the past she attacked first, asked questions later—or not at all. For her to engage a seeming adversary in a constructive way rather than immediately wading into an angry confrontal is a small but real victory.

Perhaps the most telling sign of the impact of such emotional literacy classes are the data shared with me by the principal of this twelve-year-old's school. An unbendable rule there is that children caught fighting are suspended. But as the emotional literacy classes have been phased in over the years there has been a steady drop in the number of suspensions. "Last year," says the principal, "there were 106 suspensions. So far this year—we're up to March–there have been only 26."

These are concrete benefits. But apart from such anecdotes of lives bettered or saved, there is the empirical question of how much emotional literacy classes really matter to those who go through them. The data suggest that although such courses do not change anyone overnight, as children advance through the curriculum from grade to grade, there are discernible improvements in the tone of a school and the outlook—and level of emotional competence—of the girls and boys who take them.

There have been a handful of objective evaluations, the best of which compare students in these courses with equivalent students not taking them, with independent observers rating the children's behavior. Another method is to track changes in the same students before and after the courses based on objective measures of their behavior, such as the number of schoolyard fights or suspensions. Pooling such assessments reveals a widespread benefit for children's emotional and social competence, for their behavior in and out of the classroom, and for their ability to learn (see Appendix F for details):

Emotional self-awareness

- Improvement in recognizing and naming own emotions
- Better able to understand the causes of feelings
- Recognizing the difference between feelings and actions

Managing emotions

- Better frustration tolerance and anger management

• Fewer verbal put-downs, fights, and classroom disruptions
• Better able to express anger appropriately, without fighting
• Fewer suspensions and expulsions
• Less aggressive or self-destructive behavior
• More positive feelings about self, school, and family
• Better at handling stress
• Less loneliness and social anxiety

Harnessing emotions productively

• More responsible
• Better able to focus on the task at hand and pay attention
• Less impulsive; more self-control
• Improved scores on achievement tests

Empathy: reading emotions

• Better able to take another person's perspective
• Improved empathy and sensitivity to others' feelings
• Better at listening to others

Handling relationships

• Increased ability to analyze and understand relationships
• Better at resolving conflicts and negotiating disagreements
• Better at solving problems in relationships
• More assertive and skilled at communicating
• More popular and outgoing; friendly and involved with peers
• More sought out by peers
• More concerned and considerate
• More "pro-social" and harmonious in groups
• More sharing, cooperation, and helpfulness
• More democratic in dealing with others

One item on this list demands special attention: emotional literacy programs improve children's *academic* achievement scores and school

performance. This is not an isolated finding; it recurs again and again in such studies. In a time when too many children lack the capacity to handle their upsets, to listen or focus, to rein in impulse, to feel responsible for their work or care about learning, anything that will buttress these skills will help in their education. In this sense, emotional literacy enhances schools' ability to teach. Even in a time of back-to-basics and budget cuts, there is an argument to be made that these programs help reverse a tide of educational decline and strengthen schools in accomplishing their main mission, and so are well worth the investment.

Beyond these educational advantages, the courses seem to help children better fulfill their roles in life, becoming better friends, students, sons and daughters—and in the future are more likely to be better husbands and wives, workers and bosses, parents, and citizens. While not every boy and girl will acquire these skills with equal sureness, to the degree they do we are all the better for it. "A rising tide lifts all boats," as Tim Shriver put it. "It's not just the kids with problems, but all kids who can benefit from these skills; these are an inoculation for life."

CHARACTER, MORALITY, AMD THE ARTS Of DEMOCRACY

There is an old-fashioned word for the body of skills that emotional intelligence represents: *character*. Character, writes Amitai Etzioni, the George Washington University social theorist, is "the psychological muscle that moral conduct requires."[14] And philosopher John Dewey saw that a moral education is most potent when lessons are taught to children in the course of real events, not just as abstract lessons—the mode of emotional literacy.[15]

If character development is a foundation of democratic societies, consider some of the ways emotional intelligence buttresses this foundation. The bedrock of character is self-discipline; the virtuous life, as philosophers since Aristotle have observed, is based on self-control. A related keystone of character is being able to motivate and guide oneself, whether in doing homework, finishing a job, or getting up in the morning. And, as we have seen, the ability to defer gratification and to control and channel one's urges to act is a basic emotional skill, one that in a former day was called will. "We need to be in control of ourselves—our appetites, our passions—to do right by

others," notes Thomas Lickona, writing about character education.[16] "It takes will to keep emotion under the control of reason."

Being able to put aside one's self-centered focus and impulses has social benefits: it opens the way to empathy, to real listening, to taking another person's perspective. Empathy, as we have seen, leads to caring, altruism, and compassion. Seeing things from another's perspective breaks down biased stereotypes, and so breeds tolerance and acceptance of differences. These capacities are ever more called on in our increasingly pluralistic society, allowing people to live together in mutual respect and creating the possibility of productive public discourse. These are basic arts of democracy.[17]

Schools, notes Etzioni, have a central role in cultivating character by inculcating self-discipline and empathy, which in turn enable true commitment to civic and moral values.[18] In doing so, it is not enough to lecture children about values: they need to practice them, which happens as children build the essential emotional and social skills. In this sense, emotional literacy goes hand in hand with education for character, for moral development, and for citizenship.

A LAST WORD

As I complete this book some troubling newspaper items catch my eye. One announces that guns have become the number-one cause of death in America, edging out auto accidents. The second says that last year murder rates rose by 3 percent.[19] Particularly disturbing is the prediction in that second article, by a criminologist, that we are in a lull before a "crime storm" to come in the next decade. The reason he gives is that murders by teenagers as young as fourteen and fifteen are on the rise, and that age group represents the crest of a mini baby boom. In the next decade this group will become eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds, the age at which violent crimes peak in the course of a criminal career. The harbingers are on the horizon: A third article says that in the four years between 1988 and 1992 Justice Department figures show a 68 percent jump in the number of juveniles charged with murder, aggravated assault, robbery, and forcible rape, with aggravated assault alone up 80 percent.[20]

These teenagers are the first generation to have not just guns but automatic weaponry easily available to them, just as their parents' generation was the first to have wide access to drugs. The toting of

guns by teenagers means that disagreements that in a former day would have led to fistfights can readily lead to shootings instead. And, as another expert points out, these teenagers "just aren't very good at avoiding disputes."

One reason they are so poor at this basic life skill, of course, is that as a society we have not bothered to make sure every child is taught the essentials of handling anger or resolving conflicts positively—nor have we bothered to teach empathy, impulse control, or any of the other fundamentals of emotional competence. By leaving the emotional lessons children learn to chance, we risk largely wasting the window of opportunity presented by the slow maturation of the brain to help children cultivate a healthy emotional repertoire.

Despite high interest in emotional literacy among some educators, these courses are as yet rare; most teachers, principals, and parents simply do not know they exist. The best models are largely outside the education mainstream, in a handful of private schools and a few hundred public schools. Of course no program, including this one, is an answer to every problem. But given the crises we find ourselves and our children facing, and given the quantum of hope held out by courses in emotional literacy, we must ask ourselves: Shouldn't we be teaching these most essential skills for life to every child—now more than ever?

And if not now, when?

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* For more information on emotional literacy courses: The Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, Department of Psychology (M/C 285), University of Illinois at Chicago, 1007 West Harrison St., Chicago, IL 60606-7137.

APPENDIX A

What Is Emotion?

A word about what I refer to under the rubric *emotion*, a term whose precise meaning psychologists and philosophers have quibbled over for more than a century. In its most literal sense, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *emotion* as "any agitation or disturbance of mind, feeling, passion; any vehement or excited mental state." I take *emotion* to refer to a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and range of propensities to act. There are hundreds of emotions, along with their blends, variations, mutations, and nuances. Indeed, there are many more subtleties of emotion than we have words for.

Researchers continue to argue over precisely which emotions can be considered primary—the blue, red, and yellow of feeling from which all blends come—or even if there are such primary emotions at all. Some theorists propose basic families, though not all agree on them. The main candidates and some of the members of their families:

• *Anger:* fury, outrage, resentment, wrath, exasperation, indignation, vexation, acrimony, animosity, annoyance, irritability, hostility, and, perhaps at the extreme, pathological hatred and violence

• *Sadness:* grief, sorrow, cheerlessness, gloom, melancholy, self-pity, loneliness, dejection, despair, and, when pathological, severe depression

• *Fear:* anxiety, apprehension, nervousness, concern, consternation, misgiving, wariness, qualm, edginess, dread, fright, terror; as a psychopathology, phobia and panic

• *Enjoyment:* happiness, joy, relief, contentment, bliss, delight, amusement, pride, sensual pleasure, thrill, rapture, gratification, satisfaction, euphoria, whimsy, ecstasy, and at the far edge, mania

• *Love:* acceptance, friendliness, trust, kindness, affinity, devotion, adoration, infatuation, *agape*

• *Surprise:* shock, astonishment, amazement, wonder

• *Disgust:* contempt, disdain, scorn, abhorrence, aversion, distaste,

revulsion

• *Shame:* guilt, embarrassment, chagrin, remorse, humiliation, regret, mortification, and contrition

To be sure, this list does not resolve every question about how to categorize emotion. For example, what about blends such as jealousy, a variant of anger that also melds sadness and fear? And what of the virtues, such as hope and faith, courage and forgiveness, certainty and equanimity? Or some of the classic vices, feelings such as doubt, complacency, sloth, and torpor—or boredom? There are no clear answers; the scientific debate on how to classify emotions continues.

The argument for there being a handful of core emotions hinges to some extent on the discovery by Paul Ekman, at the University of California at San Francisco, that specific facial expressions for four of them (fear, anger, sadness, enjoyment) are recognized by people in cultures around the world, including preliterate peoples presumably untainted by exposure to cinema or television—suggesting their universality. Ekman showed facial photos portraying expressions with technical precision to people in cultures as remote as the Fore of New Guinea, an isolated Stone Age tribe in the remote highlands, and found people everywhere recognized the same basic emotions. This universality of facial expressions for emotion was probably first noted by Darwin, who saw it as evidence the forces of evolution had stamped these signals in our central nervous system.

In seeking basic principles, I follow Ekman and others in thinking of emotions in terms of families or dimensions, taking the main families —anger, sadness, fear, enjoyment, love, shame, and so on—as cases in point for the endless nuances of our emotional life. Each of these families has a basic emotional nucleus at its core, with its relatives rippling out from there in countless mutations. In the outer ripples are *moods*, which, technically speaking, are more muted and last far longer than an emotion (while it's relatively rare to be in the full heat of anger all day, for example, it is not that rare to be in a grumpy, irritable mood, in which shorter bouts of anger are easily triggered). Beyond moods are *temperaments*, the readiness to evoke a given emotion or mood that makes people melancholy, timid, or cheery. And still beyond such emotional dispositions are the outright *disorders of* emotion such as clinical depression or unremitting anxiety, in which someone feels perpetually trapped in a toxic state.

APPENDIX B

Hallmarks of the Emotional Mind

Only in recent years has there emerged a scientific model of the emotional mind that explains how so much of what we do can be emotionally driven—how we can be so reasonable at one moment and so irrational the next—and the sense in which emotions have their own reasons and their own logic. Perhaps the two best assessments of the emotional mind are offered independently by Paul Ekman, head of the Human Interaction Laboratory at the University of California, San Francisco, and by Seymour Epstein, a clinical psychologist at the University of Massachusetts.[1] While Ekman and Epstein have each weighed different scientific evidence, together they offer a basic list of the qualities that distinguish emotions from the rest of mental life.[2]

A Quick but Sloppy Response

The emotional mind is far quicker than the rational mind, springing into action without pausing even a moment to consider what it is doing. Its quickness precludes the deliberate, analytic reflection that is the hallmark of the thinking mind. In evolution this quickness most likely revolved around that most basic decision, what to pay attention to, and, once vigilant while, say, confronting another animal, making split-second decisions like, Do I eat this, or does it eat me? Those organisms that had to pause too long to reflect on these answers were unlikely to have many progeny to pass on their slower-acting genes.

Actions that spring from the emotional mind carry a particularly strong sense of certainty, a by-product of a streamlined, simplified way of looking at things that can be absolutely bewildering to the rational mind. When the dust settles, or even in mid-response, we find ourselves thinking, “What did I do that for?”—a sign that the rational mind is awakening to the moment, but not with the rapidity of the emotional mind.

Since the interval between what triggers an emotion and its eruption can be virtually instantaneous, the mechanism that appraises

perception must be capable of great speed, even in brain time, which is reckoned in thousandths of a second. This appraisal of the need to act needs to be automatic, so rapid that it never enters conscious awareness.[3] This quick-and-dirty variety of emotional response sweeps over us virtually before we quite know what is happening.

This rapid mode of perception sacrifices accuracy for speed, relying on first impressions, reacting to the overall picture or the most striking aspects. It takes things in at once, as a whole, reacting without taking the time for thoughtful analysis. Vivid elements can determine that impression, outweighing a careful evaluation of the details. The great advantage is that the emotional mind can read an emotional reality (he's angry with me; she's lying; this is making him sad) in an instant, making the intuitive snap judgments that tell us who to be wary of, who to trust, who's in distress. The emotional mind is our radar for danger; if we (or our forebears in evolution) waited for the rational mind to make some of these judgments, we might not only be wrong—we might be dead. The drawback is that these impressions and intuitive judgments, because they are made in the snap of a finger, may be mistaken or misguided.

Paul Ekman proposes that this quickness, in which emotions can overtake us before we are quite aware they have started, is essential to their being so highly adaptive: they mobilize us to respond to urgent events without wasting time pondering whether to react or how to respond. Using the system he developed for detecting emotions from subtle changes in facial expression, Ekman can track microemotions that flit across the face in less than a half second. Ekman and his collaborators have discovered that emotional expressions begin to show up in changes in facial musculature within a few thousandths of a second after the event that triggers the reaction, and that the physiological changes typical of a given emotion—like shunting blood flow and increasing heart rate—also take only fractions of a second to begin. This swiftness is particularly true of intense emotion, like fear of a sudden threat.

Ekman argues that, technically speaking, the full heat of emotion is very brief, lasting just seconds rather than minutes, hours, or days. His reasoning is that it would be maladaptive for an emotion to capture the brain and body for a long time regardless of changing circumstance. If the emotions caused by a single event invariably continued to dominate us after it had passed, and regardless of what else was happening around us, then our feelings would be poor guides

to action. For emotions to last longer the trigger must be sustained, in effect continually evoking the emotion, as when the loss of a loved one keeps us mourning. When feelings persist for hours, it is usually as moods, a muted form. Moods set an affective tone, but they are not such strong shapers of how we perceive and act as is the high heat of full emotion.

First Feelings, Second Thoughts

Because it takes the rational mind a moment or two longer to register and respond than it does the emotional mind, the "first impulse" in an emotional situation is the heart's, not the head's. There is also a second kind of emotional reaction, slower than the quick-response, which simmers and brews first in our thoughts before it leads to feeling. This second pathway to triggering emotions is more deliberate, and we are typically quite aware of the thoughts that lead to it. In this kind of emotional reaction there is a more extended appraisal; our thoughts—cognition—play the key role in determining what emotions will be roused. Once we make an appraisal—"that taxi driver is cheating me" or "this baby is adorable," a fitting emotional response follows. In this slower sequence, more fully articulated thought precedes feeling. More complicated emotions, like embarrassment or apprehension over an upcoming exam, follow this slower route, taking seconds or minutes to unfold—these are emotions that follow from thoughts.

By contrast, in the fast-response sequence feeling seems to precede or be simultaneous with thought. This rapid-fire emotional reaction takes over in situations that have the urgency of primal survival. This is the power of such rapid decisions: they mobilize us in an instant to rise to an emergency. Our most intense feelings are involuntary reactions; we cannot decide when they will erupt. "Love," wrote Stendhal, "is like a fever that comes and goes independently of the will." Not just love, but our angers and fears, as well, sweep over us, seeming to happen tous rather than being our choice. For that reason they can offer an alibi: "It is the fact that *we cannot choose the emotions which we have*," notes Ekman, that allows people to explain away their actions by saying they were in the grip of emotion.[4]

Just as there are quick and slow paths to emotion—one through immediate perception and the other through reflective thought—there are also emotions which come bidden. One example is intentionally