



Integral Theory (also called AQAL theory) and its relationship to Spiritual Intelligence and the SQ21™ Assessment

By

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Why do we need to understand Spiritual Intelligence?

I define Spiritual Intelligence as “The ability to behave with Wisdom and Compassion while maintaining inner and outer peace (equanimity) regardless of the circumstances.” Wisdom and Compassion compose the two pieces of loving behavior (more on this below).

The world’s religions generally advocate loving behaviors, yet religious beliefs have often divided our planet and caused war. We have been trapped in a world that tends to confuse the doctrine with the destination. What we need is a way to talk about the skills that religions are trying to help us attain. I have three goals in trying to more clearly define Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) by creating and testing a competency based assessment – the SQ21 (previously called the SQi)

1. To create a language that enables us to discuss these concepts without being limited to the language of any one faith tradition. SQ21 language - with clear definitions (showing synonyms from many belief systems including atheism and secular humanism)
2. To create a competency-based language and a novice-to-expert scaffolding that helps people assess where they are and where they want to go in their own spiritual development
3. To create a faith-neutral and faith-friendly language of competencies that makes Spiritual Intelligence acceptable for discussion in the workplace...the place where most of us spend most of our time.

When I began to try to describe Spiritual Intelligence the questions I asked myself were these:

- What do people who are generally considered “spiritually admirable” have in common?
- What are the behaviors or skills that these people demonstrate?

- Can we list and explain these skills in a way that is comprehensive and faith-neutral?
- Can we describe each skill developmentally from “novice” to “expert”?

I begin many of my workshops by asking people – typically working in teams – to complete two simple tasks.

1. Write down the names of spiritual leaders/teachers you admire (can be alive, dead or fictional)
2. List the character traits that cause you to admire these people

I have done this now with thousands of people. What I find both reassuring and fascinating is that the lists look so similar from group to group. The list of spiritual leaders typically includes major religious figures from many traditions, global peace activists, local religious leaders, teachers, guidance counselors, family members and spiritual writers. A sampling of typical well-known names include: Jesus, Buddha, Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Martin Luther King, Jr., Lord Krishna, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter and Deepak Chopra.

The traits that caused these people to be considered “spiritual leaders” typically includes descriptors such as: loving, compassionate, kind, forgiving, peaceful, courageous, honest, generous, persistent, faithful, honest, seeing the potential in other people, wise, and inspiring.

What the consistency of the responses tells me is that we already have a general perception of what makes someone “spiritually intelligent.” What we do not yet have is a way of describing Spiritual Intelligence that is faith-neutral and specifically focused on the skills and abilities we are trying to attain when we seek spiritual growth. In my study of world religions, psychology and philosophy, I have found recurring themes. They demonstrate that spiritual growth occurs on the inner dimensions and the outer behaviors. The failure to reflect inner growth in the outer world demonstrates incompleteness in spiritual development (i.e. such a person would probably not appear on a most admired spiritual leader list). Full spiritual realization, by whatever language it is described (Christ-consciousness, Buddha Nature, etc) seems to require manifesting behaviors of love and service. A high SQ person would therefore be functional IN the world while also not being solely OF the world.

To explain where my model of Spiritual Intelligence or “SQ” fits within Ken Wilber’s Integral framework **there are five pieces of Integral Theory which need to be considered: States, Lines, Stages, Types and Quadrants.**

STATES

There are a minimum of four states of consciousness to keep in mind as we talk about Spirituality: awake (awareness of gross physical reality), dreaming (aware of subtle reality but not gross), deep sleep (causal or formless awareness) and spiritual states (which include the a witnessing awareness and various levels of

non-dual or mystical consciousness.) You can only be in one state of consciousness at a time. For example: you cannot be awake and dreaming simultaneously. (Newer work by Dustin DiPerna expands this conversation into Vantage Points – but we will not go into that complexity at this time.)

LINES

There are multiple *lines* of human development or lines of intelligence. These include four to be addressed in this article: physical, cognitive, emotional (here I include what Ken Wilber calls the interpersonal and affective lines) and spiritual. Lines are somewhat independent in their development – although I believe there are interdependencies. For example, some IQ skills are required to support some SQ related skills. Some EQ skills are required to support SQ development. I see SQ as both a separate line of intelligence and as a capstone intelligence – amplifying the other intelligences. More on this below.

STAGES¹

Stages of development unfold in complex ways. A critical piece of understanding stages is how they interact with LINES. Not every line of intelligence develops at the same speed. The simplest description is to use three stages: *pre-rational*; *rational* and *trans-rational*. We do not want to confuse the pre-rational with the trans-rational stages. Thus pre-rational spirituality (young children) is not the same as the trans-rational spirituality of experienced spiritual practitioners. All stages of development are spiritual in that they are capable of spiritual states. How we interpret or make meaning of our spiritual States will vary based on our Stage of development. Higher SQ21 scores are strongly positively correlated with higher Stages of developing – supporting our hypothesis (not yet fully proven) that SQ is a gateway or requirement for higher Stages.

QUADRANTS

In the four-quadrant model of Integral Theory as applied to spiritual work the quadrants are:

- Upper left - “I” or interior consciousness. Here SQ relates to your line of development, the states you can hold, and your stage of development. High SQ21 scores are strongly positively correlated with higher stages of development. We believe that SQ is critical for full embodiment of Tier 2 / Integral levels.
- Upper right – “It” or individual exterior – this is the realm of behaviors. High SQ as we define it is “proven” by our behaviors. Do we show up as wisdom and compassion even in times of stress? This is also the realm of the biological correlates of interior development and states. In this quadrant we “build neural pathways” as we develop our intelligences.
- Lower Left – “We” or group interior. This is the realm of cultural values, cultural stage of development, and collective/group worldviews. This is

¹ Stages of development are incredibly complex. See the work of Clare Graves, Don Beck, Susanne Cook-Greuter, Robert Kegan, Lawrence Kohlberg and others who study developmental psychology for more information. See also the work of James Fowler in [Stages of Faith](#).

related to SQ21 via Skill 7 – the ability to understand the world views of others and Skill 1 – the ability to understand how your own worldview is influenced by your culture. And of course the development of SQ among enough individuals can affect the culture in which they are embedded. For example – with strong limbic resonance a leader can change the culture of a workplace. A high SQ leader can change the value system of a culture such that low EQ/SQ people begin to feel uncomfortable and either start developing, or move out.

- Lower Right – “Its” or systems. Systems are the outpicturing of the interior of the group. For example, we create laws based on our understanding of what “justice” means, and how we balance the Mercy and Justice Polarity. As we develop vertically through stages of development and develop our multiple intelligences, including SQ, we refine this understanding and our legal systems change.

TYPES

Typologies like Myers Briggs are descriptors of innate personal preferences that stay with a person regardless of the state or stage that person is in. For example an Introvert remains an introvert at all stages of development. However, how that introversion expresses may change as people mature through stages. Typologies merit discussion in terms of helping people to develop their skills – as people will have preferred means of learning based on typology, and preferred forms of spiritual expression/devotional practices.

With this reminder of the basics of Integral Theory we can now move into getting clear operational definitions of 2 terms: Intelligence and Spirituality.

Defining Intelligence:

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines intelligence as “the ability to learn or understand or to deal with new or trying situations.”

Our “Intelligence Quotient” or “IQ” is generally thought of as our analytical or mathematical intelligence and our linguistic intelligence (think of college entrance exams – verbal and math components). Initially it was expected that IQ would be a strong predictor of success in careers. In fact it has turned out to be a weak predictor of success. IQ appears to be related to *minimum standards* to enter a given a profession. Once you have chosen your career, what actually leads to success is far more complicated.

Howard Gardner opened the door to discussion of “multiple intelligences” with his book *Frames of Mind* in 1983. He listed seven different types of intelligences in that book:

1. Linguistic
2. Logical-mathematical
3. Musical
4. Bodily-kinesthetic

- 5. Spatial
- 6. Interpersonal
- 7. Intrapersonal

Gardner’s 6th and 7th intelligences are combined into the study of “emotional intelligence” by Daniel Goleman and others.

In *Intelligence Reframed*, 1999, Gardner offers that one might add a “philosophical intelligence” which would combine spiritual, moral, emotional, transcendental, cosmic and religious intelligences. Gardner lists eight criteria for an “intelligence.” One criterion is particularly relevant for this discussion is that **“an intelligence should show a developmental history with a definable set of expert ‘end-state’ performances” (p.39)**. Our research with the SQ21 shows that our definition of SQ meets this criteria.

A Simplified View of “Multiple Intelligences”

While this model is over-simplified from a scientific standpoint, I find it very useful when introducing multiple intelligences in a short time. This model describes only four intelligences (see Figure 1). I show them as a pyramid to demonstrate the simplest sequence of development. I always acknowledge that this is too simple a model. Yet it is a helpful visual aide.

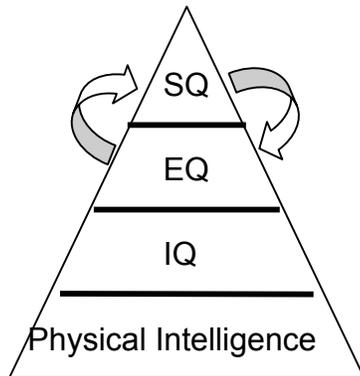


Figure 1

The idea of this model is that as babies we first focus on controlling our bodies (Physical Intelligence or PQ). Then our linguistic and conceptual skills develop (“IQ”)...and are a key focus of our school work. We do some early development of relationship skills, but for many of us “EQ” or emotional intelligence becomes a focus area only later when we realize we need to improve – usually based on feedback in romantic and work relationships. Brain studies also show that we are not fully “wired” to do more complex “EQ” work until we are approximately 22 years of age. “SQ” or spiritual intelligence typically becomes a significant focus of energy and effort later – as we begin to search for meaning and ask “is this all there is?”

The arrows show that SQ and EQ development are related to each other. We need some basics of EQ to even successfully start our spiritual growth. Some degree of emotional self-awareness and empathy is an important foundation. Then, as our spiritual growth unfolds, there would be a strengthening of EQ skills – which would further reinforce and assist the growth of SQ skills.

The pyramid is also useful in that PQ underlies our ability to function at all. People who do not manage their blood sugar for example may experience loss of cognitive function when blood sugar is low, as well as low demonstrations of EQ and SQ. The same is true for lack of sleep, poor hormone balance, low oxygen levels and failure to properly maintain the body through exercise. So the intelligences are somewhat dependent upon each other with PQ as a foundation. Yet SQ can also support and amplify all of them. High SQ makes us better able to sense our bodily state and use intuition as needed to supplement traditional diagnostic care. SQ supports our ability to show EQ. And SQ amplifies IQ by adding humility and openness to our mindset.

Emotional Intelligence

This SQ21 model was heavily influenced by the work of Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis. Daniel Goleman popularized the phrase “Emotional Intelligence” with the publication of his book by the same title in 1995. In his book, Goleman cites research at Bell Labs that examined star performers, and tried to determine what distinguished them from more average performers. It appeared that star performers had significantly stronger relationship skills and personal networks than average performers. Harvard Business Review published the results of the Bell Labs study in 1993. Business interest in the study of “Emotional Intelligence” or “EQ” began in earnest.

EQ is actually a large collection of skills. Goleman and Richard Boyatzis² have recently grouped these skills into 4 quadrants as shown in Figure 2. If you reverse the Other Awareness and Self Management quadrants then the model lines up with the Integral model.

There is a sequence to these skills. The research done by Goleman and Boyatzis shows that **Self-Awareness skills must be developed before the skills in the other three quadrants can develop.** This makes sense if you consider Emotional Self-Awareness. If I don't know when I am angry how can I have Emotional Self Control? How can I have Empathy for your anger? How can I handle conflict appropriately? The last quadrant to develop is Relationship Skills – it is dependent upon at least a minimum number of skills being developed in the other three quadrants.

The abundant research on EQ has left no doubt that these skills are vital for personal and business success.

² Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis, with Hay-McBrer, 2002

<p style="text-align: center;">SELF AWARENESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional self-awareness • Accurate self-assessment • Self-confidence 	<p style="text-align: center;">OTHER AWARENESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • Organizational Awareness • Service Orientation
<p style="text-align: center;">SELF MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Self-Control • Transparency (honest/trustworthy) • Adaptability • Achievement Orientation • Initiative • Optimism 	<p style="text-align: center;">RELATIONSHIP SKILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Others • Inspirational Leadership • Influence • Change Catalyst • Conflict Management • Teamwork & Collaboration

Figure 2

Defining Spirituality:

Generally use of the word “Spirituality” is poorly defined. In *Integral Psychology* Ken Wilber outlines five definitions people frequently use for the word “Spirituality” (pages 126-134). They are:

1. Spirituality involves the highest levels of any of the developmental lines
2. Spirituality is the sum total of the highest levels of the developmental lines
3. Spirituality is itself a separate developmental line
4. Spirituality is an attitude (such as openness or love) that you have at whatever stage you are at
5. Spirituality basically involves peak experiences

Beginning with definition number five - Wilber has said, a “peak experience” gives us a “peek” into the non-dual realm. It can leave “stretch marks on our minds” but it does not translate into character traits unless we have the overall *stage* development to hold that consciousness. Peak experiences can increase our appetite for growth and perhaps accelerate it. It is related to Skill 11 in the SQ21 – Experiences of Transcendent Oneness. Yet people can be skillful at obtaining peak experiences and NOT be able to consistently translate those moments into what we might call spiritually admirable behaviors. Non-dual moments cannot in and of themselves create loving, peaceful, ethical people. So *if* the line of development called “spiritual” is deemed to be only how skillful are you in achieving meditative and transcendent states – then some level of development of that “line” (I prefer to think of it as a list of skills) is a critical piece of becoming spiritually intelligent – but it is not sufficient.

I see elements of all five definitions of Spirituality above in the SQ21 – but mostly it focuses on the first three. Spiritual Intelligence is a separate line AND it represents interdependency of multiple lines. Furthermore, SQ is a “capstone” intelligence – somewhat dependent upon the foundational work in other intelligences AND acting as a multiplier – intensifying or improving the other lines of intelligence. For example, the humility of SQ allows for more information to flow in – we can see more and hold more. This amplifies or improves our “IQ” or logical problem solving.

For simplification, my definition of Spirituality is distinct from Spiritual Intelligence. **I define Spirituality as “an innate human need to be in relationship with the something larger than ourselves – something we consider to be divine, sacred or of great nobility.”** I believe the need to transcend the limited self is just part of who we are as a species – it is “innate” (see Maslow’s final book: *Farther Reaches of Human Nature*). Not everyone “wakes up” to this facet of human nature and acts on it. But we tend to be miserably unhappy when we do not address this need. We need an active process – a relationship – with whatever we call the divine.

My embedded assumption, which is made explicit in the Spiritual Intelligence model, is that the goal is to be both *ascending and descending* in the experience of our Spirituality. That is – to be in the world while also not being limited to this three dimensional dualistic experience. What is “sacred” is what is above, below, beside and all around us. Thus relationships with the sacred have a focus of service to the separated individuals we encounter (still in contracted consciousness – including ourselves) and to the planet and to the transcended whole.

The skills associated with successfully managing relationships among humans have been defined by Daniel Goleman as the skills (competencies) of “Emotional Intelligence.” In exactly the same way as relationships with humans, a well-developed relationship with the sacred requires skills - the skills of “Spiritual Intelligence.”

I define Spiritual Intelligence as “The ability to behave with Wisdom and Compassion while maintaining inner and outer Peace (equanimity) regardless of the circumstances.” The word “behave” is important because it reflects the outer demonstration of inner development. Wisdom, Compassion and Peace are sometimes shown as capitalized to emphasize the connection with the Divine. There is a parable from the east: Love is like a bird with two wings. One wing is wisdom and the other is compassion. Without either wing the “bird” cannot fly. So SQ is the ability to behave with divinely inspired Love. Peace is demonstrated both by the inner state (upper left quadrant) of the person and their outer behaviors and presence (right quadrants). “Regardless of the circumstances” reflects what we most admire in our spiritual exemplars – they stayed true to their highest selves even in trying times. In other words their

stage development is advanced and stable, they have stable access to an expansive witnessing awareness (state or vantage point), and they have build the skills of the SQ21 .

So what are the 21 skills of Spiritual Intelligence as I define them? The 21 skills fall into 4 quadrants that directly and intentionally parallel both Daniel Goleman’s/Richard Boyatzis’ work (and bear a connection to Ken Wilber’s quadrants as explained above).

Spiritual Intelligence (SQ21) Skills

<p>Quadrant 1: Higher Self/Ego self Awareness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awareness of own worldview 2. Awareness of life purpose (mission) 3. Awareness of values hierarchy 4. Complexity of inner thought 5. Awareness of Ego self / Higher Self 	<p>Quadrant 2: Universal Awareness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Awareness of interconnectedness of all life 7. Awareness of worldviews of others 8. Breadth of time perception 9. Awareness of limitations/power of human perception 10. Awareness of Spiritual laws 11. Experience of transcendent oneness
<p>Quadrant 3: Higher Self/Ego self Mastery</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Commitment to spiritual growth 13. Keeping Higher Self in charge 14. Living your purpose and values 15. Sustaining your faith in tough times 16. Seeking guidance from Higher Power or Higher Self 	<p>Quadrant 4: Social Mastery and Spiritual Presence</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. A wise and effective spiritual teacher/mentor 18. A wise and effective change agent 19. Makes compassionate and wise decisions 20. A calming, healing presence 21. Being aligned with the ebb and flow of life

As with the Goleman/Boyatzis model of EQ skills, our hypothesis is that Quadrant 1 will be critical for the development of Quadrants 2 and 3, which are in turn necessary for Quadrant 4. However, it is possible that some people, especially those in eastern traditions, may first develop some of the skills of Quadrant 2 and then move into Quadrant 1 before moving on to Quadrants 3 and 4. Thus Quadrants 1 and 2 are both needed but where you start is not critical.

Each of the 21 skills is scaled from “zero” (meaning no skill development is measurable yet) to five - the highest level we measure. Clients taking the SQ21 self-assessment receive a report for all 21 skills that gives both a numeric score and description of what that skill attainment looks like. An optional “next step” is then provided for every skill – including for skills where the client scores a “five.” This is based on the belief that we are never “finished.”

Here is an overview of the five levels of skill development for Quadrant 1, Skill 5: Awareness of Ego self/Higher self.

Skill 5: Awareness of Ego self/ Higher Self

Level 1 (novice)	Can communicate understanding of the nature of Ego self- including its origin and the purpose it serves in spiritual development. (Cognitive theoretical awareness)
2	Demonstrates ability to observe personal Ego in operation and comment on what seems to trigger Ego eruptions. (personal awareness of own Ego)
3	Demonstrates awareness of and ability to periodically "listen to" Spirit or Higher Self as a separate voice from Ego self (personal awareness of voice of Higher Self)
4	Hears the voice of Spirit or Higher Self clearly and understands the "multiple voices" that Ego self can have. Gives authority to voice of Higher Self in important decisions. (Ego voice less strident, Higher Self voice strengthening)
Highest Level 5	Spirit or Higher Self voice is clear and consistent. Ego self is present and is a joyful advisor to Higher Self. There is no longer a struggle between the two voices. Rather there is a sense of only "one voice" ...the Higher Self (Authentic Self, Spirit) voice and the Ego in service to that.

Here is a sample of the feedback you would receive if you scored a "3" on this skill:

You are aware of the influences of your childhood on the development of your personality and beliefs. You understand that there is a difference between the desires of your Ego and the desires of your Higher Self. You can observe the Ego part of your nature and can usually recognize what has caused your Ego to get agitated. You are aware of how your body feels when Ego is agitated. This is great...your body can be your ally in alerting you to when your Ego is upset. **Next step:** Learn to have a conversation with yourself when your Ego is upset (or better yet in a quiet moment later on). Ask your Ego self "What are you afraid of?" "What are you angry about?" "What would you like me to do about this situation?" This dialogue helps you to create a little bit of distance through awareness so that you are OBSERVING your Ego self rather than just automatically acting based on its prompting. Write down the answers you get from Ego. Then ask yourself "What might be a more Wise and Compassionate response to this situation?" (or more simply, "What would Love do?") Breathe deeply to calm your body and then ask the question again. Listen for the inner wisdom that arises from Higher Self. Notice the differences in how each part of us interprets a situation. When you have reflected on

these different interpretations, look closely at the Ego's interpretation. Fear is the underlying feeling beyond anger. Ask it "What are you afraid of?" and then "why are you afraid of that?" When it answers, ask again, "and why are you afraid of that?" and again "Why are you afraid of that?" Keep going as long as you can until you get to the deepest fear you can reach. Notice what beliefs and thoughts are behind the fear your Ego feels. Write these beliefs and thoughts down. Then write their antidotes - the truth as Higher Self sees it.

This model defines the "expert" level of skill attainment and 4 preceding levels for all 21 skills.

Conclusion

It is possible to create clear operational definitions of Spirituality and Spiritual Intelligence. Furthermore we can define and assess the specific skills and the levels of skill development for the 21 skills of SQ. This should lead to wonderful opportunities to use the SQ Assessment for helping people:

- Assess (and periodically re-assess) their current skill development levels
- Plan for their own development in a way that allows them to utilize the abundant options in the world, including their existing faith tradition or the tools from psychology, spirituality, or personal growth
- Find ways to talk about these skills and areas of ultimate concern with people of any faith, atheists and agnostics

In the end, we are alike in our suffering, our hopes and our joys. We are all striving to reach the same goals: peace and love. Perhaps with a clear, concrete and faith-neutral language for SQ we can see our commonality and work together towards getting there.

For further information on SQ or the SQ21 Assessment please go to www.deepchange.com or email Cindy at cindy@deepchange.com