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Goleman

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Degrees in themselves do not guarantee any growth in emotionally intelligent leadership ability. Emotional Intelligence competencies develop in the midst of life. There are a wide variety of situations in which this can occur.

When Johnson & Johnson did an internal study of the way their best leaders had developed their strengths, they found that people had begun to build these abilities early in life. An outstanding team leader, for instance, said she began to develop this strength in middle school, when she

acted as an assistant coach on the girls' field hockey team.

So many of the situations you name could provide this kind of natural strength building. Living in another culture, for instance, can be a great way to develop more cognitive empathy, where we understand other people's mental models – how they see the world. This competence makes us [better communicators](#): we know how to put things so people understand.

[Tough criticism](#), my colleague [Richard Boyatzis](#) has found, is not a good way to help people build strengths. The reason is that it activates centers in the brain for negative emotion that can shut down learning.

The same goes for too much positive reinforcement – unconditional positive feedback is far less effective than honest, nonjudgmental feedback, which lets people stay on track and know what to keep doing and what to change.

Mentors can be great, particularly if they are positive role models. You can use the things you admire about them as goals for yourself.

If you're having trouble identifying particular situations that might help you grow your EI leadership competencies, [I recommend the work by Richard Boyatzis](#) to help give you a jump start.

Finally, let's see what we can learn from one another. List some of your real-life EI training experiences in the comments section.

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*Emotional Intelligence* author, [Daniel Goleman lectures](#) frequently to business audiences, professional groups and on college campuses. A psychologist who for many years reported on the brain and behavioral sciences for *The New York Times*, Dr. Goleman previously was a visiting faculty member at Harvard.

Dr. Goleman's most recent books are [The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights](#) and [Leadership: The Power of Emotional Intelligence – Selected Writings](#). (More Than Sound). Goleman's latest project, [Leadership: A Master Class](#), is his first-ever comprehensive video series that examines the best practices of top-performing executives.

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