ESI™ — Emotional & Social Intelligence

The Leadership Multiplier

The Case for ESI

Across multiple leadership studies over the past several decades, **80–90% of the competencies that distinguish outstanding leaders from average performers are emotional and social in nature.**

Technical expertise may earn a role.
Emotional and Social Intelligence sustains and builds influence.

Unlike IQ — which stabilizes early in life — ESI competencies are learned, practiced, and strengthened over time.

ESI is not personality.
It is disciplined behavioral intelligence.

Definition of ESI

Adapted from Daniel Goleman:

Emotional and Social Intelligence is the capacity to understand and manage our own emotions and behavior, accurately perceive those of others, and respond in ways that strengthen relationships and effectiveness in the moment.

In short:

ESI is self-mastery in a relationship.

The Five Core Competencies of ESI

Each competency contains both skill and stance (attitude).
Without the attitude, the skill becomes manipulation.
Without the skill, the attitude becomes sentiment.

A. Self-Awareness

“Know yourself before attempting to lead others.”

Self-awareness is the foundation of all emotional intelligence.

Core Capacities:

1. **Clarity of Intent**
   Be explicit about why you are leading, facilitating, or intervening.
   Unexamined intent contaminates influence.
2. **Behavioral Literacy**
   Understand your natural behavioral style (pace, tone, decisiveness, emotional expression).
   Know your tendencies under stress (aka: “Backup Behavior.”)
3. **Humility of Perspective**
   Your opinions are interpretations — not the truth.
   The ability to separate perception from reality reduces defensiveness.
4. **Emotional Impact Awareness**
   Recognize how your emotional state affects your decisions, tone, and relational climate.

Leadership Failure Pattern:
Blind spots masquerading as confidence.

B. Self-Regulation

“Power over self precedes power with others.”

Self-regulation is disciplined emotional management under pressure.

Core Capacities:

1. **Behavioral Flexibility**
   Adapt your communication style to meet others' needs — without losing integrity. “Speak to the Listening”
2. **Emotional Choice**
   Emotions arise; behavior is chosen.
   Pause. Decide. Respond.

3. **Real-Time Impact Calibration**
   Accurately read verbal and non-verbal signals to gauge how your message is landing.

4. **Ego Suspension**
   Temporarily move your own self-interest aside to fully see, hear, and understand the other person.

Leadership Failure Pattern:
Emotional reactivity disguised as authenticity.

C. Self-Motivation

"Courage in alignment with purpose."

Self-motivation is an internally driven discipline rooted in values.

Core Capacities:

1. **Courage Under Fear**
   Feel discomfort and choose to act in alignment with values anyway.

2. **Values-Based Decision Making**
   Evaluate options against purpose — not convenience.

3. **Intrinsic Satisfaction**
   Experience fulfillment in developing others, not just personal achievement.

4. **Resilience**
   Sustain effort despite resistance, ambiguity, or delay.

Leadership Failure Pattern:
Comfort-seeking replaces purpose.

D. Empathy

"Attention placed over there."

Empathy is disciplined other-awareness.

It is not agreement.
It is not indulgence.
It is not emotional absorption.

It is a genuine sign of respect, appreciation, and trust.

Core Capacities:

1. **Directed Attention**
   Intentionally shift focus from self to the other person or group.
2. **Strength-Based Belief**
   Operate from the assumption that every person possesses unique potential.
3. **Comfort with Silence**
   Allow space for processing, reflection, and emergence.
4. **Compassionate Assumption**
   Begin with the belief that people are acting from the best understanding they have at the moment.

Leadership Failure Pattern:
Bias Projection — assuming others think and feel as you do.

Opinion Attribution—The transfer of your likes or dislikes to others as if they were theirs.

E. Social Skill

“Relational effectiveness in action.”

Social skill is where the previous four competencies become visible behavior.

Core Capacities:

1. **Ownership of Breakdown**
   Take responsibility for addressing misalignment, conflict, or unacceptable behavior — regardless of origin.
2. **Release of Rightness**
   Being effective is more important than being right.
3. **Active Listening Discipline**
   Listen to understand, not to prepare a rebuttal (Ie, defend yourself).
4. **Behavior-Based Feedback**
   Address observable actions and impact — never character.

5. **In-the-Moment Agility**
   Use live interactions as teaching moments. Adjust approach when data suggests a better path.

Leadership Failure Pattern:
Conflict avoidance or dominance.

The ESI Integration Model

The competencies build sequentially:

Self-Awareness
→ Self-Regulation
→ Self-Motivation
→ Empathy
→ Social Skill

Without self-awareness, the rest collapse.
Without social skills, the rest remain invisible.

ESI in One Sentence

ESI is the disciplined ability to manage oneself and engage others in ways that elevate performance and preserve dignity.

Teaching Enhancement for Your Programs

During training, demonstrate:

Weak ESI:

- Interrupting
- Defensive tone
- Over-explaining
- Emotional leakage

Strong ESI:

- Pause

- Ask clarifying questions
- Reflect emotion
- Deliver precise feedback

Then ask:

Which version would you trust under pressure?

Note — this integrates beautifully with leadership architecture around:

- Agency
- Accountability
- Verbal discipline
- Cultural stewardship
- Civility