

# Why Spiritual Intelligence Is Essential to Mature Leadership

by

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## Abstract

The life conditions and problems we face as a species, as countries, as organizations and as individuals demand increasing complex/elegant solutions. The type of mature leader who can respond to such situations is a “Tier 2” leader—embodying an advanced stage of personal development. These high levels of adult development are inseparably linked to spiritual intelligence. Thus, mature leadership requires spiritual intelligence development. The result is a leader who leads from the inside out: who she is, is how she leads.

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To realize the value of spiritually intelligent leadership we need to first understand the following:

1. What life conditions do we face now as humans? What do we need leaders to be able to deal with?
2. Multiple intelligences – what they are and specifically what is spiritual intelligence?
3. Stages of adult development and their relationship to leadership
4. Stages of adult development and their relationship to spiritual intelligence

## Life Conditions

Our life conditions on Earth today are amazing complex and stressful.

- The demand for oil and other fossil fuels is rising as India and China industrialize and become high growth, high consumption economies. Competition for energy resources increases tensions in the Middle East. Other oil supplying countries like Venezuela and Nigeria become larger political players than they would be otherwise. Thus energy, economics and politics are tightly linked and tensions are magnified.
- The US has been a dominant world power since WWII. Its economic power has led to US tastes from food to fashion permeating even remote and poor parts of the world. This creates a feeling of being “taken over” by everything American. It adds more irritation to the mix – a greater sense of threat is felt by other cultures and other value structures – perceiving that they are “under attack” by “Western” values.
- There is continuous contact with many different cultures thanks to travel, television, Internet, and other media that create the opportunity for exposure to “foreign” ideas and the result is a lot of irritation and even outright aggression toward the people carrying the “toxic” ideas.
- Polarization of viewpoints has increased in US and global politics. Filters preventing people “hearing” each other have strengthened along with the feeling of threat that these other ideas are “toxic.”

- Climate change is creating disruptions of old patterns and will eventually cause migrations of people away from rising water levels, away from areas no longer having acceptable weather patterns (e.g. drought ridden), or to safer or cooler climates. The opportunity for conflict will be enormous as survival fears are triggered.
- Other ecosystem changes create more pressure as fishing stocks are depleted, and some farmland—especially in underdeveloped parts of the world—has been degraded by poor farming practices.
- Poverty, political instability, civil wars and dictatorships or theocracies in some countries create hot beds of disease (e.g. some parts of Africa), devastating genocides, and a readiness to go to war (Iran, Korea).
- There are more stages of development simultaneously existing on the planet than ever before. In Spiral Dynamics language we have cultures at center of gravity<sup>1</sup> Purple, Red, Blue, Orange and Green interacting with each other and finding each other's value systems appalling (see Table 4 and [Spiral Dynamics](#) by Don Beck and Chris Cowan for more information).
- Even within the “developed world” an organization has to deal with employees who are at various stages of development: Red, Blue, Orange, Green and perhaps a few at Yellow. This makes being a leader and communicating to all levels incredibly difficult.
- Secular scientific (Orange) worldviews have tended to reject spirituality (Green) and traditional religion (Blue/Purple), with the result that those who consider themselves spiritual or religious are pushing back against “cold capitalism” and insensitive science and medicine. In some cases the sense of Blue alienation is leading to increasing demand for religious government (Iran) or for war against the secular (Orange) world.
- People will generally only be “led” by people at their same level of development or just a half stage above them – *or by someone who can speak effectively to their stage* (unless they are forced to comply by brute force or other coercion).

These life conditions mean that opportunities will be present for civilization to “regress” to survival modes and warfare. Or we can “transcend” and find new ways of sharing one planet and ecosystem. Older forms of leadership, such as command and control, hierarchies and bureaucracies, and even strategic global networks like corporations, are limited in their effectiveness and will therefore not be the mechanism of transcending to a new way. A new form of complex life conditions demands a more complex, and a more elegantly simply, form of leadership. This new form of mature leadership will utilize the older forms of leadership (such as command and control) when appropriate. Mature leadership is flexible and utilizes all the previous “tools” of leadership. But mature leadership adds something older forms of leadership do not have. Leaders who continue to utilize the old forms of leadership will continue to have a role to play, but will not be able to deal with the new life conditions on their own.

## **Multiple Intelligences**

When people talk about multiple intelligences they usually mention physical, cognitive, emotional, moral, spiritual and possibly musical or spatial relations as separate lines

(see Figure 1). Ultimately how many lines are needed for the discussion depends upon the topic of interest. For leadership the intelligences we deal with the most are the physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual lines. I would include the moral line as a *subset* of emotional and spiritual intelligences – although I show it separately in Figure 1 since some authors do separate it. **Physical intelligence (PQ) is body skills.** A newborn infant has little PQ – as it struggles to focus its eyes, lift its head, and so on. Most of us are of average development on the PQ line. An Olympic athlete would have highly developed physical intelligence, as would a dancer or a marital arts expert. “IQ” or Intelligence Quotient is the nickname for the cognitive line. This typically includes mathematical and linguistic intelligences. **IQ in our society is heavily emphasized,** often to the exclusion of EQ and SQ. **Emotional intelligence (EQ) includes relationship skills** (see more in Table 1 below). Moral intelligence is the process a person uses to determine right from wrong. At the lowest level “anything I want” is right. At a higher level people learn to follow rules about what is right and what is wrong (the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments, for example). **At the highest levels people develop the ability to think through complex moral situations by looking at and caring about all the viewpoints of all the people involved, and the short term and long term implications of a moral choice.** Spiritual Intelligence is defined differently by different sources—so getting clear on what this means is important (more on this below). I do not split moral intelligence from spiritual intelligence. When people separate moral and spiritual intelligence they are often thinking of spiritual intelligence very narrowly as some kind of connection to the transcendent (which is just one of the 21 skills of SQ as I define it).

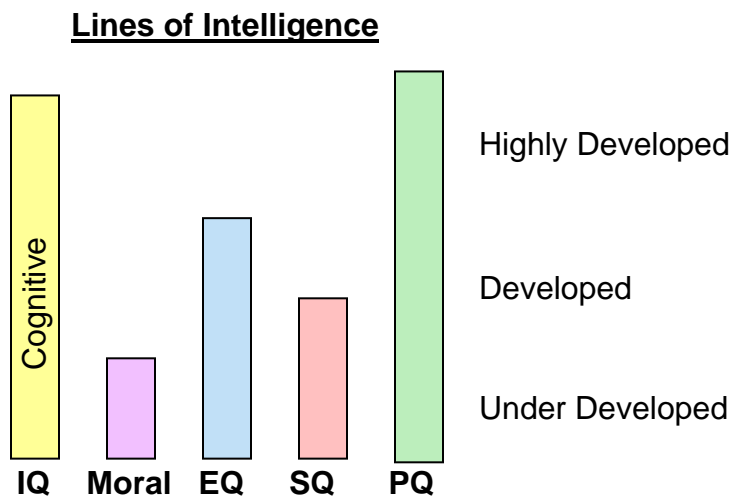


Figure 1: Bar chart display of lines – a useful but simplified depiction of reality

The relationship of the lines of intelligence can be displayed visually, but any display is a bit misleading. This is because the lines have several different interactions.

- To some degree the lines develop separately. Thus a person can be highly developed physically but not be well developed in any other line of intelligence. Or, a person can be cognitively highly developed and not well developed morally or emotionally (EQ) (as in Figure 1).

- The lines are to some degree interdependent and interconnected. Advancing on one line can create a “necessary but not sufficient” condition for growth on another line. For example, some degree of cognitive development appears to be necessary to reach the higher stages of spiritual development due to the complexity of perspectives a high SQ person must be able to perceive. And some degree of EQ development is necessary for SQ development (the EQ pre-condition is expressed in Figure 2 with the left arrow, and the yellow highlights in Table 1).
- There is a natural age period when we focus on the development of each of 4 lines of development (as in Figure 2).

Using the age period hierarchy, multiple intelligences can be displayed as follows:

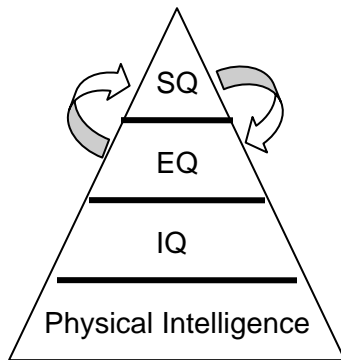


Figure 2: Vertical stacking display of multiple intelligences – again limited but useful

In Figure 2 each intelligence is stacked vertically to focus on the natural timing of developing the different lines. Again, this is oversimplified, but useful. In early childhood a huge amount of effort goes into mastering our bodies for tasks such as walking, running, and tying our shoes. At school we focus primarily (but not exclusively) on IQ development. The human brain is fully developed at age 22 to 25 (frontal neocortex especially) and at that point the full repertoire of EQ development is available to us. Spiritual Intelligence skills are somewhat dependent upon a small amount of Empathy and Emotional Self-Awareness being present—so it is shown last with the left arrow showing the connection from EQ to SQ. Questions of deep meaning and a desire for transcending the confinement of the ego self occur periodically throughout life, but become most pressing in adulthood—so we tend to focus on developing SQ last. Once the SQ journey is begun it reinforces the growth and development of EQ, hence the arrows going in both directions in a reinforcing feedback loop. Although it is not visually displayed in Figure 2, SQ requires but also reinforces the growth of cognitive complexity since SQ confronts mystery and paradox. Skill 4 (see Table 2) reflects this dimension of SQ.

### **Definition of Spiritual Intelligence**

To create spiritually intelligent leaders we must know what we mean by spiritual intelligence. Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) is defined by the author as: the ability to behave

with Wisdom and Compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace (equanimity), regardless of the circumstances. There are three important pieces to this definition.

First: The word “behave” is critical. SQ is not about just “feeling good about people.” That is relatively easy to accomplish when we are *alone* in prayer or meditation! SQ is about how we behave—how we actually make decisions and act—in the everyday, stressful world of interacting with difficult people and situations. Virtually all of the major world faith traditions, philosophies and psychologies encourage the development of understanding others and kindness. The faith traditions perceive this “right action” and “right understanding” as being in service of something larger than the individual self—a universal principle or a Higher Power. In the faith traditions it is typically expressed in some form of the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” This requires the practitioner to develop a minimum level of self-awareness and other-awareness so that one can see oneself clearly and have an understanding of the impact of one’s actions on the other. This should result in a behavior that is at a minimum non-harming. At early stages of development<sup>ii</sup> this translates into “don’t hurt someone else unless you would want to be hurt back.” In later stages it becomes “love one another as you wish to be loved” and eventually “love them as I (Higher Power/God) love you.” This core guidance sets up a striving for pure unconditional love and a deep sense of “what I do to you I literally feel as if I am doing it to myself—because we are all so deeply connected.” When people cite someone they believe has high SQ they always describe such a loving way of being in the world. So it is behavior we are looking at to determine, ultimately, the level of SQ development. Interior awareness matters—but it must be translated into action.

Second: The word “love” in English is a very sloppy word. In English we say that we “love” our children and we “love” ice cream. It is one word with many uses making it hard to use for leadership purposes or for training in SQ. There are many definitions for love that might help, but an accurate and elegant one comes from the East where the saying is: “Love is a bird with two wings: one wing is Compassion, the other wing is Wisdom...if either wing is missing the bird cannot fly.” Hence the definition of SQ contains the words Wisdom and Compassion (capitalized to emphasize both importance and connection to Higher Self / Divine) instead of the word love. Thus high SQ people *behave with love* – now defined as Wisdom and Compassion. Wisdom is the most elevated stage development of the intellect (head). Compassion is the most elevated stage of Emotional Intelligence (heart). The behavior which results from such highly developed head-plus-heart competency is skillful. It creates the ability to be interpersonally and socially masterful. It is also related to the highest stages of adult development.

Third, maintaining “inner and outer peace” relates to an interior calm non-attachment to outcomes, while acting with passionate conviction, which is stably available to people at higher stages of development in SQ and in the psychology of adult development. Stable realization of Wisdom provides the distance needed to always keep things in perspective. Stable realization of connection with the transcendent (one of 21 skills of SQ) makes perspective shifting much easier. Unitive, cosmic, “Big Mind” or “nondual” states can be accessed when needed by people in higher stages of spiritual and adult development. This keeps high SQ people from getting emotionally distressed by the obvious suffering and unfairness in the present situation. When we are distressed, angry, or upset our limbic system is activated and many functions of the neocortex lose blood flow and therefore effectiveness (see the work of Daniel Goleman for many references to this). In other words, when we allow ourselves to dwell in upset we cannot

access our higher brain functions and we lose perspective and skillfulness. A high SQ person can feel the activation of ego defenses and empathy (upset) and can manage it appropriately. A high SQ person can intuitively discern or “feel in the body/mind” whether the activation is just an outdated “lower stage” ego-activation to be ignored or if it is relevant data to be added to wise decision-making. If it is relevant information, then a principled stand against whatever is happening may be called for. So a high SQ person can act in a way that may *look* angry to some people but in fact remain biologically and psychologically in a state of relative calm. In other words strong actions can come from a peaceful mind. So no lack of energy is found in high SQ people. Instead, there is an increase of effectiveness that comes from not activating the limbic system in fear when needing to respond to a stressful situation.

The additional benefit of this inner calm state is less stress, higher resilience and more energy available for leadership. When people are *appearing* calm on the outside but are actually churning emotionally on the inside they become exhausted and burned out. With the intense and conflict-filled work and world environments the ability to remain calm *from the inside out* is a real advantage. More decisions, higher quality decisions and more skillful actions result from this state of being.

### **The Spiritually Intelligent Leader**

Who is a “spiritually intelligent leader”? How do we know that we have defined this intelligence in a way that makes sense? The easiest way to validate the “construct” is to see if it makes sense to thousands of people—to ask them to describe the most spiritually powerful (i.e. intelligent) people they know. Over several years the author has asked thousands of people the same question at the start of workshops or seminars. The question is: “Who do you admire (alive or dead, fictional or not) as a spiritual leader?” I get the same list of names over and over again. This list includes some famous names – for example: Jesus, Mohammed, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, the historical Buddha, and Thich Nhat Hanh. The list of “spiritual leaders” will also include people who are not famous but who had a huge and positive impact on the person naming them. For example: a parent or grandparent or other relative, schoolteachers or guidance counselors, pastors/rabbis/priests, other spiritual teachers or authors, and occasionally a boss. When you ask these people “What traits or characteristics caused you to admire these people” you get an almost identical list from each group. The traits listed typically include: honest/high integrity, authentic/walk their talk, loving, compassionate/kind, peaceful/non-violent, patient/persevering in the face of great difficulty, seeing the good in others and helping to bring it forth, wise, humble, committed to service/helping others, inspiring, generous, and open-minded. These leaders were perceived as having the best interests of other people at heart...in other words they were TRUSTED.

These spiritual leaders moved people. They moved them emotionally (inspiration, feeling touched or changed in a deep way) as well as physically (to action) and mentally (to new ideas about how to be in the world). This was almost always done in a non-coercive way (parents of children being an occasional deviation from this—perhaps totally appropriate during some stages of childhood development and the teen/early adult years). These spiritual leaders generally led by role-modeling how to be in the world, and by inspiring others toward a set of behaviors. They created a PULL toward something magnetic by being out in front personally and “walking their talk.” As Gandhi would say,

they were “being the change” they wanted to see in the world and acting from a loving place that inspired others to follow.

So if leadership is moving people emotionally (motivation, engagement), intellectually (new ideas) and physically (to stop, modify or start some action) then is developing one’s SQ helpful in becoming a leader in the world of complexity we currently face? The answer is a definite YES! But to explain this we need to look at the 21 Skills of Spiritual Intelligence.

### The Skills of Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence

Looking now at specifics, there are 18 skills of emotional intelligence (EQ) according to the many years of research by Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis.<sup>iii</sup> These 18 skills divided into 4 quadrants: self-awareness, self-management, social/other awareness and relationship skills. These 4 quadrants have a sequential connection. The upper left quadrant of self-awareness is foundational. With low self-awareness a person has very low percentage likelihood of developing social awareness or self-management skills. And without social awareness and self-management skills it is very unlikely someone can develop strong social/relationship skills.

<p><b>SELF AWARENESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional self-awareness</li> <li>• Accurate self-assessment</li> <li>• Self-confidence</li> </ul>	<p><b>SOCIAL AWARENESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Organizational Awareness</li> <li>• Service Orientation</li> </ul>
<p><b>SELF MANAGEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional Self-Control</li> <li>• Transparency (honest/trustworthy)</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> <li>• Achievement Orientation</li> <li>• Initiative</li> <li>• Optimism</li> </ul>	<p><b>RELATIONSHIP SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing Others</li> <li>• Inspirational Leadership</li> <li>• Influence</li> <li>• Change Catalyst</li> <li>• Conflict Management</li> <li>• Teamwork &amp; Collaboration</li> </ul>

Table 1: Emotional Intelligence (EQ) skills by four quadrants per Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis. **Highlighted skills are needed in some minimal amount to begin SQ development.**

Over the last fifty-plus years, research has conclusively proven that Emotional Intelligence creates better performance in every job category measured, even including computer programming. Original assumptions were that programmers didn’t really need to “relate” to anyone they just needed to write good code. As it turns out, good code is not a solo job. Good code means that the program can meet the needs of the client and interface well with other programs. This requires communication skills with an ability to listen to and act on the needs of others and good teamplay with the other programmers. The top 10% EQ programmers outperformed their average peers in producing effective code by 320%. The top 1% EQ programmers outperformed their average peers by 1272%. (Goleman, Working, p.37) High EQ performers understand the value of collaboration instead of competition.

The moral is that “IQ” or being cognitively very bright will get you in the door, but what makes you successful in your career is your EQ. EQ becomes more important the farther up the management ladder you climb. Daniel Goleman said, “When I compared star performers with average ones in senior leadership positions, nearly 90% of the

difference in their profiles was attributable to emotional intelligence factors rather than cognitive abilities” (Goleman, “*Leader*”, p.2)

Goleman and Boyatzis have described each skill from novice to expert levels ranging from level 1 (novice) to level 4 (expert). Each skill is part of a complex “algorithm” expressing the minimum amount of expertise you need in each skill to meet the research standards for moving from “average” to “star” levels of performance. In some skills one needs a “3” to satisfy the algorithm. For other skills a “4” is needed. Some strong skills can substitute for weak scores in other skills, based on their research. But the 3 most important skills are the skills that are foundational for many other skills. Goleman calls these the “metaskills” and they are: emotional self-awareness; empathy and emotional self-control.

It seemed to the author intuitively likely that the skills of SQ would follow a similar four quadrant model. The descriptors of the four quadrants for SQ reflect the vertical move toward less ego and greater expansion of awareness (e.g. social awareness quadrant EQ skills are narrower in scope than universal awareness SQ skills). Considering the spiritual leaders/exemplars listed repeatedly in the seminars and workshops, and referencing the world’s major faith traditions, philosophies and psychology, a list of 21 skills in four quadrants was created (Table 2). Each skill was described from skill attainment levels of 1 (novice) to 5 (expert or highest level we can describe at this time). This list of skills and the means of describing them was tested for construct validity by reviewing it with a small group of people who work in the “Spirit at Work” field, and then through larger groups via an alpha test and a beta test of the assessment instrument and feedback report which details all 21 skills and the four quadrants. Feedback from participants led to some minor adjustments in wording but essentially validated that these skills seem to accurately reflect a spiritually intelligent person. Furthermore people felt their assessment results were generally accurate. Research is presently continuing into the next level of validation – comparing structured interviews to assessment results.

The four quadrants and 21 SQ skills can be considered a “step up” from the four quadrants and 18 EQ skills.

**CPI Model of Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) Skills**

<p><b>Higher Self/Ego self Awareness</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Awareness of own worldview</li> <li>2. Awareness of life purpose (mission)</li> <li>3. Awareness of values hierarchy</li> <li>4. Complexity of inner thought</li> <li>5. Awareness of Ego self / Higher Self</li> </ol>	<p><b>Universal Awareness</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Awareness of interconnectedness of all life</li> <li>7. Awareness of worldviews of others</li> <li>8. Breadth of time / space perception</li> <li>9. Awareness of limitations/power of human perception</li> <li>10. Awareness of Spiritual laws</li> <li>11. Experience of transcendent oneness</li> </ol>
<p><b>Higher Self/Ego self Mastery</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Commitment to spiritual growth</li> <li>13. Keeping Higher Self in charge</li> <li>14. Living your purpose and values</li> <li>15. Sustaining your faith</li> <li>16. Seeking guidance from Spirit</li> </ol>	<p><b>Social Mastery / Spiritual Presence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. A wise and effective spiritual teacher/mentor</li> <li>18. A wise and effective change agent</li> <li>19. Makes compassionate and wise decisions</li> <li>20. A calming, healing presence</li> <li>21. Being aligned with the ebb and flow of life</li> </ol>

Table 2: Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) skills by four quadrants per Cindy Wigglesworth/CPI.

A core piece of vocabulary in the domain of SQ is ego self and Higher Self (capitalized to emphasize the connection to the Divine or transcendent domain). Ego is used in the



spiritual literature to refer to our separated sense of self as a personality in a body who is ultimately alone in the world. The ego sense develops over time, as mapped by the developmental psychologies, in ways that parallel the spiritual literature (for example the chakras). The ego self is sometimes called: personality self; temporary self; limited self; or lower self. The Higher Self has many synonyms: soul, Spirit, Atman, Buddha nature, the Divine within, the Tao within, the eternal self, authentic self, essential self, true self. Generally the Higher Self is perceived as far wiser than the ego self and more expansive in its view with a longer time perspective (Skill 8) as well as the ability to easily understand the worldview of anyone (Skill 7). A critical skill for the development of SQ is the ability to hear the voice of the ego self (the inner chatter of worry, fear, et cetera) as separate from the voice of the Higher Self develops (Skill 5). Once we can hear that we have multiple “voices” or perspectives inside our own self, and that some of them cause us upset, then the spiritual journey—and the development of the other SQ skills—can begin in earnest.

**Development of Skill 5: Awareness of Ego self/Higher Self as described from skill attainment Level 1 (novice) to Level 5 (highest we can describe)**

Level 1	Can communicate understanding of the nature of Ego self- including its origin and the purpose it serves in spiritual development
2	Demonstrates ability to observe personal Ego in operation and comment on what seems to trigger Ego eruptions
3	Demonstrates awareness of and ability to periodically "listen to" Spirit or Higher Self as a separate voice from Ego self
4	Hears the voice of Spirit or Higher Self clearly and understands the "multiple voices" that Ego self can have. Gives authority to voice of Higher Self in important decisions.
Highest Level 5	Spirit or Higher Self voice is clear and consistent. Authority consistently given to Spirit Self. Ego self is present and is a joyful advisor to Higher Self.

Table 3: 1 to 5 competency development scale for SQ Skill 5

To develop the quadrants you begin with the Awareness quadrants first, then move into Higher Self/Ego self mastery and finally arrive at Quadrant 4: Social Mastery and Spiritual Presence. By the time you arrive in Quadrant 4, you have the ability to influence others with your calming and healing presence. Absolutely essential to the development of SQ is the ability to hear and act from Higher Self, an increasing sense of interconnectedness to all life (and therefore all people) and adeptness at seeing the worldview of anyone—even someone who has acted to harm you. As these skills develop, a person automatically becomes less ego-driven (in the common use of the word) and more interested in being of service to others. Humility is a natural outcome of this process, as is courage, patience and perseverance. Judgments about other people give way into deep insight, compassion, and an ability to say and to do the right thing to help move people forward into a healthier place.

Jim Collins, in his **Harvard Business Review** article “Level 5 Leadership” talked about how his research on “Good to Great” leaders<sup>iv</sup> showed that leaders who took their companies to new heights of greatness were both humble and passionately committed. Abraham Maslow found that the healthiest, most developed adults were not the “self-

actualizers” he identified earlier in his career...but the “self-transcenders”—those who moved beyond ego into service to others and the whole of society.<sup>v</sup>

## Stages of Adult Development

Developmental psychology<sup>vi</sup> has received too little consideration in relationship to leadership. A stage relates to a structure of thinking, not the specific content of anyone’s beliefs. For example, at the stage called “Blue” in Table 4 the structure of thinking is one of seeking a noble purpose—the first stage to focus on longer term gain (deferring gratification). AND this stage tends to follow the rules laid down by experts to accomplish noble purpose. What rules are being followed is the “content” placed inside the structure. That content could be Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or Communism. The content is critically different from the stage or structure of thinking. You can find people of Jewish faith at any stage of development. But those at “Blue” will be focused on rules and a long-term noble cause that is good for the group. The same is true of all faith traditions and political points of view. You can have people who advocate for Democracy from a Blue structure of thinking, or from Orange, or Green. So do not confuse the stage with the content.

Stages of development are related to several things:

- We are all born at the lowest level and have to work our way “up” from there. Similarly humanity began at the lowest level (Beige in Table 4) and has been working its way through these stages as a species. Countries also grow from stage to stage over their history.
- Psychological traumas can cause an individual to stop developing or they may accelerate growth.
- Stages cannot be skipped—they must be developed in sequence
- Each stage has its own “action-logic”—a way of thinking and behaving that distinguishes it from other stages.
- Life conditions—the problems we face stimulate us to create ways to deal with those problems. When the “way we think” is insufficient to deal with the problems we face, new structures of thinking emerge. Thus problems are helpful to a degree in stimulating vertical growth. Each stage of development solves some problems that previous stages could not solve.
- Each stage also creates some problems as it grows too powerful or moves into excess.
- Societies or groups tend to cluster at a level (e.g., in the US the “center of gravity” is Orange—see Table 4). Societies create learning systems to encourage vertical growth to their center of gravity (COG), but will then subtly or overtly ostracize or punish those who try to go beyond the COG.
- Stages of development are not “lost” when we move up to the next stage. The lower levels are available to us and can be reactivated when stimulated by life conditions that originally caused that level to develop. For example, the stage of Blue rules-based thinking was stimulated by the chaos created when the world was at “Red” (warriors and despots raping and pillaging). If significant threats from Red “outlaws” are perceived by people at Orange or higher, they can revert to their “Blue” way of being and start cracking down and enforcing the rules—since the rules-based Blue structure emerged to deal with Red.
- Temporary or permanent reversion and regression are possible. We can revert to a lower level and “stay there” if life conditions press us to do so. Think of the

novel **Lord of the Flies** where a group of “true Blue” private school Christian boys revert to Red and below to survive when stranded on an island and needing to fight to survive.

- People tend to choose as their leaders people who are at their own stage of development or just slightly (one-half a stage) ahead of them. The exception: leaders who have reached Tier 2 where the leader can truly speak in the language of each stage

**Table of Adult Development Stages by Spiral Dynamics colors and Torbert Action Logic Names**

<b>SD Color</b> <i>(Torbert Action Logic name and connection to SD)</i>	<b>Description of Individuals</b>	<b>Where in the world it is the dominant mode and its leadership style*</b>
Coral+ <i>(Ironist? Early Coral?)</i>	No description yet – this color is assigned but this stage will develop only after Yellow and Turquoise have been substantially present in the population for a while. It will echo Red but without narrow egocentric power-hunger.	No country or group yet.
Turquoise <i>(Ironist – late Turquoise, entering Coral?; Magician/ Alchemist – early Turquoise/exiting Yellow)</i>	Individuals: feeling connected to all of humanity and all sentient life as one living whole. Deeply in tune with the flow of life, sometimes described as the Tao or Spirit. The separation between “spirituality” and life is no longer meaningful. Spirituality is part of everything. Echoes Purple but at a much higher level of complexity that transcends and includes the rational. Personal ego no longer is a significant factor. No longer triggered by fears that the personality self or ego used to act upon. More patience and more perspective that evolution of consciousness happens in its own time and cannot be forced.	No country yet. “The way (Tao) can be known, but not by conceptual mind alone” Aligning with the flow of a greater intelligence. Easy access to intuition and “implicit memory” for decision making - no longer limited by the conscious/rational mind.
Yellow <i>(Strategist)</i>	Individuals: aware for the first time of the deep truth of all the levels below it (Green still has issues with Orange and Blue). Also aware of the limitations of each level, and when a level has become toxic/dysfunctional. Focused on survival, echoing Beige, but at Tier 2 consciousness...a much higher level of complexity. Focuses on survival of the planet. Driven to make a difference for the good of the whole. Ego-fears begin to significantly reduce, along with need to defend. Mature post-conventional. Uses head and heart.	No country yet. Seeking solutions that allow private right to believe what you want while not allowing inter-level or intra-level warfare or solutions that damage our ability to survive collectively. “The best way for now, all views considered”
Green <i>(Individualist)</i>	Individuals: ecosensitivity, social justice issues, diversity sensitivity, <b>relativism</b> , pluralism – seeing all perspectives as having some truth but often has a lot of anger at Orange and Blue. Values social democracy with safety nets for the disadvantaged. First POST-conventional stage which is able to see that our perspective is biasing how we understand reality. Also called Post-Modernism.	Parts of Europe – especially The Netherlands and Scandinavia. All should benefit equally. “All ways are equally valid”
Orange	Individuals: strive drive – high achievement	USA, Taiwan, Hong

( <i>Achiever-late Orange; Expert – an Orange/Blue combination</i> )	orientation, you get what you earn in life. Scientific, rational, business like. Values a free competitive economy, merit-based systems, and multi-party democracy. Conventional-rational. Also called “Modern”.	Kong, Japan – also growing rapidly in India and mainland China. You win by being the best. “Target level” for adult development in most western countries. “The most successful way”
Blue ( <i>Expert – late blue/early Orange; Diplomat – early Blue</i> )	Individuals: Obedience and self-sacrifice to an overarching Good / God/ Authority. Loyal, hard working, dutiful. Values security, clear cut rules and morals (right and wrong spelled out), unambiguous leadership, one-party democracy (picking from among the believers), autocracy, monarchy or theocracy. Minimum socially accepted level for adults in most societies. Traditionalist. Conventional-conforming.	Cuba, Iraq A sub-level in many countries, also found in all religions when doctrine/dogma dominates. The just earn the rewards. “The one right way”
Red ( <i>Opportunist</i> )	Individuals: Freedom from rules-or at least from consequences of breaking them. Respects power (especially physical). Creative and courageous. Tends to set up government by force. Excellent in sizing people up and finding opportunities. Typically peaks in adolescence, some adults remain at this level. PRE-conventional.	Taliban (with some blue), Somalia (with some purple), Beige (survival) is an active sub-theme in these cultures. “My way or the highway”
Purple ( <i>Impulsive</i> )	Individuals: Safety is found in the group (family, tribe). The world is a dangerous place, filled with spirits. Strong magic/rituals are needed to stay safe. In touch with nature. Highly intuitive but in a pre-rational way. Early childhood and some adults. Pre-conventional. Honors the ancestors, the ancient ways and sacred lands.	Haiti (with some red). A strong sub-theme in some countries, e.g. in parts of Asia “The way of the ancestors”
Beige	Survival focused – newborns and early human species. Instinctive, organized in small herds to hunt and stay safe.	Not found in its pure form anymore except in babies. Pure instinct.

Table 4: Spiral Dynamics stages/levels – Based on the work of Clare Graves, Don Beck and Chris Cowan. **Highlighted levels are often referred to as “Tier Two”** – echoing the first 6 levels but at a much higher level of consciousness and complexity. There will be additional levels beyond Coral eventually. Action-logic names from William Torbert as mapped to SD by Susanne Cook-Greuter and by Paul Landraitis. \*Thanks to Paul Landraitis, Integral Development Associates, for the “way” expressions. The action logic term “Magician” also sometimes shown as “Alchemist.”

Tier Two individuals, those at the highlighted levels in Table 4, are described by Clare Graves, Don Beck and Chris Cowan as having a remarkable increase in complexity and elegance of thought, an amazing reduction of fear, an ability to bring their heads and hearts to the solution of difficult situations and to generate significantly more options than the previous levels. They have a flexibility of thinking and a speed of solution generation that exceeds all the previous levels in a significant way.

The Individualist/Green stage is the first level that can see that each level has some truth in its perspective. But it is still a Tier 1 stage prone to ego-centric “I’ve got the right perspective” thinking. So while it is beginning to be able to communicate with other stages (action logics) and is capable of being quite helpful in leading change the

tendency to break rules and do things the way they see fit can cause a good bit of collateral damage in organizations.

The author operates from the basic assumption that “who we are IS how we lead.” In other words, leadership is an “inside out” proposition. A person at an early stage of development can only access those means of leading that are at or precede his/her current stage/perspective. At higher levels additional means, styles or technologies of leadership are available. Stage development creates the ability to see things not visible before each stage. At later stages of development there is a wisdom that appears due to an expanding sense of interconnection with others and an ability to see long term causes and effects and systemic interactions. This allows for profound understanding of situations, people and options. The number of action options available to such “Tier 2” leaders is larger, and the skillfulness of use of each option increases. SQ and stage development become increasing interdependent as you move to higher stages. Thus “Tier 2” or mature, flexible, skillful leadership is intimately connected with the skills of spiritual intelligence as I will explain further below.

The real transformational leader emerges at the Strategist level. This stage accounts for just 4% of leaders (Rooke and Torbert 5). Unlike the Individualist who can listen to other stages, the Strategist

...is also adept at creating shared visions across different action logics—visions that encourage both personal and organizational transformations....Strategists deal with conflict more comfortably than do those with other action logics, and they're better at handling people's instinctive resistance to change. As a result, Strategists are highly effective change agents (Rooke and Torbert 5).

According to David Rooke and William Torbert, a study was done by the Harthill group on ten CEOs in six different industries, all of whom were committed to transformations. All CEOs hired consultants to assist them. The transformation was more successful in the five companies where the CEO was a Strategist.

The Strategists succeeded in generating one or more organizational transformations over a four-year period; their companies' profitability, market share, and reputation all improved. By contrast, only two of the other five CEOs succeeded in transforming their organizations – despite help from consultants, who themselves professed as Strategists” (Rooke and Torbert 6).

Strategists “are fascinated with three distinct levels of social interplay: personal relationships, organizational relations, and national and international developments.” In SQ terms this relates to a wider feeling of being interconnected with others (Skill 6) and an awareness of the worldviews of others (Skill 7). It is also reflective of Skill 4—enhanced complexity of inner thought—since many more stakeholders and perspectives are automatically considered. But Strategists are not prone to running off and living in a cave, meditating for 20 hours a day—a side effect of SQ development that is sometimes wrongly assumed. Rather, “Strategists typically have socially conscious business ideas that are carried out in a highly collaborative manner. They seek to weave together idealist visions with pragmatic, timely initiatives and principled actions” (Rooke and Torbert 6).

What about Alchemists/Magicians as leaders? Although very limited in number (about 1%)...

Our studies of the few leaders we have identified as Alchemists suggest that what sets them apart from Strategists is their ability to renew or even reinvent themselves and their organizations in historically significant ways...the Alchemist has an extraordinary ability to deal simultaneously with many situations at multiple levels. The Alchemist can talk with both kings and commoners. He can deal with immediate priorities yet never lose sight of long term goals....Alchemists are typically charismatic and extremely aware individuals who live by high moral standards. They focus intensely on the truth. Perhaps most important, they're able to catch unique moments in the history of their organizations, creating symbols and metaphors that speak to people's hearts and minds (Rooke and Torbert 6).

Nelson Mandela, one of the spiritual leaders typically cited when I ask people to list "spiritual leaders they admire", is considered to be an Alchemist.

In 1995, Mandela symbolized the unity of a new South Africa when he attended the Rugby World Cup game in which the Springboks, the South African national team, were playing. Rugby had been the basis of white supremacy, but Mandela attended the game. He walked on to the pitch wearing the Springbok's jersey so hated by black South Africans, at the same time giving the clenched fist salute of the ANC, thereby appealing, almost impossibly, both to black and white South Africans (Rooke and Torbert 6).

## **The Relationship of Tier 2 Stages and Spiritual Intelligence**

You have heard descriptions of the Strategist and the Magician/Alchemist from the standpoint of business and leadership. Now consider what Susanne Cook-Greuter says about the characteristics of the post-conventional action logics (Individualist and beyond). "The postconventional stages Individualist...through Ironist...show an overall trend of assimilation and integration towards an ever more conscious sense of belongingness and unity with the ground." This culminates in the Ironist "where spirit, is seen as radiant in all people" (Cook-Greuter 4). This certainly sounds like increasing spiritual intelligence. But let's get even more specific.

Using primarily Susanne Cook-Greuter's article "A Detailed Description of the Development of Nine Action Logics in the Leadership Development Framework". we can see the characteristics that grow through the increasing stages of action logic up to the Ironist level. These can then be easily related to the SQ skills in Table 2. What changes as people move vertically through the stages and move into the Ironist level?

- Increasing transcendence of ego—moving from the lower stages that are extremely ego self focused to the Ironist who is in the "ego transcendent realm." Center of perspective and decision-making shifts from ego to Higher Self (SQ Skills 2, 3, 5, 12, 13 and 14).
- An unassuming, humble and graceful presence becoming standard (Skill 20).

- Increasing cognitive complexity: can handle conflicting viewpoints, paradox, chaos and ambiguity (Skill 4).
- Can “look at themselves in terms of passing of ages, near and far in geographical, social, cultural, historical, intellectual and developmental dimensions.” (Cook-Greuter p.32) Can shift points of view effortlessly (Skills 1, 7, 8, 9).
- Holds a very long cosmic perspective on time, yet are able to work on short term and long term goals simultaneously (Skill 8, 17, 18, 19).
- Ability to generate meaning on one’s own (Skills 10, 13, 16).
- Wider and wider social networks, eventually feeling connected to whole destiny of universal evolution (Skills 6, 7, 8).
- Increasing openness to feedback and change (Skills 1, 9, 12).
- Increasing capacity to observe the self (Skills 1, 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16).
- Able to forgive self and others (Skills 1, 7, 9, 10, 11).
- Sees the limitations of language as always less than what we are actually trying to communicate. Understands that the habit of language supports the beliefs and defenses of the ego. (Skills 9, 16).
- Unitive consciousness—an actual experience of the interconnectedness of all things. Ironists can literally see the world in a grain of sand, as the poet said (Skill 6, 21).
- Decreasing need to control and to “do”—more interested in connecting to the flow, the Tao, or the energy of what is happening—feeling “embedded in nature” (Cook-Greuter p. 32) (Skills 10, 17, 18, 19, 20, and especially Skill 21).
- Fully empathic, non-interfering ability to be with what is (Skills 17, 18, 19, 20, 21).
- A deeper security about being than can be gained from rational thought (Skills 11, 15, 16, 21).

### **Spiritual Intelligence and Mature Leadership**

So what does all this have to do with leadership? In a complex world filled with some difficult life conditions, who is best prepared to lead? Whether we are talking about an organization, a country or just inspiring the people around us, it is the leader at the highest stages of adult development who is best prepared to cope effectively with the life conditions we face. It is the Yellow/Turquoise (Strategist, Magician, Ironist) leader who will be able to navigate the difficult times, to encourage and inspire others, to speak so they can be heard, and to stay peaceful in the midst of it all. These people will have spiritual intelligence—since the skills of spiritual intelligence are intricately linked to the higher stages of development. Such leaders will be able to act with love (Wisdom and

Compassion). Mature leadership, high SQ leadership, is not about warm and fuzzy feelings. It is deep compassion manifesting in wise action. It is a profound personal integrity—an alignment with purpose and values. The high SQ leader understands the natural emergent processes at play and can work with them for the best outcomes, all while he/she stays focused on the big picture—remaining untriggered by old egoic reactions.

How will we create such leaders? We need to give people the vocabulary (ego self and Higher Self) and then the skills to allow them to grow and then transcend the ego, eventually transcending even language itself as these emerging leaders come into direct knowing beyond language of the nature of what is. To dodge around developing SQ skills because we are not comfortable with the concepts is a sign of clinging to old Orange/Achiever scientific rationalist ways of looking at things, or a sign of fear of conflict (Green/Individualist harmony-seeking). To do what is needed takes courage. But developing spiritual intelligence is a requirement if we want to access the highest stages of adult development and become truly mature leaders – leaders ready for the challenges we face.



**QUESTIONS?** For more information on this Spiritual Intelligence model, a sample assessment report, or status update on the validation research, contact Cindy Wigglesworth at [cswigglesworth@aol.com](mailto:cswigglesworth@aol.com) or see the free articles on [www.consciouspursuits.com](http://www.consciouspursuits.com)

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<sup>i</sup> Center of Gravity (COG) means that the dominant behavior of the culture is centered in that stage of development. However, cultures typically have some people above that level and some below that level in terms of their personal center of gravity. And a person or a group at “COG Blue” has access to all the stages preceding his/her current stage.

<sup>ii</sup> For childhood development see the work of Jean Piaget. For adult development see the work of any of the following: Clare Graves as modified by Don Beck and Chris Cowan in “Spiral Dynamics” (meaning making systems); Carol Gilligan and Lawrence Kohlberg (moral development); Susanne Cook-Greuter, Robert Kegan, Jane Loevinger and William Torbert (ego development and action-logics); James Fowler (stages of faith)

<sup>iii</sup> For more on this see Daniel Goleman’s books Emotional Intelligence and Working with Emotional Intelligence and his Harvard Business Review article “*What Makes A Leader?*”

<sup>iv</sup> The book Good to Great by Jim Collins details his research and his findings.

<sup>v</sup> See The Farther Reaches of Human Nature by Abraham Maslow.

<sup>vi</sup> See Integral Psychology by Ken Wilber for an overview of quite a few developmental psychologists, also cross-referenced to the developmental theories of the world religions. Key developmentalists include: Jean Piaget, Clare Graves (and Beck and Cowan who added the colors to “Spiral Dynamics”), Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, Robert Kegan, William Torbert, Jane Loevinger, and Susanne Cook-Greuter.

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