit from learning how to develop your emotional intelligence, not out of necessity, but out of a personal commitment to improve success, your personal well-being, and your academic and career performance.

To gain the most from this text, try to internalize and learn from each of the 12 lessons and corresponding hallmarks of our transformational approach to emotional intelligence. Make a personal decision to fully develop your emotional intelligence. This intentional and active decision is the key.

### Lesson

**Lesson 1.** Some people believe that people cannot substantively change.

**Lesson 2.** Life's emotional aspect is the most important. Although this is true for everyone, the emotional dimension is missing from or neglected by most educational programs.

**Lesson 3.** High levels of achievement, success, and happiness are self-defined and self-directed.

**Lesson 4.** Honest self-assessment is necessary for positive and intentional personal change. Even so, most assessments and evaluations do not acknowledge this and do not take a positive, formative, and developmental approach.

### Educational Corollaries: Hallmarks of the Transformative Model of EI

**Hallmark 1.** Reflective and constructive thinking processes can be effectively taught and learned. Reflective and constructive thinking engenders emotionally intelligent and wise behavior.

**Hallmark 2.** Approaching affective education as an integrated set of learned abilities based on specific emotional skills provides a straightforward approach for learning and teaching emotional intelligence.

**Hallmark 3.** Including and integrating the emotional system in constructive, intentional ways enhances academic and life success.

**Hallmark 4.** Positive assessment models, such as those provided in this text, are key.

**Lesson 5.** Students learn best and work best in environments that are physically and emotionally safe. High levels of performance and productivity are easier to achieve and sustain when trust, respect, communication, commitment, and personal leadership are evident in safe environments.

**Lesson 6.** Emotional intelligence is the most important factor in achieving excellence. Even so, most people have not been provided systematic opportunities to learn EI competencies and skills.

**Lesson 7.** The effects of negative and unchecked emotional stress and ineffective or poor relationships are financially costly. The human costs that result from poor health, destructive relationships, and a loss of hope for a better life cause even more long-term damage.

**Lesson 8.** A personal and emotional accountability system is essential for high achievement.

**Lesson 9.** People develop and change themselves. People have within themselves all they need to live productive, responsible, and satisfying lives, although they may require some help to know what to learn and how to make positive changes.

**Hallmark 5.** Transformative approaches emphasize trust, support, and affirmation to engender personal meaning and instill intelligent self-direction.

**Hallmark 6.** Education models must incorporate a systematic or step-by-step process for learning and teaching EI.

**Hallmark 7.** Although a degree of independence is important for success in life, ultimately interdependence is more important than independence. Healthy, effective relationships are essential for superior performance and outstanding personal and organizational leadership.

**Hallmark 8.** The Emotional Learning System and positive assessment processes provide a model for building personal and emotional accountability around the emotional intelligence competencies and associated emotional skills.

**Hallmark 9.** Our minds are shaped by how we process and relate with the important events and feelings in our lives. The Emotional Learning System provides a systematic way to constructively process important life events and feelings.

## 14 Chapter 1

**Lesson 10.** The four critical areas of human performance are Interpersonal, Personal Leadership, Self-Management, and Intrapersonal. These performance areas represent the essential competencies or component areas of emotional intelligence.

**Lesson 11.** Personal meaning is more powerful than external data. The individual determines personal meaning. Emotional growth and health are exciting, enjoyable, and rewarding, but must have a foundation of personal meaning.

**Hallmark 10.** To be transformational, EI assessments must include these four areas of human performance.

**Hallmark 11.** Intelligent self-direction, which is a by-product of studying and learning about emotional intelligence, results from emotional reflection and learning, higher-order thinking, (thinking about how we think and feel), and healthy functioning.

The last lesson, **Lesson 12**, is simply that life transitions and changes are often challenging and sometimes difficult. The educational corollary or hallmark of transformational EI is that developing a healthy emotional mind must be intentional, skill based, and it requires protection, permission, and personal empowerment. *EI Man* provides a wonderful and interesting example of this lesson in Exhibit 1.8, The Hermit Crab Story. In many ways, the process of successfully developing and exercising your emotional intelligence in life closely parallels the healthy growth and success of the Hermit Crab.

**EXHIBIT 1.8**

## LESSONS FROM THE HERMIT CRAB

## How Do I Grow?

*From a story by Dr. Darwin Nelson Adapted by Gardner Reynolds*

Once upon a time, there was a very young Hermit Crab. He was so young he really didn't understand how fragile he was. He never knew his mother or father. They were carried off and eaten by seagulls right after he was born. He soon discovered that, although the front of his body, his claws and his head were covered by a hard shell, his whole back end was like mush; really, really soft. He knew he needed to get a house to live in to protect himself. And he better do it pretty quickly, for he heard the dreaded, dangerous seagulls all the time.

One day when he was very carefully exploring the beach, he found an old shell. He poked his claws into it and looked around. "Wow," he thought, "It's empty. I could live in here!" and he quickly slipped his rear end in the shell.

He lived very comfortably in the shell for quite a while. But one day he woke up with a bad backache. He pulled himself out of the shell a little way and the pain stopped. He tried to push himself back in and the pain came back. He soon realized he had outgrown his shell-house and he needed a bigger one. So he dragged his old shell around very carefully all over the beach until he found another shell. It was bigger, so said good-bye and moved in to his new house.

After a while, the back pain happened again, so he went looking for even bigger shell. Again, he knew he was vulnerable and had to be very careful. But this time, he learned a new lesson: He was going to keep growing and he would need even bigger shells, so he scoured the beach looking for even bigger shells. He found several more and dragged them all to the same place so he had them when he needed them. This was one smart Hermit Crab!

In many ways, people are like Hermit Crabs. Not so much on the outside, our bodies get bigger and we need bigger clothes, sure, but where we really grow, and sometimes are vulnerable and need protection, is on the inside: Our minds and feelings need to grow. Our souls need to expand and adapt to include new situations as we journey through life.

We go from being babies to children in a family, then we go to school, to church to be married and then out into the world to seek our fortunes.

Many times along the path in life, we will meet new people, go to new schools, get new jobs, become a parent and raise a family, go into the hospital, or feel the pain of a loss of a loved one. All kinds of new things happen to us, some are fun and some are not so fun, but every time something big and important and new happens to us, we need to grow inside to meet the challenge.

When something new happens to you, how do you deal with it? Well, you can be like an ostrich; hide your head in the sand and go into denial and pretend nothing is happening. Or you can get like a rattlesnake; coil up and get all hostile, ready to strike out at anybody that comes near you. Or be like a scorpion in a fire and sting yourself to death. Probably, not too smart.

On the more positive side, you could be like a baby chicken. When she gets too big for her shell, she pokes her beak through it and out she comes: Here I am world, ready or not.

Or better yet, why not be like a Hermit Crab? Push the envelope and find a bigger house for yourself. Sure, you need to be careful when you're looking for your new place, but there's nothing wrong with the "Spirit of Adventure." It can be very cool to expand your mind & spirit and grow. Think of all the new things you will learn. Think of how you will feel about yourself about being a "risk-taker" who found a new way that worked.

*(Continued)*

16 Chapter 1

The Good Lord didn't put us here to be stuck inside an old shell. Your ego, what you mean when you say "I am," needs to change and grow in a positive way. Being stuck in an overgrown ego that thinks it's better than everybody else is a major drag. But having an "I am" that blends and flows with all the other "I am's" makes life enjoyable for you and everybody around you.

It's very uncool to be stuck in a rut. It hurts to be all cramped up in a hard shell. Life is all about taking chances, expanding your mind and feelings, adapting to changes and learning new things. So maybe take a lesson from our little buddy, the Hermit Crab.

**LINK**

Very few people develop the knowledge and skills to integrate thinking and feeling into effective behaviors. Emotions are often viewed as automatic and beyond conscious control. You may not be able to choose when you feel, but you can learn to control how you experience and express your emotions. The next chapter outlines the important steps in becoming an emotionally intelligent student. A very practical model for understanding your emotional mind is presented. Understanding the emotional mind leads to constructive thinking, and constructive thinking leads to more effective (successful) behavior. As you learn more about how the emotional mind works, you will begin to view personal behavior as what you do more than how you are.