

Steps to Sustainable Change

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Introduction. As you look over your EI inventory results, remember that the goal is *not* to get high scores in every area, but to

- 1) Evaluate where you presently think you're at in each of the EI categories.
- 2) Get others' feedback in these areas.
- 3) Remember that only God's perceptions are truly accurate.
- 4) Make a plan to grow in EI competency.

In keeping with this goal, the *Steps to Sustainable Change Worksheet* (below) is designed to walk you through these basis steps:

- 1) Choose one EI area you'd like to grow in.
- 2) Create a realistic growth plan.
- 3) Periodically evaluate your progress.
- 4) Celebrate your victories.

It can help to keep in mind this God-centered version of "Seven Steps to Sustainable Change"¹:

- 1) Know who you think God wants you to become (who He has created you to be).
- 2) Know who you are now.
- 3) Decide that you want to change and ask God to help you do this.
- 4) Ask God to help you develop the learning agenda He would like you to pursue (including how to build on your strengths while reducing your gaps, and praying through any stuck places).
- 5) With God's help and direction, experiment with and practice new thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to the point of mastery.
- 6) Together with God, develop supportive and trusting relationships that facilitate change.
- 7) Share with others ways in which you are changing and celebrate these; share with others ways in which you want to change; ask for prayer support and for appropriate accountability.

Note: Your growth process can be facilitated by identifying your present strengths and using these to reduce your present gaps. *For example, if you have good self-awareness, but low empathy, intentionally using your awareness of your own feelings can greatly help you understand how others may be feeling. If, in addition, you have good communication and listening skills, you can also use these to learn to ask appropriate questions of others that can help you understand their feelings.*

Quotes on growing in EI from *Primal Leadership* by Daniel Goleman:

- *Self-awareness "is the real starting point of self-directed learning; taking stock of the parts of yourself that you relish and want to preserve, versus those you'd like to change or adapt to your new circumstances."*²
- *"The best kind of learning agenda helps you focus on what you want to become – your own ideal – rather than on someone else's idea of what you should be. It should lead to*

¹ Adapted from *Primal Leadership*, by Daniel Goleman, ©2002 Daniel Goleman, pages 111-112

² *Primal Leadership*, by Daniel Goleman (©2002 Daniel Goleman), page 134

setting meaningful standards of performance, rather than taking on an arbitrary, normative standard for success that may or may not fit with personal goals. When crafting specific, manageable learning goals, it works best to tie them into goals that motivate you and ignite your full range of talents.”³

- *“It’s possible to improve if you do three things: Bring bad habits into awareness, consciously practice a better way, and rehearse that new behavior at every opportunity until it becomes automatic.”⁴ [To these three things we would add a fourth: prayer. God’s power at work within us enables us to do the other three things.]*
- *“Because leadership skills are part of an unconscious repertoire of habits learned long ago, the old response won’t magically disappear. It takes commitment and constant reminders to stay focused on undoing those habits. Over time, the need for reminders will diminish as the new behavior becomes a stronger pathway in the brain.”⁵*
- *“Kolb found that people learn most often through one of the following modes:*
 - *Concrete experience: Having an experience that allows them to see and feel what it is like*
 - *Reflection: Thinking about their own and other’s experiences*
 - *Model building: Coming up with a theory that makes sense of what they observe*
 - *Trial-and-error learning; Trying something out by actively experimenting with a new approach*
 - *Learning often happens best through some combination of two or three of these modes.”⁶*
- *“Recent studies of people who have improved their emotional intelligence reveal several key points about what works and what doesn’t... The findings include the following:*
 - *Goals should build on one’s strengths, not on one’s weaknesses.*
 - *Goals must be a person’s own – not goals that someone else has imposed.*
 - *Plans should flexibly allow people to prepare for the future in different ways – a single ‘planning’ method imposed by an organization will often prove counterproductive.*
 - *Plans must be feasible, with manageable steps: Plans that don’t fit smoothly into a person’s life and work will likely be dropped within a few weeks or months.*
 - *Plans that don’t suit a person’s learning style will prove demotivating and quickly lose his attention.”⁷*
- *“Such an agenda should focus on improvements about which a person feels passionate, while giving him realistic, manageable steps that will help him realize these possibilities. It should build on his strengths while working on his gaps.”⁸*
- *“it’s important to remember that the more personal the commitment to learning goals, the more likely you are to achieve them.”⁹*
- *“develop competencies already close to the tipping point – the level at which a relatively small improvement or increase in the frequency of a competence will tip someone into outstanding performance.”¹⁰*

³ *ibid*, page 141

⁴ *ibid*, page 156

⁵ *ibid*, page 143

⁶ *ibid*, page 150

⁷ *ibid*, page 144

⁸ *ibid*, page 139

⁹ *ibid*, page 147

¹⁰ *ibid*, page 146

- “Perhaps the greatest mistake that people make when setting goals is committing themselves to activities that are difficult to do in their current lives and work style. Your action plan needs to fit into the structure and rhythm of your life.”¹¹
- “learning plans that lay out concrete practical steps yield the most powerful improvement.”¹²
- “The key to learning new habits for leaders lies in practice to the point of mastery.”¹³
- “You know that the new habit has been mastered when you’re able to sustain that new response long into the future – not just for a week or a month.”¹⁴

Steps to Sustainable Change Worksheet.

- 1) Seek to identify your strengths and areas that you have grown in¹⁵. Thank God for these. Write down these areas and celebrate them!
- 2) Seek to identify any gaps between who you are now and who you think God created you to be. Write down these gaps. Ask God to help you grow in these areas in His time.
- 3) Ask God to reveal to you what He is doing in your life right now and in your transformation process as a whole. Write down what He shows you.
- 4) Ask God to show you *one* area of your life He would presently like you to work on in partnership with Him. Write down this area. Ask Him to help you grow in this area.
- 5) Ask God to reveal if there is anything within you that hinders your ability to grow in this area.
 - a. If there is anything you’re aware of, write it down.
 - b. Pray through these issues. Ask a friend to help you, if you’d like.
- 6) Ask God to help you develop a learning agenda to help you grow in this area:
 - a. Ask God to show you how you can use strengths you already have to help you grow in this area. Write down your ideas.
 - b. Ask God to show you how you can maximize everyday situations to catch old, unhealthy habits relating to this area and replace them with new, healthy ones. Write down your ideas.
 - c. Write down any ideas you have for growing in this area by building on your strengths while reducing your gaps. *Examples of possible actions include:*
 - i. *Praying in specific ways*
 - ii. *Studying Scripture on specific topics*
 - iii. *Reading books and other materials*
 - iv. *Thinking and writing reflectively*
 - v. *Working with a mentor*
 - vi. *Being accountable – initiating this and following through*
 - vii. *Making changes in your schedule, including whatever actions it takes to make this work well*
 - viii. *Prayerfully analyzing a problem and coming up with creative solutions*
 - ix. *Asking advice from friends and/or peer mentors*

¹¹ *ibid*, page 148

¹² *ibid*, page 149

¹³ *ibid*, page 157

¹⁴ *ibid*, page 158

¹⁵ For areas you have grown in, also consider Emotional Intelligence Competencies. These competencies have been identified through global studies as integral to successful leadership. One listing of these competencies, *The Emotional Competence Framework*, by The Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organization, www.eiconsortium.org, can presently be found online at: <http://www.businessballs.com/emotionalintelligencecompetencies.pdf>.

- x. *Identifying root issues that are hindering your ability to move ahead in an area, and praying and working through these*
- xi. *“Experimenting with and practicing new behaviors, thoughts, and feelings to the point of mastery”¹⁶*
- xii. *Thinking of creative ways to practice these in the context of your everyday life and work*
- xiii. *Other creative ideas.*

Notes:

- *It’s highly recommended that you include weekly prayer time for specific areas of felt need.*
- *Brainstorming with someone can help you identify realistic, sustainable actions for your growth process; as well as provide a potential person to hold you accountable on what you choose to pursue.*

7) Prayerfully decide *how much time* per week to set aside for specific actions in your learning agenda. Along with this, decide *when* during the week you will likely work on these goals. Schedule this time, including a (brief) regular time to review your progress. Write down your plan.

Notes:

- *Wherever possible, incorporate your learning goals into your daily routine.*
- *You may want to set aside a different amount of time during weeks when you are traveling.*

8) Prayerfully decide a time by when you would like to *complete* any specific actions for growth in this area (such as reading a book or doing a word study). List these goals with dates for completion, and schedule time for these into your weekly routine. Ask God to help you reach these goals.

9) *Tell someone* what your goals are for growth in this area (including your mentor, if you have one) and *ask them to hold you accountable – and when and how you’d like them to do that*. You may also want to get their input on how realistic your goals are. Write down your accountability plan.

10) Prayerfully decide *when* you would like to re-evaluate your goals for growth in this area. Write down your plan for when to re-evaluate your goals.

11) Adjust your growth plan as needed.

12) *Persevere*, in partnership with God, until you have victory in this area, identifying obstacles as they arise, praying through any root issues, and seeking creative solutions.

13) *Celebrate* your victories!

14) *Remember:*

- Focus on one area for desired growth at a time.
- Partner with God. *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”* Phil 4:13.
- Change is a process. All true believers will be perfect in heaven. In the meantime, we’re being *perfected*.
- Keep your plan simple. Break it down into manageable steps. Seek to integrate your plan, as much as possible, with daily life.
- Include plans for developing and practicing new, healthy patterns of thinking and behavior in this area.
- Keep celebrating your victories, giving glory to God for them.

¹⁶ Page 112, *Primal Leadership*, by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee ©2002 Daniel Goleman