

Linda Lantieri: A View on Emotional Intelligence in Everyday Life

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Linda Lantieri, a former teacher and administrator in the New York City Public Schools and co-founder and national director of the [Resolving Conflict Creatively Program \(RCCP\)](#), describes the impact of emotional intelligence on schools and daily life.

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1. How do you define emotional intelligence?

Emotional intelligence in the work that we do in the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program is about equipping young people with the kinds of skills they need to both identify and manage their emotions, to communicate those emotions effectively, and to resolve conflict nonviolently. So it's a whole set of skills and competencies that, for us, fall under the umbrella of emotional intelligence.

2. How do the emotional and intellectual domains complement each other?

One of the things we realized about this work is that our comprehensive evaluation taught us some things that had been very helpful. And one of the most important things it taught us is that it's not an "either-or." We found that the young people who had a substantial number of lessons in the Resolving Conflict Creatively Curriculum, which was about twenty-five, not only did better in terms of people skills, but they managed their emotions, they were less violent and more caring, and they actually did better on their academic achievement tests.

We're finally learning that it is not an either-or situation and until teachers realize that, they begin to fear that if they pay attention to the emotional domain, then they're not paying attention to the intellectual domain. But we realize that feelings and learning and emotion are all very integral to each other. And that's what some of this research has been teaching us.

3. How important is teaching skills of emotional intelligence in school?

I've seen schools that were very violent -- both in physical violence as well as a lack of caring and community -- begin to slowly but surely turn around as we work with parents, the principal, teachers, and then ultimately the young people. One of the things I am happy about when I see young people learning these skills as a normal, regular part of their curriculum is that I know we're equipping them to deal with all of what they're going to have to deal with in the twenty-first century. We know enough from the research and from what employees tell us that we need the people skills, team-building skills, communication skills, and the managing emotions skills as much as we need all of those other, more intellectual capacities.

So when I see such a balance in this classroom, between the academic, which is right there in the front of this classroom and many of the classrooms in our program, and I see that integrated with those other skills, then I feel more confident that the whole set of skills that these young people have will equip them to really deal with what they're going to have to deal with in the outside world.

4. How viable are the skills of emotional intelligence in everyday life?

Often when people see this work, it seems as though practicing something here in a classroom is something that couldn't possibly then be transferred outside the classroom. But what we begin to see is that that very practice is the beginning of being able to do that. And we find more and more young people, teachers, and parents coming back to us and saying, What I practiced in the classroom, I tried out in the real world. And of course, what we realize is that some of these things are based on the principles of non-violence, that when you teach people how not to escalate conflict, then that will work whether you're in a serious kind of conflict situation or whether you're not, whether you're just negotiating what movie you might want to go to. So we find that more and more young people, in fact, do try these skills in the real world.

I remember a young boy in one of our high schools, who after learning about win-win solutions -- this was in the South Bronx -- went and decided to negotiate with the drug dealers on the seventeenth floor of his building, saying, basically, that I can't stop you from doing what you're doing, but I'd like to ask you to stop doing it here because I'm just so tired of seeing my brother and sister see this everyday. And he reported back, saying, "You know, the next day they weren't there, and the day after they weren't there, and they never came back." So it's that courage of being able to try out some things that don't seem like they could be possible in an environment that doesn't have that ethos. And beginning to see that these are skills, these are technical skills that help people manage their anger differently, whether or not they know the skill or not, by having the skill, you can often change the situation.