

## Become Better: Applying Emotional Intelligence

**Ann Polya**

XlibrisUS (Jun 8, 2021)

Softcover \$16.99 (150pp)

978-1-66417-443-6

*The self-help text *Become Better* proposes a road map to cultivating deep, far reaching emotional intelligence.*

Ann Polya's self-help book *Become Better* suggests empowering methods for increasing emotional intelligence.

Polya knows that some people seem to have ample emotional intelligence, while others seem to possess little. But she argues that everyone can, and should, develop and expand upon their own innate emotional intelligence, leaning on strong teachers and investing in their own growth. Focusing separately on one's inherent abilities and intentional methods of growth, the text aims to help people evaluate their current strengths, then reflect, and then evolve.

Further, the book examines emotional intelligence on three exponentially more impactful levels: the personal; the relational; and the social. In its early portions, it hones in on what is necessary to develop a connection between one's thoughts and emotions, calling such work critical, as those who can't recognize their emotions, or their impacts, are impeded. This recognition of the expanding impact of personal emotional intelligence stands to be transformative.

But as the book progresses, it shifts to address particular challenges of the moment, like society's emotional intelligence in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This timely commentary—on how the pandemic shaped people's perspectives on time; on how it informed whether and when people would invest trust in others—speaks to particular needs, as with potential improvements to the health care industry. While emotional intelligence is still centered in these discussions, and while the proposed solutions are heartfelt, they are comparatively rooted in the present.

Still, the book makes intangible emotional ideas easy to understand via true-to-life composites, showing how each person's emotional intelligence might impact their lives and relationships. It uses clear explanations to break down its central ideas, as of the individual elements of emotional intelligence, like awareness, empathy, and balance. It mixes positivity with realistic thinking, counseling that while anyone *can* build their emotional intelligence, doing so is not always easy. Pros and cons are addressed on a topical basis; the book's treatment of social media positives and negatives is particularly compelling. Further, there are helpful summaries at the end of each chapter, which couple with frequent suggested takeaways to build one's personal understanding. Brain teasers are present as a source of levity, though their connections to the content aren't always strong.

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MELISSA WUSKE (January 7, 2022)

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