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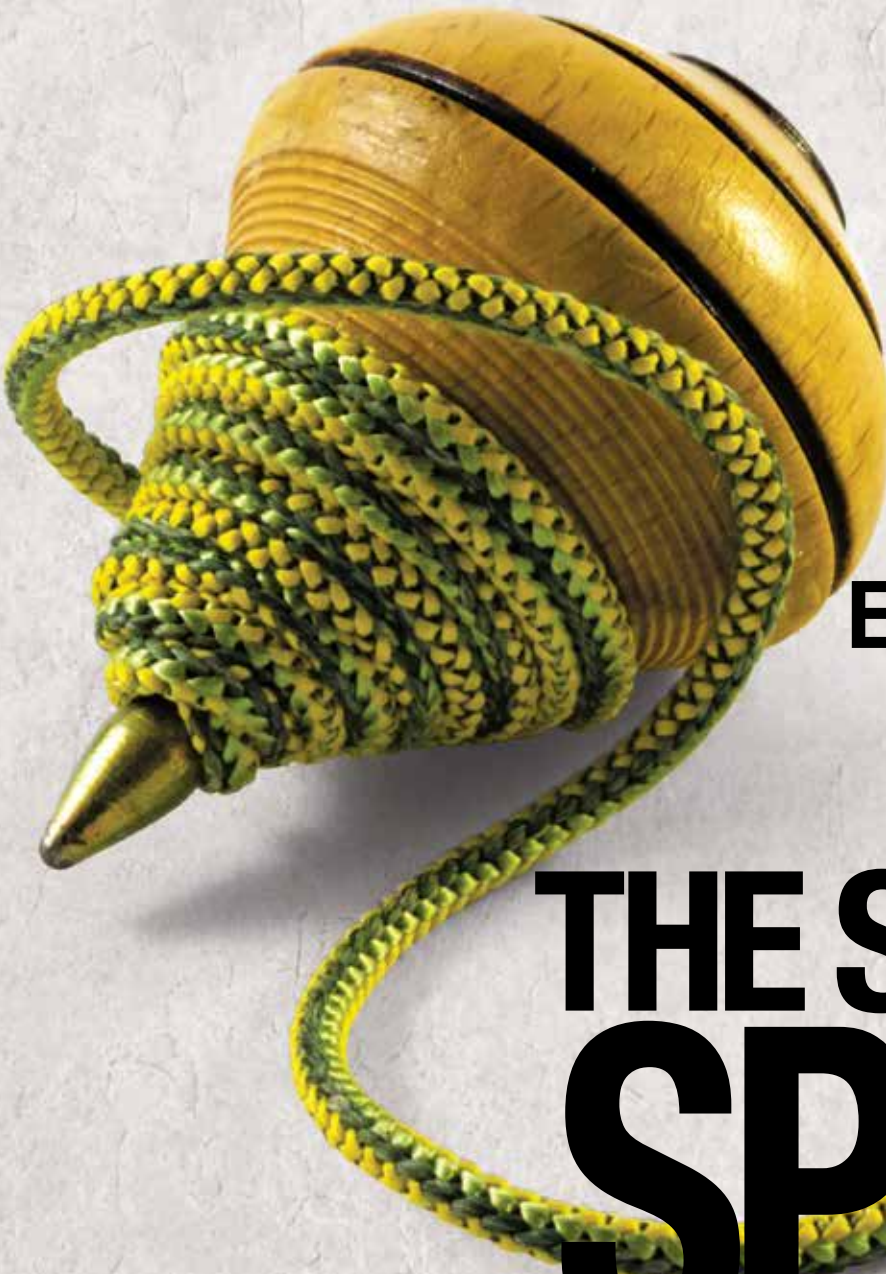
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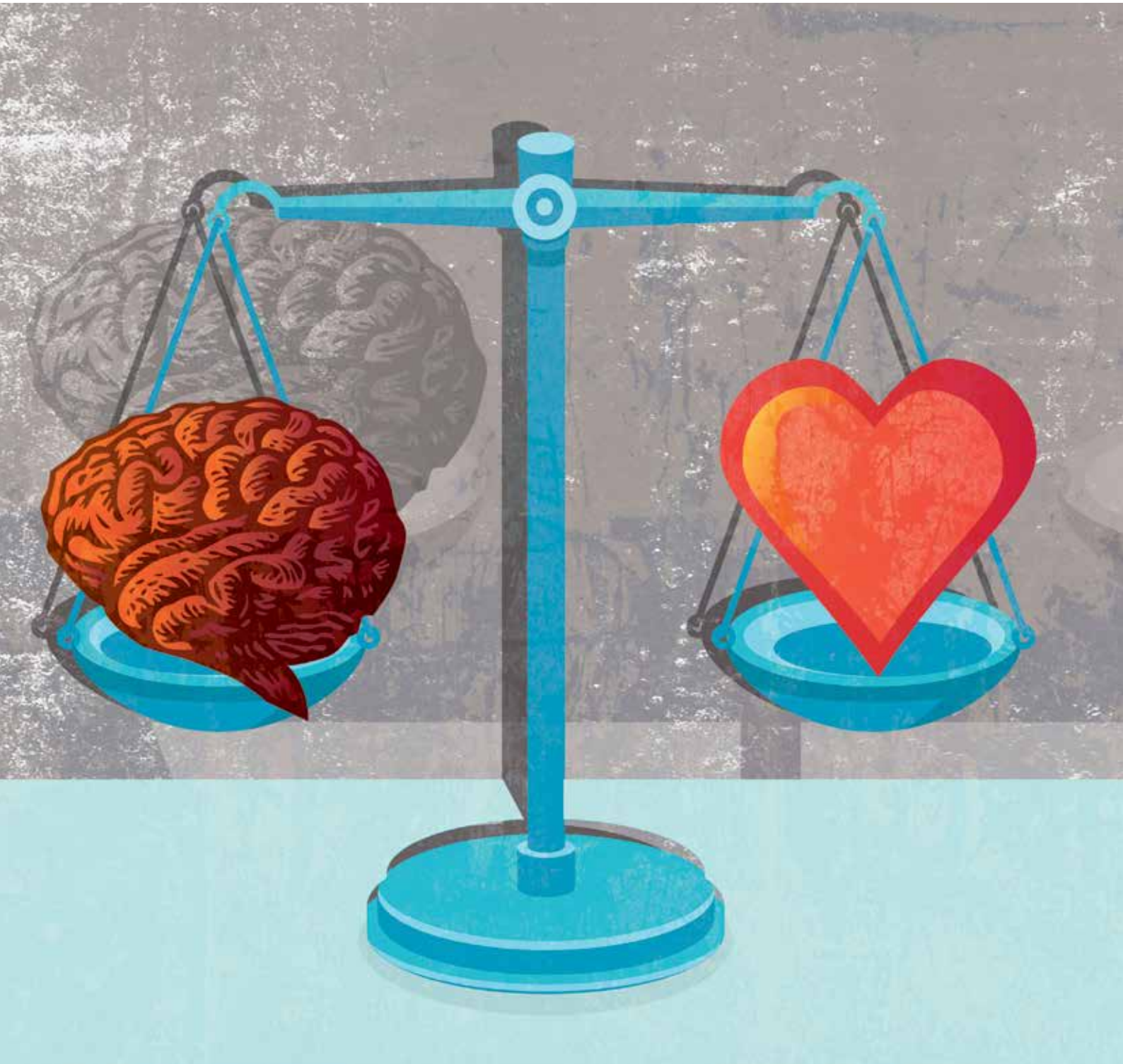
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*Emotional intelligence is like getting back to the basics, which instills those values that make us a good person, good citizen, and a good professional—in that order.*

◆ VIRENDER KAPOOR, MILE

**CULTURE**



# Heart over head

**A**s many recent studies have pointed out, great corporate leadership rests firmly on traditional virtues and time-tested values such as honesty, integrity, empathy, commitment, and fair play; leaders and managers who are considerate, respectful of their team members, and can establish an environment of mutual trust are more effective and successful. In psychological parlance, these attributes are non-cognitive human traits whereas memory, intellect, and problem-solving ability are among the cognitive aspects. By the early nineties, a lot of research had been conducted on the role of non-cognitive factors in helping people succeed in both, life and at the workplace, laying the foundation for ‘emotional intelligence’ as a concept.

Our value system has degenerated considerably in the last 50 years, although we still find goodness in society—we come across honest policemen, committed politicians, upright bureaucrats, loyal workers, conscientious teachers, great corporate leaders, and straightforward citizens. But the wave of value depletion needs to be reversed, and this is a major challenge.



‘Worldly human abilities’ are difficult to define and measure, but all of us need to possess them irrespective of our background or vocation—caring for others, fighting back after a setback, managing our impulse, controlling anger, etc. Such qualities make us strong, dependable, and trustworthy, and contribute substantially to making us great parents, teachers, friends, and also successful entrepreneurs and corporate leaders. And these are the attributes that constitute emotional intelligence.

### Relevance at the workplace

Our work life entails dealing with people, situations, and also ourselves. It is imperative for us to harness our inner strength to handle these ‘essentials of life’. Emotional intelligence is one tool that can be effectively used in today’s environment to improve our quality of life, and create managers and leaders who are more caring and self-motivated.

John Mayer and Peter Salovey coined the term ‘emotional intelligence’ sometime in the 1990s. They described it as a form of ‘social

intelligence’ that involves the ability to monitor one’s own as well as the feelings and emotions of others, and use the information to guide one’s own thinking and action. Daniel Goleman, around the same time, described emotional intelligence by breaking it down into specific competencies, which he called the ‘framework of emotional intelligence’. Taking a closer look at these nuances will give us a better perspective of the overall emotional acumen one must possess at the workplace.

Emotional intelligence, comprising 20 competencies as laid down by Goleman, is divided into the four logical domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Briefly, they are explained as under:

### Self awareness

- **Emotional self-awareness:** This is the ability to recognise one’s own feelings and how they affect one’s performance. This is the starting point of self-control.
- **Accurate self-assessment:** This is the ability to know your own strengths and weaknesses. Those high on this component are aware of their abilities and limitations. They are prepared to learn from others, take candid feedback, and learn from their mistakes. This, I feel, is one of the most important human abilities that can trigger positive change. Actors who make their screen debut improve after a few movies. They are individuals who do not have any inhibitions and are prepared to learn from senior artistes, co-artistes, and directors. Those who refuse to learn because they feel they are the best never make it big and hence fade out in no time. Average performers typically overestimate their strengths, whereas star performers are more conservative about their own abilities. This also indicates that star performers set high standards for themselves. You have to

continuously keep receiving feedback and reflect on your performance; it requires effort and courage to acknowledge one's weaknesses though.

- **Self-confidence:** People with self-confidence always come out as winners. There is a difference between being confident and being foolhardy. Self-assessment tells you how much you can achieve, and self-confidence tells you that you can achieve whatever you have set your sights on.

## Self management

- **Self-control:** This is the prowess that star performers possess. The ability to manage your impulses, and remain calm and unflappable during stressful situations is a great quality many leaders possess. Business executives, who exercise a high degree of self-control, can handle their teams better and provide support to their subordinates when they need it most. This is expected of those who have to motivate others to accomplish organisational goals, such as military leaders and skippers on the cricket pitch.
- **Trustworthiness:** There is a large moral component attached to being trustworthy. Those with clear and good intentions are more principled, and demonstrate all these abilities loud and clear.
- **Adaptability:** Those who are adaptable are more open to new ideas, creative, and hence better equipped to tackle uncertainties. In today's scenario, where 'change management' is the mantra, adaptability lets you handle that change with dexterity.
- **Initiative:** Certain individuals can be self-starters—they do not require any pushing and prodding to take action. They are conscientious, can take preemptive action, and are pro-active rather than reactive in their approach.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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## Social awareness

- **Empathy:** Some people have the ability to be concerned about others—to know and feel what their needs are. They will have a high emotional connect with those whom they deal with.
- **Organisational awareness:** This kind of awareness helps you identify the power centres within an organisation and build strong personal networks with those who matter. In the corporate world, this is the competence of star performers.

## Relationship management

- **Developing others:** The instinct to act as a coach and offer mentoring and guidance is required not only for frontline managers, but also the top leadership.
- **Communication:** To be able to get your point across to another person, listen to others, and being diplomatic make one a good communicator.
- **Conflict management:** Handling a situation before it snowballs into a crisis is a highly desirable trait in managers and leaders. Picking up signals that could cause trouble, and calming down those involved is an art in itself. This ability will be of extreme help negotiating or handling tough situations, such as conflicts between the management and the workers' union.
- **Change catalyst:** Bringing in new ideas, launching fresh initiatives, and smoothly ushering in change can help make an organisation dynamic.
- **Building bonds:** Networking is the emotional ability that helps make strong bonds with people. It also builds trust and friendship. Emotional intelligence will go a long way in helping managers and leaders do well at the workplace. Use your heart to connect with people and influence those who are not directly under your control or authority. Let influencing people on the emotional plane become a habit for you. ■