we must seek other factors to explain the rest. It does *not* mean, however, that emotional intelligence represents the rest of the factors in success: they certainly include a very wide range of forces—from the wealth and education of the family we are born into, to temperament, to blind luck and the like—in addition to emotional intelligence.

As John Mayer and his associates point out: "To the unsophisticated reader, bringing up the '80 percent unaccounted for variance' suggests that there may indeed be a heretofore overlooked variable that truly can predict huge portions of life success. Although that is desirable, no variable studied in a century of psychology has made such a huge contribution."[4]

Another common misconception takes the form of recklessly applying this book's subtitle—"Why it can matter more than IQ"—to domains like academic achievement, where it does not apply without careful qualification. The extreme form of this misconception is the myth that EI "matters more than IQ" in all pursuits.

Emotional intelligence trumps IQ primarily in those "soft" domains where intellect is relatively less relevant for success—where, for example, emotional self-regulation and empathy may be more salient skills than purely cognitive abilities.

As it happens, some of these circumscribed realms are of major importance in our lives. One that comes to mind is health (as detailed in Chapter 11), to the extent that disturbing emotions and toxic relationships have been identified as risk factors in disease. Those who can manage their emotional lives with more calm and self-awareness seem to have a distinct and measurable health advantage, as has now been confirmed by many studies.

Another such domain is romantic love and personal relationships (see Chapter 9), where, as we all know, very smart people can do very dumb things. A third—though I have not written about it here—occurs at the top levels of competitive endeavors such as world-class sports. At that level, as I was told by a sports psychologist who coaches U.S. Olympic teams, everyone has put in the requisite ten thousand-plus hours of practice, so success hinges on the athlete's mental game.

Research findings about leadership in business and the professions paint a more complex picture (Chapter 10). IQ scores predict extremely well whether we can handle the cognitive challenges that a given position demands. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of studies have

shown that IQ predicts which career rungs a person can manage. No question there.

But IQ washes out when it comes to predicting who, among a talented pool of candidates *within* an intellectually demanding profession, will become the strongest leader. In part this is because of the "floor effect": everyone at the top echelons of a given profession, or at the top levels of a large organization, has already been sifted for intellect and expertise. At those lofty levels a high IQ becomes a "threshold" ability, one needed just to get into and stay in the game.

As I proposed in my 1998 book *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, EI abilities rather than IQ or technical skills emerge as the "discriminating" competency that best predicts who among a group of very smart people will lead most ably. If you scan the competencies that organizations around the world have independently determined identify their star leaders, you discover that indicators of IQ and technical skill drop toward the bottom of the list the higher the position. (IQ and technical expertise are much stronger predictors of excellence in lower-rung jobs.)

That point was developed more fully in my 2002 book *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* (coauthored with Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee). At the very highest levels, competence models for leadership typically consist of anywhere from 80 to 100 percent EI-based abilities. As the head of research at a global executive search firm put it, "CEOs are hired for their intellect and business expertise—and fired for a lack of emotional intelligence."

When I wrote *Emotional Intelligence*, I saw my role as that of a science journalist, reporting on a significant new trend in psychology, particularly the merging of neuroscience with the study of emotions. But as my involvement in the field deepened, I stepped back into my old role as psychologist to offer my insights into models of EI. As a result, my formulation of emotional intelligence has progressed since I wrote these pages.

In *Working with Emotional Intelligence* I proposed an expanded framework that reflects how the fundamentals of EI—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and the ability to manage relationships—translate into on-the-job success. In doing so, I borrowed a concept from David McClelland, the Harvard psychologist who had been my mentor in graduate school: *competency*.

While our emotional *intelligence* determines our potential for learning the fundamentals of self-mastery and the like, our emotional *competence* shows how much of that potential we have mastered in ways that translate into on-the-job capabilities. To be adept at an emotional competence like customer service or teamwork requires an underlying ability in EI fundamentals, specifically social awareness and relationship management. But emotional competencies are learned abilities: having social awareness or skill at managing relationships does not guarantee that one has mastered the additional learning required to handle a customer adeptly or to resolve a conflict. One simply has the potential to *become* skilled at these competencies.

Again, an underlying EI ability is necessary, though not sufficient, to manifest a given competency or job skill. A cognitive analog would be the student who has excellent spatial abilities yet never learns geometry, let alone becomes an architect. So, too, can one be highly empathic yet poor at handling customers—without having learned the competency for customer service. (For those ultradedicated souls wanting to understand how my current model nests twenty or so emotional competencies within the four EI clusters, see the appendix to *Primal Leadership*.)

In 1995 I reported data from a nationwide, demographically representative sample of more than three thousand children aged seven to sixteen, rated by their parents and teachers, showing that over the decade or so between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s, indicators of emotional well-being among America's kids underwent a marked decline. These children were more troubled and had more problems, ranging from loneliness and anxiety to disobedience and whining. (Of course, there are always individual exceptions—children who grow up to be outstanding human beings—whatever the overall numbers show.)

But a later group of children, rated in 1999, seem to have improved markedly, rating far better than those in the late 1980s, though they were not quite restored to the levels recorded in the mid-1970s.[5] True, parents are still likely to complain in general about their kids, still concerned that their children are hanging out with "bad influences," and whining seems worse than ever. But the trend is clearly upward.

Frankly, I'm puzzled. I had conjectured that today's children are

unintended victims of economic and technological progress, deskilled in EI because their parents spend more time at work than in previous generations, because increased mobility has cut ties to extended family, and because "free" time has become so structured and overorganized. After all, emotional intelligence has traditionally been passed on in the midst of everyday life—with parents and relatives, and in the rough-and-tumble of free play—opportunities that are now being lost to the young.

Then there's the technological factor. Today's children spend more time alone than ever before in human history, staring at a video monitor. That amounts to a natural experiment on an unprecedented scale. Will these tech-sawy children become adults who are as comfortable with other people as they are with their computers? I suspected, rather, that a childhood spent relating to a virtual world would deskill our young people when it came to relating person to person.

So went my arguments. Nothing has happened in the last decade or so to reverse these trends. Yet children, thankfully, seem to be faring better.

Thomas Achenbach, the University of Vermont psychologist who has done these studies, hypothesizes that the economic boom of the 1990s lifted children as well as adults; more jobs and less crime meant better childrearing. Should there be another major economic recession, he suggests, we would see another decline in this measure of children's skills for life. That may well be; only time will tell.

The hyperspeed at which EI has become a topic of importance in a wide array of fields makes prediction difficult, but let me offer some thoughts on what I hope for the field in the near future.

Many of the benefits that accrue from developing emotional intelligence capabilities have gone to the privileged, such as high-level business executives and children in private schools. Of course, many children in impoverished neighborhoods have also benefited—for instance, if their schools implemented SEL. But I encourage a further democratization of this variety of human skill development, reaching into often-neglected pools, like families in poverty (where children so often suffer emotional wounds that compound their plight) and to prisons (particularly for young offenders who could benefit enormously from strengthening skills like anger management, self-awareness, and empathy). Given the right help with these abilities,

their lives would improve, and their communities would be safer.

I'd also like to see the scope of thinking about emotional intelligence itself expand, leaping from a focus on capacities within the individual to a focus on what emerges when people interact, whether one on one or in larger groups. Some research, notably the University of New Hampshire psychologist Vanessa Druskat's work on how teams can become emotionally intelligent, has seamlessly made this leap already. But much more could be done.

Finally, I envision a day when emotional intelligence will have become so widely understood that we need not mention it because it has melded with our lives. In such a future, SEL would have become standard practice in schools everywhere. Likewise, EI qualities such as self-awareness, managing destructive emotions, and empathy would be givens in the workplace, "must-haves" for being hired and promoted, and most especially for leadership. If EI were to become as widespread as IQ has become, and as ingrained in society as a measure of human qualities, then, I believe, our families, schools, jobs, and communities would be all the more humane and nourishing.

Aristotle's Challenge

Anyone can become angry—that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not easy.

ARISTOTLE, *The Nichomachean Ethics*

It was an unbearably steamy August afternoon in New York City, the kind of sweaty day that makes people sullen with discomfort. I was heading back to a hotel, and as I stepped onto a bus up Madison Avenue I was startled by the driver, a middle-aged black man with an enthusiastic smile, who welcomed me with a friendly, "Hi! How you doing?" as I got on, a greeting he proffered to everyone else who entered as the bus wormed through the thick midtown traffic. Each passenger was as startled as I, and, locked into the morose mood of the day, few returned his greeting.

But as the bus crawled uptown through the gridlock, a slow, rather magical transformation occurred. The driver gave a running monologue for our benefit, a lively commentary on the passing scene around us: there was a terrific sale at that store, a wonderful exhibit at this museum, did you hear about the new movie that just opened at that cinema down the block? His delight in the rich possibilities the city offered was infectious. By the time people got off the bus, each in turn had shaken off the sullen shell they had entered with, and when the driver shouted out a "So long, have a great day!" each gave a smiling response.

The memory of that encounter has stayed with me for close to twenty years. When I rode that Madison Avenue bus, I had just finished my own doctorate in psychology—but there was scant attention paid in the psychology of the day to just how such a transformation could happen. Psychological science knew little or nothing of the mechanics of emotion. And yet, imagining the spreading virus of good feeling that must have rippled through the city, starting from passengers on his bus, I saw that this bus driver was an urban peacemaker of sorts, wizardlike in his power to transmute the sullen irritability that seethed in his passengers, to soften and open their hearts a bit. In stark contrast, some items from this week's paper:

• At a local school, a nine-year-old goes on a rampage, pouring paint over school desks, computers, and printers, and vandalizing a car in the school parking lot. The reason: some third-grade classmates called him a “baby” and he wanted to impress them.

• Eight youngsters are wounded when an inadvertent bump in a crowd of teenagers milling outside a Manhattan rap club leads to a shoving match, which ends when one of those affronted starts shooting a .38 caliber automatic handgun into the crowd. The report notes that such shootings over seemingly minor slights, which are perceived as acts of disrespect, have become increasingly common around the country in recent years.

• For murder victims under twelve, says a report, 57 percent of the murderers are their parents or stepparents. In almost half the cases, the parents say they were “merely trying to discipline the child.” The fatal beatings were prompted by “infractions” such as the child blocking the TV, crying, or soiling diapers.

• A German youth is on trial for murdering five Turkish women and girls in a fire he set while they slept. Part of a neo-Nazi group, he tells of failing to hold jobs, of drinking, of blaming his hard luck on foreigners. In a barely audible voice, he pleads, “I can’t stop being sorry for what we’ve done, and I am infinitely ashamed.”

Each day’s news comes to us rife with such reports of the disintegration of civility and safety, an onslaught of mean-spirited impulse running amok. But the news simply reflects back to us on a larger scale a creeping sense of emotions out of control in our own lives and in those of the people around us. No one is insulated from this erratic tide of outburst and regret; it reaches into all of our lives in one way or another.

The last decade has seen a steady drumroll of reports like these, portraying an uptick in emotional ineptitude, desperation, and recklessness in our families, our communities, and our collective lives. These years have chronicled surging rage and despair, whether in the quiet loneliness of latchkey kids left with a TV for a babysitter, or in the pain of children abandoned, neglected, or abused, or in the ugly intimacy of marital violence. A spreading emotional malaise can be read in numbers showing a jump in depression around the world, and in the reminders of a surging tide of aggression—teens with guns in schools, freeway mishaps ending in shootings, disgruntled ex-

employees massacring former fellow workers. *Emotional abuse, drive-by shooting,* and *post-traumatic stress* all entered the common lexicon over the last decade, as the slogan of the hour shifted from the cheery "Have a nice day" to the testiness of "Make my day."

This book is a guide to making sense of the senselessness. As a psychologist, and for the last decade as a journalist for *The New York Times*, I have been tracking the progress of our scientific understanding of the realm of the irrational. From that perch I have been struck by two opposing trends, one portraying a growing calamity in our shared emotional life, the other offering some hopeful remedies.

WHY THIS EXPLORATION NOW

The last decade, despite its bad news, has also seen an unparalleled burst of scientific studies of emotion. Most dramatic are the glimpses of the brain at work, made possible by innovative methods such as new brain-imaging technologies. They have made visible for the first time in human history what has always been a source of deep mystery: exactly how this intricate mass of cells operates while we think and feel, imagine and dream. This flood of neurobiological data lets us understand more clearly than ever how the brain's centers for emotion move us to rage or to tears, and how more ancient parts of the brain, which stir us to make war as well as love, are channeled for better or worse. This unprecedented clarity on the workings of emotions and their failings brings into focus some fresh remedies for our collective emotional crisis.

I have had to wait till now before the scientific harvest was full enough to write this book. These insights are so late in coming largely because the place of feeling in mental life has been surprisingly slighted by research over the years, leaving the emotions a largely unexplored continent for scientific psychology. Into this void has rushed a welter of self-help books, well-intentioned advice based at best on clinical opinion but lacking much, if any, scientific basis. Now science is finally able to speak with authority to these urgent and perplexing questions of the psyche at its most irrational, to map with some precision the human heart.

This mapping offers a challenge to those who subscribe to a narrow view of intelligence, arguing that IQ is a genetic given that cannot be

changed by life experience, and that our destiny in life is largely fixed by these aptitudes. That argument ignores the more challenging question: What *can* we change that will help our children fare better in life? What factors are at play, for example, when people of high IQ flounder and those of modest IQ do surprisingly well? I would argue that the difference quite often lies in the abilities called here *emotional intelligence*, which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself. And these skills, as we shall see, can be taught to children, giving them a better chance to use whatever intellectual potential the genetic lottery may have given them.

Beyond this possibility looms a pressing moral imperative. These are times when the fabric of society seems to unravel at ever-greater speed, when selfishness, violence, and a meanness of spirit seem to be rotting the goodness of our communal lives. Here the argument for the importance of emotional intelligence hinges on the link between sentiment, character, and moral instincts. There is growing evidence that fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capacities. For one, impulse is the medium of emotion; the seed of all impulse is a feeling bursting to express itself in action. Those who are at the mercy of impulse—who lack self-control—suffer a moral deficiency: The ability to control impulse is the base of will and character. By the same token, the root of altruism lies in empathy, the ability to read emotions in others; lacking a sense of another's need or despair, there is no caring. And if there are any two moral stances that our times call for, they are precisely these, self-restraint and compassion.

OUR JOURNEY

In this book I serve as a guide in a journey through these scientific insights into the emotions, a voyage aimed at bringing greater understanding to some of the most perplexing moments in our own lives and in the world around us. The journey's end is to understand what it means—and how—to bring intelligence to emotion. This understanding itself can help to some degree; bringing cognizance to the realm of feeling has an effect something like the impact of an observer at the quantum level in physics, altering what is being observed.

Our journey begins in Part One with new discoveries about the

brain's emotional architecture that offer an explanation of those most baffling moments in our lives when feeling overwhelms all rationality. Understanding the interplay of brain structures that rule our moments of rage and fear—or passion and joy—reveals much about how we learn the emotional habits that can undermine our best intentions, as well as what we can do to subdue our more destructive or self-defeating emotional impulses. Most important, the neurological data suggest a window of opportunity for shaping our children's emotional habits.

The next major stop on our journey, Part Two of this book, is in seeing how neurological givens play out in the basic flair for living called *emotional intelligence:* being able, for example, to rein in emotional impulse; to read another's innermost feelings; to handle relationships smoothly—as Aristotle put it, the rare skill "to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way." (Readers who are not drawn to neurological detail may want to proceed directly to this section.)

This expanded model of what it means to be "intelligent" puts emotions at the center of aptitudes for living. Part Three examines some key differences this aptitude makes: how these abilities can preserve our most prized relationships, or their lack corrode them; how the market forces that are reshaping our worklife are putting an unprecedented premium on emotional intelligence for on-the-job success; and how toxic emotions put our physical health at as much risk as does chain-smoking, even as emotional balance can help protect our health and well-being.

Our genetic heritage endows each of us with a series of emotional set-points that determines our temperament. But the brain circuitry involved is extraordinarily malleable; temperament is not destiny. As Part Four shows, the emotional lessons we learn as children at home and at school shape the emotional circuits, making us more adept—or inept—at the basics of emotional intelligence. This means that childhood and adolescence are critical windows of opportunity for setting down the essential emotional habits that will govern our lives.

Part Five explores what hazards await those who, in growing to maturity, fail to master the emotional realm—how deficiencies in emotional intelligence heighten a spectrum of risks, from depression or a life of violence to eating disorders and drug abuse. And it documents how pioneering schools are teaching children the emotional and social skills they need to keep their lives on track.