

# Social Intelligence Summary

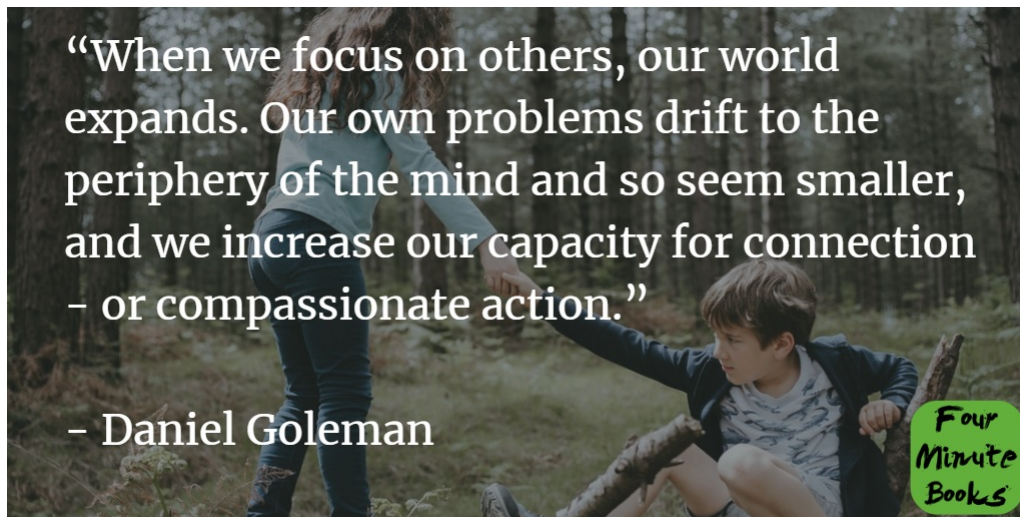
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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Social Intelligence is a complete guide to the world of social neuroscience, explaining the ways in which your social interactions shape you – and how to use it to your advantage.*

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Daniel Goleman is widely known for describing the various types of intelligence people have. In his 1995 bestseller *Emotional Intelligence*, he already laid out the idea that the IQ measure is not the most reliable factor determining our happiness or success.

*Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* comes with the notion that it is not enough to simply manage one’s own emotional life. We also need to foster our connections with others. In short, social intelligence is about the ability to accurately “read” other people around us, as well as our social context – and act accordingly. Goleman shows that the way we engage with our social environment has profound consequences not just for our external success. It also improves physical and mental health.

When we cultivate our social intelligence, we discover that humans are biologically built for cooperation, altruism, and empathy. The question is: are you going to nurture these qualities, or give them up in favor of self-absorption?

Here are 3 important points that helped me better understand my social life:

1. Your childhood and culture are important factors impacting your social skills.
2. Putting social intelligence to work depletes your body’s resources.

3. Investing in social connection is one of the best things you can do for your health.

Want to learn more about how to nurture your social life? Then you are in a good place. Let's do it!

## Lesson 1: Your culture and upbringing shape your social skills.

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A big aspect of social intelligence is how much attention you are able to give to other people. The culture you grew up in, as well as the trajectory of your childhood, are what condition this quality.

One intriguing story that illustrates cultural influence comes from a Japanese psychologist named Takeo Doi. He stayed with an American family while visiting the United States. When he first arrived, his hosts asked whether he would like something to eat. According to his cultural etiquette, Doi politely refused and went starving till the end of the day.

As Doi pointed out, the whole situation would play out very differently in a Japanese home. Nobody would openly talk about hunger. Instead, the hosts would remain observant. They would notice the cues in the guest's behavior, signaling that he needs to eat something. The family would simply offer food at the right moment without asking. This shows how different cultures encourage sensitivity to other people's needs to varying degrees.

Regardless of the cultural influence, attentiveness to others can also be learned in childhood, sometimes in less obvious ways. **One 2004 study on squirrel monkeys, for example, showed that moderate levels of stress during childhood can enhance their social skills later on in life.** That's because exposure to mildly stressful experiences increases the courage to explore new environments.

According to Goleman, for humans, this can translate to being more open to other people and their perspectives.

## Lesson 2: Putting social intelligence to use costs energy.

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Being socially intelligent is as useful as it can be tiring. **That's because being available for others consumes your body's resources in a very real way.** Fortunately, Goleman also provides practical ideas for how to remain in balance *while* being socially involved.

Care work is quite stressful for most people. Helping someone old or sick for a prolonged time often results in worsening of the carer's mental health. However – as Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and Ronald Glaser found in their study of women caring for their partners with Alzheimer – constantly looking after someone may also result in weakening the caretaker's immune system.

Being socially involved is important. But if it becomes an overwhelming responsibility, it may harm us, too. What Goleman recommends for overloaded caretakers is encouraging even more social bonds!

One person's capacity to look after others has biological limitations. Therefore, the community should share such responsibilities. If a group of family and friends is taking care of someone, it not only stops being a burden. The community can also become a way to foster new relationships and an increased sense of connectivity.

This directly benefits everybody. As we will soon see, social involvement is a great predictor of a happy and healthy life!

## Lesson 3: Your social engagement is directly related to your health.

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Humans are built for connection, cooperation and relating to others. This means that making sure you are socially active and maintaining supportive relationships is the simplest way to ensure a good, healthy life.

At least 18 medical studies have backed up this notion. **Research shows that those who are involved in strong social networks are more predisposed for longevity and recover from illness faster.**

Hospitals are already implementing these findings in some settings. For example, patients awaiting a complicated surgery have encouragement to spend time with those who have successfully undergone the same treatment. This causes them to experience less stress and adopt a more optimistic outlook. This improves their chances of recovery.

Indian hospitals stimulate the power of social connections in a different way. Contrary to the Western ones, Indian medical centers don't offer their residents any meals. That's a way to ensure that family and friends visit their close ones to bring food. At the same time, this helps support their recovery by keeping the patients socially involved.

You shouldn't wait until you become sick to start investing in your social network, though. Do it while you are well. You'll enjoy a more healthy and balanced life by satisfying your natural need to connect!

## Social Intelligence Review

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Daniel Goleman is a widely-read author for a reason. In *Social Intelligence*, he explains complicated concepts and neurological events in a plain, entertaining language that anyone can understand. Seasoned with plentiful real-life examples, this book is a comprehensive guide to understanding the science of human relationships.

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## Who would I recommend the **Social Intelligence** summary to?

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The 35-year-old HR employee who looks for a pleasurable way to enhance her competencies, the 30-year-old young mom who intends to create a nurturing family and to any psychologist or psychotherapist who hasn't read it yet.