What You Need TO LEAD an Early Childhood Program

Emotional Intelligence in Practice

Holly Elissa Bruno

National Association for the Education of Young Children
Washington, DC
National Association for the Education of Young Children
1313 L Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005-4101
202-232-8777 • 800-424-2460
www.naeyc.org

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What You Need to Lead an Early Childhood Program:
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Library of Congress Control Number: 2011943664
ISBN: 978-1-928896-80-7
NAEYC Item # 363
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What do you need to succeed as a leader?

• Proper academic credentials
• Solid business plan
• Articulated vision and mission
• Budgeting expertise
• Knowledge of the latest leadership theory
• Well-designed buildings with green play areas
• Mastery of health and safety standards
• Time management expertise

You may have all of these capacities and still be struggling as an early childhood leader. What are you missing?

You know the answer: Relationships.

Unless we can build and maintain honest, productive, and dynamic relationships with everyone we encounter, we cannot be excellent leaders. Unless we can build effective teams, our carefully crafted vision statement will gather dust. Unless we inspire our staff’s trust, we cannot bring out their best. Unless we earn the respect of families, our business plan will never be fulfilled. Without people skills, even the most stellar academic credentials are just capital letters after our name.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” With these words, poet Maya Angelou reminds us of how invaluable it is to build connections with the people we encounter. This ability to put people at ease, earn their trust, and inspire their dedication to quality is called emotional intelligence (EQ).

*What You Need to Lead an Early Childhood Program: Emotional Intelligence in Practice* is the first and only early childhood leadership book anchored in what matters most: EQ, the art and science of building relationships. Emotional intelligence is the ability to read people as well as you read books and to know how to use that information wisely. Each chapter begins with a case study that features richly complex, everyday challenges facing early childhood program directors. Alongside case studies are EQ theory and principles, pointers and problem-solving steps to help you practice and hone your leadership skills.

To lead with EQ is to read the story behind the story. Can you hear the cry for help beneath a parent’s outburst? Or the unstated fear that sabotages a teacher’s openness
to a new approach? Leading an early childhood program requires learning the unspoken language of every individual and team. Valuable as rational analysis is, logic cannot translate these languages. Author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s Little Prince explains: “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

Emotional intelligence is not magic, nor is it “soft” science. EQ can be measured and learned. Current research in the growing field of neuroscience documents the physical, neuron-to-neuron impact we have on one another. For example, without one word being spoken, the human heart electromagnetically communicates a “Great to see you” or “Keep your distance” message to people within five feet of us. In addition, research shows that the brain’s ability to make effective consecutive decisions declines after three or four hours. Yet, how many of us forge ahead, unaware that our brain has hit the snooze button? Sixty-five to ninety percent of human emotion is communicated without words. Leaders need to listen with the heart as well as the mind.

Our leadership practices, informed by neuroscience research, can be sharpened and polished to greater effectiveness. Thanks to fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging), research on the adult brain is now as compelling as research on the newborn to three-year-old’s brain. Knowledge liberates. When we know how the brain functions, we can partner with its idiosyncrasies and not feel restrained by uncomfortable thoughts and reactions. To lead with EQ is to lead with confidence and integrity. As we build and refine our EQ capacities, our confidence as leaders grows commensurately.

*What You Need to Lead an Early Childhood Program: Emotional Intelligence in Practice* covers the entire realm of a leader’s responsibilities, from financial management to marketing, supervision to assessment, and health and safety to preventing legal troubles. What makes this book unique and engaging is the human focus in each of these areas.

*What You Need to Lead* is the new edition of *Leading on Purpose: Emotionally Intelligent Early Childhood Administration*. This edition incorporates the latest research, theories, and practices a leader must know, while retaining the best of the original book.

Examples of new and updated topics include:

- Research findings by Adam Bryant on the five essential skills of successful leaders
- How to avoid legal troubles in the age of social networking
- Courage: What is it, where do we find it, how do we use it?
- QRIS: New evaluation tools to assess our leadership and our programs
- Using the brain to stay cool under pressure—the neuroscience of button pushing
- Eliminating whining in the workplace
- New practices to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as Amended (enacted January 1, 2009)
- Working with immigrant families, legally and culturally
- Gender issues in leadership
- When should a leader apologize?
- What do you do if your boss is the problem?
- Managing Millennials, Gen-Xers, and Baby Boomers in the same workplace
- Building teams where women predominate
The new edition also features podcasts of interviews with a variety of early childhood professionals. Starting in 2010, as the host of the online radio program *Heart to Heart Conversations on Leadership: Your Guide to Making a Difference* (bamradionetwork.com), I have had the pleasure of conducting live interviews with experts, authors, practitioners, and futurists in the field of educational leadership. Interviews with Neila Connors (*If You Don’t Feed the Teachers, They Eat the Students*), Meg Wheatley (*The New Science* and *Walk Out, Walk On*), Adam Bryant (*The Corner Office*), Phyllis Chesler (*Woman’s Inhumanity to Woman*), Robert Sutton (*Good Boss, Bad Boss*), Stephanie Feeney (*Professionalism in Early Childhood*), Roy Baumeister (*Willpower*), and Rick Kirschner (*Dealing with People You Can’t Stand*) are a click away! Their answers are revealing and thought provoking.

Thanks to those interviews, *What You Need to Lead* shimmers with direct quotations and insights not found anywhere else. I ask the questions most of us want to ask but feel we shouldn’t; my guests open up and tell the truth. The links to the podcasts of these interviews are noted in the page margins, so you can follow them online.

Telling the truth is the core of *What You Need to Lead*. As you turn each page, you are invited to resolve sticky dilemmas, identify your underlying gifts, activate your sense of humor, illuminate your blind spots, apply the latest leadership theories, and be the best leader you can be.

This book honors your individual learning style through a variety of print, online, and hands-on resources. The following resources are conveniently featured in the margins and highlighted in the text:

- Opportunities to assess where you stand on issues
- Case studies to ponder and resolve
- Quotations to inspire you
- Podcasts featuring interviews with leadership experts
- Invitations to reflect on what you have learned from your own experience
- Choices about which steps you will take next

In addition, if you lead workshops or are a teacher educator, at the end of each chapter there are questions for reflection and team projects to engage participants in professional development sessions and to extend the learning of students in early childhood education courses.

Finally, as an attorney, I have given special attention to the legal conundrums early childhood leaders face: providing and acquiring authentic references for job applicants; handling custody disputes at pickup time; instituting no-babysitting policies; allowing smokers to work with young children; facing an intoxicated parent walking out the door with her infant; and preventing confidential or otherwise damaging material from appearing online. The text includes policies, procedures, and, above all, clear (nonlegalese) and direct information. With emotional intelligence and accurate information, you will find *what you need to lead* in each page you turn.

Your response to *What You Need to Lead* matters to me. I value your feedback, insights, questions, and ideas for change. Contact me at hollyelissabruno.com.

Now, read on to explore the uncharted territories of original leadership!