

## Leadership Coaching

An effective development route for executives:

- **To acquire gravitas and develop presence** - enabling them to demonstrate the qualities that help get things done incisively and with compassion, but without aggression.
- **To find their purpose in life.** Aware of the need for strategic thinking and a clear vision, leaders of all kinds can nevertheless find themselves caught up in a whirlwind of daily problems.
- **To re-align themselves.** Recognising that they aren't quite achieving what they want to achieve - we look at what led to their success in the first place and what works now. Finding there are better ways of managing situations so they are clearer, energised and more effective.

## Graham Wilson

For the last 17 years, I've worked with the leaders of organisations, and their people, helping create a vision of what their world could be like, and then helping them to achieve it.

Believing in the enormous potential that people have I love to see them discover and tap into this in every aspect of their life.

Whilst both a futurist and strategist, my work has its roots in organisation development and is shaped by my training as a psychotherapist, sports coach, and minister.

You can read more about my background, leadership roles and my books on my website:

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# EMOTIONAL LITERACY

A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Guide  
for Today's Executives

## Leadership Coaching

I meet clients at a variety of locations around the country, including London, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Surrey, Hampshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands. Appointments can be made to suit your timetable - many clients preferring to meet outside their core working hours.

GRAHAM WILSON  
LONDON • OXFORD

# Emotional Literacy

*I don't agree with the term EQ, or emotional intelligence, for two reasons - it implies that it can be measured and that there are therefore 'norms' to which people can be compared, and (as it was originally defined) it is highly manipulative of others. So I prefer the term 'emotional literacy'. Unlike other topics, this one can't really be addressed in ten simple steps. It involves a great deal of self-study. It isn't something you simply learn and then use - instead you have to go through MUCH iteration, thinking you have got the message but then having to re-visit and re-do the thinking. Slowly, unconsciously, you change. It isn't sudden and it isn't conscious. You can't just take something on-board and then behave differently - the things that determine how you behave are too deep-rooted. You can change though and this guide offers a few approaches to help you.*

## 1 There are no quick fixes

Becoming more emotionally literate means investing time in yourself - observing, interpreting and acting on, your behaviour. You need to be prepared to invest and you need to accept that some of what you discover will be painful until you have 'dealt' with it.

## 2 Keep a personal journal

Almost every 'expert' and every 'path' expects you to keep a personal journal to record your observations, tentative questions, analyses, and interpretations, along with details of your successes and failures along the way. Write a few words every day or so. It needn't be a 'diary' nor a comprehensive account of your life - it is a place to record your feelings and what you interpret about them. Use it as a place to ask yourself questions.

## 3 Describe your personality today

Try describing your personality as it is today. Ask a few friends, or people who have seen you from a distance, for honest feedback. Don't rely on family members - they are

usually part of the reason why you are the way you are, and they are rarely able to be dispassionate. If you don't really feel comfortable asking anyone, then start with an astrological description - you can usually find a description on the internet of your star-sign personality. Don't accept all it says - ask yourself if you feel it fits or not. From time-to-time return to this step.

## 4 What has shaped you so far?

Look back over your life and ask yourself where these characteristics came from. Most originate in childhood, so what do you think led you to be like this? For instance, if you feel you're shy, when did you first feel this? Were you 'always' like it or did something happen that so embarrassed you, that you avoid attention at all costs? Did you live in the shadow of an older sibling? Again, you need to keep returning to this step.

## 5 Recognize your emotional buttons

What makes you uncomfortable? Build up a list of things that make you feel uncomfortable. These may be things you do not like doing or feel uncomfortable doing. Think how you would know - apart from simply putting off doing them, does your jaw lock, do your fists tighten, do you become 'grumpy' or break out in a cold sweat? Examples include: public speaking, writing letters, borrowing from people you know, shopping for clothes, dancing, dating, sex... Go through step 4 again - where do these things come from?

## 6 What makes you happy or not?

Which aspects of your life are you happy with and which are you less happy with? Explore the details of these, then look more carefully at what they tell you about yourself. For example, if you loathe commuting into work each day, what led you to a job that involves a commute? What is stopping you from doing something else? We're not interested so much in the practicalities as the emotions... "I need to earn a decent living." What's decent? Why? Can only commuters earn a decent living? Where did YOU get that idea from? What aspect is it that you loathe? What is behind this?

## 7 How authentic are you?

Do you wear a mask? Many people do, yet those we respect for their wisdom don't - they are authentic - what you see is what you get regardless of the circumstances. We often wear two or more masks - such as one at work and one at home. A supposedly very emotionally-balanced 'spiritual guru' (who often spoke

of the need to stop our egos controlling our lives) had photos of herself and copies of her books displayed all over her house. She was wearing two masks. Would anyone get to know her? Draw your masks - whether in words or images - and go through step 4 again.

## 8 Draw on your intuition

Do you draw on your intuition when making decisions? People are frightened to admit that they have no rationale for a decision. Companies make them out to be bad for failing to justify something rationally. Yet we all make intuitive decisions. Behind most decisions is some kind of intuitive element. Emotionally literate people recognise this, are comfortable drawing on their intuition, and accept emotive reasons as just as valid as rational ones. Decisions are not all major and life-changing nor are they often about right or wrong, so try asking yourself more often what your 'gut-feel' is or what you would like to do rather than what you feel you have to do.

## 9 What can you learn from others?

Do some people "push your buttons"? What is it about them that gets you going or makes you clam up? They often represent something about ourselves. Whether they come across as patronizing, flippant, overly friendly, controlling, 'in your face', flamboyant, or dogmatic, there is usually someone from our past who had similar qualities or they are qualities we're afraid we have ourselves. Go through step 4 again!

## 10 What happens when you feel threatened?

We may deny that we feel threatened, or draw on a complicated repertoire of 'coping strategies'. This would be fine, only we acquire these when we were a child (NB go through step 4) and they have often ceased to work in adulthood. Probably the commonest is 'sublimation' - we throw ourselves into something highly absorbing, such as a hobby or committee, rather than examining what else is missing from our lives.

For details of my leadership coaching, public speaking and other activities, please check out my website: [www.grahamwilson.org](http://www.grahamwilson.org)

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