

Beyond Gender

Feminine Intelligence: the new smart for today's needs

Nowadays everyone has heard of Emotional Intelligence and how it has supplanted IQ as the marker of real success in work. Now a new intelligence is making itself known. At this time of 'Strong-Man' sabre-rattling it is no coincidence that this new intelligence, called Feminine Intelligence, is drawing interest. Hetty Einzig and Scilla Elworthy ask if FemmeQ is the antidote we need to the posturing and dangerous threats, and a way forward to tackle the challenges we face?

The idea of 'Intelligence' refers to the best, highest and most refined version of a particular faculty. The most well known intelligence, cognitive, or IQ, became popular in the 1940s as a way of measuring our ability to do certain kinds of reasoning tests. But it was clear that this was too limited a view of human beings. Many psychologists expanded this field and the idea of multiple intelligences was developed by Harvard Professor Howard Gardner¹. In the 1990s science journalist Daniel Goleman built on this and other research to outline the concept of Emotional Intelligence as a key determinant of success in life and work² and Gardner popularised his research, offering seven kinds of smart (verbal, visual, musical, kinaesthetic, mathematic, social, personal).³

Prior to their work and that of other psychologists, words like 'emotional' or 'sensitive' were derogatory terms in the workplace and the capacity to self-reflect or get on well with people were disregarded as skills. Nowadays, to have high EQ is recognised as a business advantage and essential life skill.

The Big Split

Like Emotional Intelligence, Feminine Intelligence is not new. These skills are ancient wisdom but were sidelined from the Industrial Revolution on. The invention of the machine age, first in the 19th century in the UK and USA then spreading around the world, was a seismic shift. As cultures moved towards industrialisation and mechanisation so an emphasis on speed, efficiency, logic and the production line supplanted centuries of work as an integrated part of life lived in close connection with the land, with community and with ourselves. It was inevitable that human beings came to be subservient to the brilliant efficiency of the machine. The technologically oriented left-brain rose supreme while our emotional selves and imaginative, big-picture right brain were marginalised. This rupture and split has damaged both men and women, and adversely affected the earth. Previously it was a mark of the gentle-man to be sensitive, emotionally responsive and kind. The Industrial and post-industrial technological and digital eras have all but banished these qualities in the workplace – for women as well as men. We are now seriously out of balance – as individuals, societies and within our workplaces and institutions.

However there is a growing recognition from all quarters that left-brain, linear reasoning is inadequate to engage with the complexity of today's globalised world. A desire for rebalancing is gaining ground. FemmeQ is now re-emerging as the necessary skill set for a world that is networked, complex, uncertain and volatile.

We are once again beginning to understand that everything is interdependent – as quantum physicists have been demonstrating for decades. FemmeQ prioritises this

awareness. It prioritises right brain ‘big-picture’, patterned and holistic thinking, and it builds the skills necessary to navigate complexity and address the otherwise insuperable challenges thrown up by current crises.

Feminine and Masculine

Currently the words ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ evoke a range of associations, both negative and positive. These are culturally, not biologically, determined and identified with gender stereotypes. They persist in all cultures. ‘Feminine’ has come to be freighted with attributes like caring or submissive, pretty or indecisive, while ‘masculine’ is burdened with associations like strong and silent, logical, macho or aggressive.

Just as the concept of Emotional Intelligence has reclaimed the word ‘emotional’ from negative implications of ‘over-emotional’ and made being emotionally literate a desirable attribute for both men and women, so Feminine Intelligence seeks to reclaim the word ‘feminine’ from widespread associations with the weak, decorative or ‘hormonal’ and establish it as a distinct set of important and powerful skills, qualities and behaviours that are not identified with just one gender but belong to both women and men.

We now propose a new intelligence to join IQ and EQ. FemmeQ denotes a set of 5 interlocking qualities and skills that reinforce each other:

Compassion, Deep Listening, Inclusivity, Interconnectedness, Regeneration

At the turn of the 20th century the psychoanalyst Carl Jung identified the existence of two complementary energies in both men and women, distinct from gender. He used the words ‘anima’ to describe feminine energies within men and ‘animus’ to describe masculine energies within women. Like the yin-yang symbol, both energies or principles contain an echo of the other within them, enabling us to recognise the other and respond. When we deny the complementary energy it becomes our shadow – a repressed and even unconscious quality. For example when women deny their strength or assertiveness they not only weaken themselves but they project onto others – usually men – the demand to be strong and assertive in their place; or they may express strength in distorted and manipulative ways. When men deny their intuition or compassion they not only narrow their own expression, they may project the demand onto others – women – to be caring or sensitive in their place; they might also denigrate these qualities in themselves and other men.

It is certainly clear that our concept of the ‘masculine’ has also been degraded and reduced by the industrial and technological eras’ focus on functionality. Nevertheless an examination of any statistics on gender in leadership and decision-making positions shows that men and male values continue to shape and dominate societies everywhere. It is clear that the major ‘threats’ to the future of humanity – namely global warming, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, migration, the rich-poor gap and cyber warfare – are man-made. Therefore the most pressing need is to focus on Feminine Intelligence and promote its widespread revival. We believe it to be the fastest and most effective route to rebalancing for both men and women, for workplaces and cultures, and for the health of the planet.

Gender Wars

The gender debate remains polarised; it plays a zero-sum power game that results in a familiar standoff. The struggle reflects an outdated binary concept of gender in a world where gender fluidity is now increasingly accepted. Astonishingly, gender equality is still a topic for debate. It seems incontrovertible that equal pay, rights and access should by now be established or actively pursued by all civilised societies.

Embracing and deepening our understanding of Feminine Intelligence holds the potential of taking us beyond the gender debate stalemate. It mirrors a more nuanced and fluid understanding of identity *beyond* gender that seeks to free both women *and* men from the stereotypes that box us in and restrict our capacity to deal creatively with our lives, relationships, work and challenges.

Men have been just as badly served by gender stereotypes as women. Feminine Intelligence is seen as a powerful route for men and women to counter centuries of male-shaped structures and practices with new ways of being, living and working. This is not an 'either-or' but a 'both-and' approach. We should all have the right to be *both* competitive, assertive, ambitious *and also* compassionate, caring, collaborative.

As gender fluidity is becoming a more familiar concept, as Millennials are demanding the right to determine their own identities rather than fit into societal templates, so the ground is ready for this next evolution. The time has come for the reassertion of Feminine Intelligence, the reassertion of balance, wisdom and a holistic, responsible and appropriate approach to living in today's complex world.

The five dimensions of FemmeQ



The 5 Dimensions of FemmeQ

Compassion is feeling *for* others—combined with a strong intention to assist them. It goes beyond empathy into action. Do we have the strength to step into the shoes of even those we dislike, and understand how they feel and are motivated? This is not a practice for the meek and gentle – it actually prevents suicide bombing. Gulalai Ismael works in the Swat Valley in NW Pakistan, one of the toughest places in the world to be a woman. She trains young people to seek out those young men who are being taught in the madrassas to be jihadis, go back with them to their families and discuss how the Koran does not sanction suicide bombing. So far 4,000 ‘at risk’ young people have been reached by 223 trained youth activists, and over 250 potential bombings prevented. Thus compassion is the drive not only to feel for others but also to take action to assist them.

Deep Listening is a quality that may sound easy; most of us think we are good listeners. But most are not. Giving another person our full attention is one of the greatest gifts we can give, and this attention needs to be such that we can sense the emotions behind the words. This means that, in an argument we can move from our head, namely “I’m right and you’re wrong” to our heart, and sense “Oh, is *that* what this feels like for you...?” It is a challenge to teach deep listening to senior executives of global companies, who are trained to give orders and keep busy. After some resistance and much practice they learn how to give their full listening attention to one another, and often report: “What you taught us enables us now to resolve in 15 minutes what previously would have taken four hours of argument, and still not been agreed!”⁴ Real listening is a key skill in transforming conflicts. Listening as a quality of interaction is very close to intuition, because the quiet intensity of really listening to another allows us to notice the intuitive voice, a voice that often gets drowned out by reaction, reason and argument.

Inclusivity is the third quality. This means ensuring that the marginalized – the ‘majority world’ of those without a voice – are brought into decision-making. This can mean, as in the case of Germany’s welcome of large numbers of refugees, confronting the anger of those who are afraid of diversity and would prefer to close borders and exclude those fleeing violence or persecution. Another example is the story of Henri Bura Ladyi, an ex-child soldier in the Congo who, when *Peace Direct* is able to send him a small sum of money, gets on his motorbike and rides into the bush. There he buys a herd of goats and drives them to where the militia are hiding. He is risking his life, because the militia are trigger happy, high on drugs and don’t like intruders. But Henri knows how to talk to them and swaps one goat (price \$5) for one child, and brings the children home. Then the hard work begins, of re-integrating these traumatised children into their families. This is the sharp end of inclusivity, but in small and large ways we have opportunities to help and include rather than ignore or compete with those who cross our path every day at work.

Interconnectedness stems from the understanding that we are interdependent with each other and our environment. It motivates our urge to nurture and protect our planet and her resources. The arrogant celebration of ‘man’s conquest of nature’ is being replaced by the realization that we need to respect, safeguard and help regenerate the planetary life of which we are a part. This is evident in the refusal of Millennials to work for companies with outdated values. By 2025 those born between 1980 and 2000 will form 75 per cent of the global workforce ⁵. This will make them the biggest consumer class. Surveys show that an overwhelming 75 per cent of those born between 1980 and 2000 have 4 major priorities: planet, people, purpose, and only lastly, profit. They consider environmental protection, climate change, resource scarcity and biodiversity loss as their number one priority.⁶ Some are even insisting that governments appoint a *Guardian of Future Generations*, an official whose job it is to think ahead long term to what may affect our grandchildren, and has the power to stop governments or

corporations taking actions that may pollute or harm the planet and its creatures [needs ref].

Regeneration as a quality of Feminine Intelligence is based on the simple fact that the female body is in tune with reproduction and with the cycles of the moon. Regeneration is deeply concerned with the wounding of the Earth. For men a choice must be made to attune to this connection with the rhythms of the Earth. When we do our awareness goes beyond concepts of sustainability, or 'corporate social responsibility' policies that often fail to generate action. Indigenous leaders have long been telling us that decisions must be made—not in the interests of the next quarterly figures but with the *interests of the next seven generations* in mind. We need to clean up the vast islands of plastic debris polluting the Pacific ocean, enable our rivers to recover from oil and chemicals casually spilled, replace the tops of mountains scalped to permit mining, and re-forest lands become barren through over-farming. Near Rio in Brazil, Thais Corral inherited a mountain where all the trees had been cut down; she has now established *Sino Da Vale* where students come for a 6-month internship to learn to raise native saplings, plant them according to contours, and protect them from loggers.

So what are the skills we need?

Any one of us can develop these skills of Feminine Intelligence, and the age we are living through desperately needs people with these skills. To develop them requires that we wake up. Waking up means more than mindfulness or meditation. It means going deeper into self-knowledge, into the value of integrating the wounded parts of ourselves, and discovering how to take a stand for what we believe in.

When both men and women access and express their Feminine Intelligence fully a healthy balance will be restored in our workplaces and in public governance. Decisions will be made based on both data and intuition, our interactions will be enlivened by both competition and compassion, our workplaces enriched by both discernment and inclusivity, listening will be valued as much as speaking in the boardroom, and we will come to understand our fundamental interdependence as men and women, and with the lives and life we are part of. Business, the law, politics, the media – all will be the better for the rebalancing impact of *FemmeQ*.

¹ Gardner H (1983) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*.

² Goleman D (1995) *Emotional Intelligence*. Bloomsbury

³ Gardner H (2001) *Seven Kinds of Smart*. Plume

⁴ For the deep listening exercises used by Scilla and Hetty see their recent books: *Pioneering the Possible* (Elworthy S, 2014) and *The Future of Coaching* (Einzig, H 2017)

⁵ Deloitte (2014) *Big demands and high expectations. The Deloitte Millennial Study*. Deloitte;

⁶ Honoré S and Schofield C P (2012) *Culture Shock: Generation Y and their managers around the world*. Ashridge Business School

- Coleman D (2015) *Great Expectations: How to attract, retain and manage the female millennial*. AC Global Bulletin. http://www.associationforcoaching.com/media/uploads/january_2015_bulletin_final.pdf

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