

**SMART**



**TO**

**WISE**

**TRUE SUCCESS SERIES**

**Emotional Wisdom**

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# SMART TO WISE

## *The Smart to Wise True Success Series*

# Number 1: Emotional Wisdom

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### What is Emotional Wisdom?

Is not ***“Emotional Wisdom”*** a contradiction in terms? After all, the things we think of when we think about wisdom all originate in the brain’s cerebral cortex; the newest and, arguably, most advanced part of the human brain. These things include understanding ourselves, regulating our conduct, making judgements and acting fairly.

On the other hand, neuroscience has located the perception and regulation of emotion in *“more primitive”* sub-cortical structures like the basal ganglia and the amygdala – parts of what is sometimes referred to as the *“mammalian brain”*. Emotions, it seems, are fundamental responses that do not involve the highest processing areas of your brain.

Such a reductionist view of the way our brains work is dangerously simplistic. All parts of our brains connect to one another and we are certainly able to analyse our perceptions of emotions in others, and over-ride our own emotional responses. Indeed, this insight is as old as written records and, almost certainly, far older. In modern times, it has been powerfully documented and developed into a field of study called *“Emotional Intelligence”*.

### Defining Emotional Wisdom

To define Emotional Wisdom, we need to start with understanding what Emotional Intelligence is. It would be very easy to see the two as the same and argue that a distinction is nothing more than semantic. However, I want to argue that there really is a meaningful difference.

***Emotional Intelligence*** is a learned ability that allows us to:

1. notice, recognise, interpret, understand and express emotions in ourselves and in others
2. regulate, influence, manage and control emotions and motivations in ourselves and in others

Some people learn this naturally and easily, through their upbringing and early experiences. For others, it is a more conscious learning process during their adulthood.

Wisdom, as I define it in Smart to Wise, is *“the ability to use your knowledge well”*. If you have built up a store of Emotional Intelligence, what does it mean to use it well? This is Emotional Wisdom:

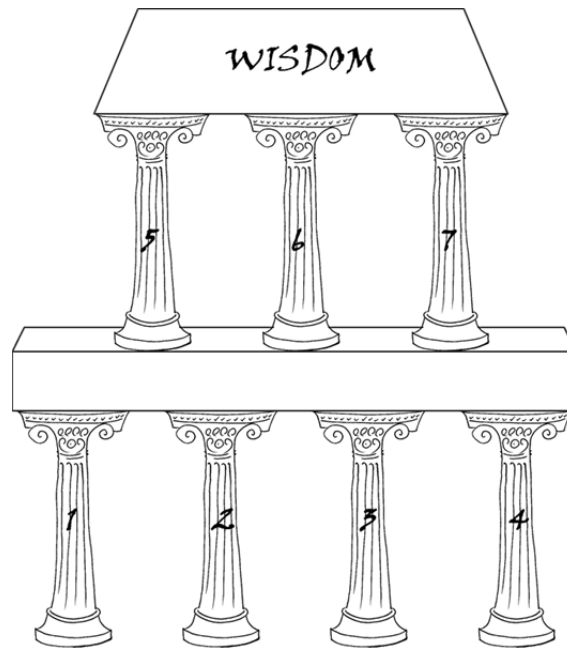
***“Emotional Wisdom is your ability to use your Emotional Intelligence well.”***

### The Seven Pillars of Wisdom - a Reminder

*"Wisdom has built her home; she has hewn her seven pillars."*

Proverbs 9:1

The Bible uses the number seven to indicate a complete set. In my book, *Smart to Wise*, I sought out the characteristics that mark out wisdom and the transition from smart to wise. I found seven pillars.



***The Seven Pillars of Wisdom***

First Pillar: Self-Mastery

Second Pillar: Perception

Third Pillar: Evolution

Fourth Pillar: Conduct

Fifth Pillar: Judgement

Sixth Pillar: Fairness

Seventh Pillar: Authority

These pillars are arranged in two tiers, with numbers 1 to 4 forming the basis for wisdom, and numbers 5 to 7 forming the final support. The journey from smart to wise requires you to build each of these pillars strongly, and set them upon a firm foundation.

### The Two Components of Emotional Wisdom

Emotional Wisdom has two components: each of which is a capability that society values as wise.

#### Evaluation

First, it enables us to evaluate ourselves, others and the social relationships that exist among us. This immediately brings into the domain of emotion two of the seven pillars of wisdom I identify in Smart to Wise: perception and judgement. Emotional Wisdom requires an accurate assessment of what the emotional cues can tell you – beneath the obvious surface appearances, and then it demands sound judgements based on that robust assessment.

This leads us into four more aspects of wisdom: in ourselves, we must use that judgement to drive self-mastery. In others, we must use it to drive fairness and good conduct. And in doing all of this, we gain a greater depth of authority in our social interactions.

But what of the seventh pillar: evolution?

#### Re-evaluation

The second component of Emotional Wisdom is the ability to re-evaluate ourselves, others and the impacts of people upon one another. This moves us from a static, fixed view of relationships to a dynamic view of their evolution.



### Why does Emotional Wisdom Matter?

In his popular books on the subject of Emotional Intelligence – especially “[Working with Emotional Intelligence](#)” – Daniel Goleman has done much to popularise the view that EI, as it is often called, has a greater part to play in workplace – and, to a great degree, social – success than the more familiar kinds of general intelligence.

If EI can contribute to how smart you are, then Emotional Wisdom must be a contributor to people’s perception of you as wise: able to develop and articulate profound insights that can change our ways of thinking and or perceiving our world. In the domain of Emotional Wisdom, those insights will be about individuals and about social relationships.

Emotional Wisdom therefore has a vital part to play in your success in at least three ways:

- 1. Social participation and contribution**  
This is about making a difference in your world – whatever the context, from home to friendship groups, to organised clubs and societies, to the workplace, to your wider society.
- 2. Leadership and followership**  
This is about how effectively you can influence others and how wisely you chose whom you allow to influence you.
- 3. Happiness and fulfilment**  
Since components of Emotional Wisdom include the evaluation and re-evaluation of yourself – and of your relationships with the people around you – this will have a profound effect on your own sense of wellbeing.

### How to Develop Emotional Wisdom

If the subject of Emotional Intelligence was born in 1990 with the eponymous article by Professors Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, then the idea would be in its early twenties and a long way from where we would confidently expect to see the transition to wisdom. But luckily, its antecedents take us back to:

- 1985, for the first coining of the term “*Emotional Intelligence*” by Wayne Leon Payne, in his doctoral thesis “*A Study of Emotion: Developing Emotional Intelligence*”.
- 1970s, for Howard Gardner’s earliest writing on “*Multiple Intelligences*”, which include inter-personal intelligence and intra-personal intelligence.
- 1950s for Abraham Maslow and other humanistic psychologists looking at how we can build our emotional strength.

Clearly, the concept of Emotional Intelligence is now at least in its middle ages and ripe for the development into Emotional Wisdom. Let us examine the components of Emotional Wisdom.

#### *Evaluation of Self*

1. Response and Capability
2. Authentic Voice
3. Trust

#### *Evaluation of Others*

1. Respect
2. Beliefs
3. Trust

#### *Evaluation of Relationships*

1. Self to Others
2. Others to Self
3. Others with Others

#### *Re-evaluation of Self*

1. Review
2. Adapting
3. Resilience

#### *Re-evaluation of Others*

1. Diagnosing
2. Re-engaging
3. Reinforcing

#### *Re-evaluation of Relationships*

1. Diagnosing
2. Strengthening
3. Breaking

### Evaluation of Self

Self-Mastery is the first pillar I discuss in Smart to Wise, so your ability to evaluate yourself rigorously and honestly seems a strong starting place for developing Emotional Wisdom. There are three levels of depth to which you can progress, from what seems little more than an application of EI, to a subtle and profound understanding of how you operate and therefore of how you can shift your focus towards greater efficacy.

#### Level 1 Self-Evaluation: Response and Capability

Do you understand your emotional responses and recognise them for what they are? Can you spot them as soon as they happen and are you able to assess how they support or undermine your resourcefulness in the situation you find yourself in? You need to be able quickly and effectively to assess your emotions and work with them to bring them under control. But wisdom also requires that you are able to decide *when* to control your emotions. There are many occasions – from moments of joy to times of grief – when this would be neither appropriate nor wise.

At the same level, you must also be able to make an honest and accurate assessment of all of your capabilities and therefore, of the significance to you of any gaps that you find. Evolving your abilities is a foundation pillar of wisdom, so it is vital that, to chart out a route from where you are, you are able to establish a definitive position at all times.

Anita has used one of the simplest tools of all, a SWOT analysis, to consider her strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats that flow from them. She is using this as a basis for planning how she will develop herself to improve her career prospects.

One of the weaknesses she identified is a tendency to lose her temper very quickly. So Anita has set herself the task of noticing the moment she starts to feel angry, and pausing to ask herself how that will serve or hinder her in getting what she wants.



### Level 2 Self-Evaluation: Authentic Voice

You also need a moral compass that will guide you in decision-making and help you interpret what fairness means. When you have calibrated your compass bearings in the moral, practical and intellectual dimensions, you will be able to find your voice: your distinctive way of speaking about who you are, what you believe, and what matters to you.

Every comment you make about anything will be coloured by your background, experiences, perceptions and prejudices. If you are not able to evaluate that in an open and honest way for yourself, then you put yourself at risk of making statements that lack the total integrity and consistency of vision that we associate with wisdom.

Boris has been feeling unhappy with some of the decisions he has made lately and how they impact on his family life. To try and address this, he has taken a couple of hours to go for a quiet walk on his own and think about what is most important in his life. He takes a notebook and pen and, from time to time, he stops and makes notes about his priorities in different areas of his life. In the last half hour, he stops to drink the last of his thermos of coffee. His thoughts turn to sorting out which of his priorities mean most to him, and what they mean about some big choices he has in his life.

### Level 3 Self-Evaluation: Trust

How much do you trust yourself? Beyond self-confidence (*“con-fidere”* – with faith) lies trust (to believe in – from the same root as true). Acting or speaking from true self-belief and commitment has a powerful impact on the people who surround you. But to truly trust yourself, you must know who you are and understand fully what your motivations are and what is important to you. To truly trust yourself, you must be able to evaluate yourself without fear. We often fear that our own self-evaluation will not match the evaluations of others. Often it will not.

I do not argue that you should ignore the feedback you get when others evaluate you or your performance: that would clearly be a blinkered journey into folly. Yet how can you act with integrity if all of the validation you receive for your actions and words must come from others. You must set up a system of drawing your sense of worth, and the value of your actions from yourself. When you can do this and then combine it with external checks and calibration, you will be fully in command of yourself.

Charamuti has felt upset by the way some of her colleagues have criticised her creative work, although she feels it is her best work. Thinking about what to do, she decided that next time she got a brief from her client, she would ask more questions and, before starting, use her notes to write down for herself two things: how she would know that she had done a good piece of creative work, and how she would know that her work was better than good; excellent.



### Evaluation of Others

In a social world, whom you choose to associate with and in what way, and how you treat the people you associate with, will be a large determinant of how you are perceived and also of how happy and content you are with your own life. As with Self-Evaluation, there are three levels to work towards.

#### Level 1 Evaluation of Others: Respect

The first level is about respect: being able to see through the surface appearances or behaviour to identify the value in a person and, indeed, that which you may choose to deprecate. It is easy to respect people who are like you, who share your beliefs, perceptions and prejudices. It is far harder to respect those who show the greatest differences in outlook and approach.

Making a conscious choice to treat someone with courtesy and consideration will give you the space and time to examine them for who they are and to understand the belief systems and philosophies that drive them.

Dinesh has a busy working life, travelling from city to city. He is always in a hurry and so frequently is short with the hotel staff when he checks in, leaving him anxious when he gets to his room that he has upset them. He decides that next week, he will make a special effort to be polite every time he checks in. It is a busy week and, on Friday, he gets home late, feeling particularly pleased with the week. Over dinner, he tells his wife how much quicker check-in seems to be, now he is making that extra effort.

#### Level 2 Evaluation of Others: Beliefs

It may be a commonplace of the self-help industry to suggest that there is something to respect and value in everyone and, doubtless, that is true. But it is equally important to face up to the realities of certain beliefs and attitudes that deserve to be cast aside.

It is not my place to dictate to you which beliefs and ideals are worthy or not of your respect. Wisdom lies in how you make your own judgements. But it is important to consider the evidence that can support or undermine a belief in evaluating it, and also the consequences of a set of beliefs in the world, through the actions they stimulate.

Elena has been living in Manchester for twenty years, but still thinks that drivers in the north-west are particularly rude. They seem to cut her up a lot and don't let her out into traffic when she wants to turn right, for example.

One week, she makes a point of noticing whenever a driver is kind, helpful or polite. Surprisingly, it happens a lot, and she starts to wonder if her perception, formed when she first moved to Manchester, is based more on her lack of confidence at that time and has been perpetuated by noticing what she expected to see. This is an insidious, but subconscious, process called "*confirmation bias*".

### Level 3 Evaluation of Others: Trust

Moving beyond someone's past history to perceive, accurately, a change that they have made is the most difficult aspect of evaluating others. Judgement is easily clouded by your perceptions of the past and by your scepticism about the possibility of change. There is good reason for this: fundamental change is, indeed, rare.

So the greatest wisdom is to know when to cast aside prior assessments and accept someone for the way they are now. Inevitably, this means you need to then be able to make shifts in the amount of trust you place in people. History here is just one component of the evidence you will use in assessing motivation and capabilities.

Francis had always found his nephew annoying and irresponsible. As a youth, Stephen had found school unpleasant and made some poor choices about the friends he made and the things he did with them. Now, however, he is a successful building contractor, running his own business specialising in high quality kitchen and bathroom refurbishments.

Francis initially rejected the idea of asking Stephen to quote for the work done when his sister suggested it, but he reflected on this on the way home. The next day he called Stephen and suggested he come round for a coffee. When they met and talked about kitchens, Francis was impressed not just by Stephen's maturity, but by his passion for high quality craftsmanship and for developing young tradespeople. He asked Stephen to do the work.

### Evaluation of Relationships

Insights into relationships – among people, ideas and phenomena – are central to what we understand of wisdom. Wisdom lies in being able to discern and articulate important truths about relationships. There are three levels of relationship that are important to Emotional Wisdom.

#### Level 1 Evaluation of Relationships: Self to Others

We all have an impact on the people around us. How profoundly do you understand the impact you have on your loved ones, your friends, your colleagues, your customers and suppliers, your audiences and the people you bump into?

If you are unable to understand this well, then you will never be able to change those impacts to make yourself more effective at influencing, leading, and persuading. This is the foundation of my seventh pillar of wisdom; Authority.

Gillian never felt very influential. She started to watch people's reactions as she was speaking and noticed that, after a while, they seemed to lose interest. She watched some more and gradually began to realise that she had a consistent habit that seemed to trigger this. It seemed to start when, after a pause, she would say "what I mean is ..." Gillian realised that, at this point, she would pretty much repeat herself. Now, whenever she catches herself about to say those four words: she stops.

#### Level 2 Evaluation of Relationships: Others to Self

*"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."*

Eleanor Roosevelt

Other people affect you, all the time. Self-help experts will tell you, correctly, that no one can influence the way that you feel; it is your choice. Yet that is not how it seems. Other people do influence us, because they narrow the range of emotions that our brain will default to without conscious intervention. So being able to evaluate the effects of other people on you is a foundation stone to being able to take control of your emotional responses.

But people do not just affect you emotionally: they can influence your ideas, beliefs, values, and decisions too. Sometimes this is for the better: many of us can point to one or two key individuals who have had a profound effect on the course of our lives, our thinking and our actions. The sooner you can identify one of these people, the more you can draw from your relationship with them.

Hamish's mood always seemed to swing one way or another according to who he was talking to. And he also seemed to find himself agreeing with everyone and therefore often contradicting himself. This was not impressing his boss.

At her suggestion, Hamish made one important change to the way he prepared for meetings: before any meeting now, he looks at each agenda item and reviews what he knows already, he often does a little bit of research, and then he writes down one or two sentences to summarise his point of view on the matter. Sometimes, he just writes "Don't know – listen to arguments."

### **Level 3 Evaluation of Relationships: Others with Others**

It is the job of therapists and sociologists to be able to assess and diagnose - and sometimes even alter - the impacts people have on one another. At early stages of their careers they are able to do so largely by following the insights already articulated by others, which form the basis of their training. As they develop and learn from experience, those formulations start to become subordinate to a deeper understanding that we will recognise as wisdom.

Within your own domain, this process is equally valid. Start by learning the basics of human interaction and continually observe relationships, to build an ever-deeper understanding that will allow you to better evaluate those relationships. Do this for the purposes of explaining, predicting and even altering.

Indra, like Hamish, has to attend a lot of meetings. But now she is a new senior manager, she wants to be more thoughtful about the decisions she makes and the observations she offers. One thing that has really helped her is to spend more time during meetings carefully watching and listening to how her colleagues interact with one another. She finds she is starting to get some deeper insights into some of the big issues her organisation is facing.

### Re-evaluation of Self

If you are evolving, then your evaluation will be out of date quickly. If you are not evolving, then it is through re-evaluation that you will realise this and start to identify how you need to change. Re-evaluation takes Emotional Wisdom beyond a static view of things. First, we must constantly re-evaluate ourselves. This consists of three components.

#### Level 1 Re-evaluation of Self: Review

Engage in both active and passive reviews of who you are, how you are changing, what you have learned and how to apply it. Passive review can be no more than allowing yourself time for a reverie or planting the seed of the idea that you need to reflect before going to sleep. Active review is then about consciously drawing the insights from your mind: giving yourself the time to consider how you are changing and how you need to change.

Jack likes to use his Saturday morning shower as a time to think about what he has learned over the last week. Sometimes, over breakfast, he makes a note in a notebook of something he has noticed, perhaps with an idea for how to take his learning a step further.

#### Level 2 Re-evaluation of Self: Adapting

Your review process will bring your changes and those of your environment into focus. The next level is to find the practical and emotional ways to adapt to what is new and to what is coming. A positive outlook on your situation and a determination to find ways to thrive is a pre-requisite for success in any context.

Kioni's employer has announced it intends to make a lot of people redundant and she thinks she could be one of them.

When they announce a first round of voluntary redundancies with reasonably generous terms, Kioni emails several friends and former colleagues to arrange coffee or lunch meetings, and she puts some of those professional networking meetings that she never seems to get to into her diary. She figures that it is time to start exploring options by listening to other people's experiences.

#### Level 3 Re-evaluation of Self: Resilience

A positive outlook is also the start of building up resilience to adversity. I discuss resilience in some detail in *Smart to Wise*, because it is an essential characteristic of wisdom: we perceive the people who are able to cope with setbacks and severe trials in life as bearing wisdom and we anticipate that their record of survival and coping will leave a trace behind in the form of new, enhanced wisdom.

Laurence is struggling to cope with a relationship breakdown and, at the same time, failing to get promoted at work. He reads that gratitude, optimism and flexibility are keys to resilience, so he chooses gratitude to focus on first and, that evening, starts his gratitude journal.

### Re-evaluation of Others

How are the people around you changing, and what does that mean to you?

#### Level 1 Re-evaluation of Others: Diagnosing

At the simplest level, you must diagnose the changes that are happening and how they will impact upon you, your domain and the various levels of society with which you and they interact. How is it affecting the beliefs and values of the people around you? What does that mean for your levels of trust in them?

Mairead is active in her local Rotary and wants to play a bigger part in fund-raising. She knows that the current economic downturn is affecting her own community harshly, but she is also committed to fundraising to bring an end to Polio in the few countries where it remains.

She sets up a stall in town on Saturday, with campaign materials showing the economic effects of Polio on communities and sets out to ask questions and listen to locals, about how their own situation affects their perception of this issue. As a result of what she hears, she is able to propose a radically different fundraising approach to her committee.

#### Level 2 Re-evaluation of Others: Re-engaging

This may mean re-building or re-styling the way you engage with someone. It is more subtle than just enemies becoming friends and allies becoming adversaries. The subtle basis of your relationships with, and your attitudes to, people will shift constantly and, from time to time, you need to recognise that shift and embed it in a new way of relating to them.

Norbert had always liked Tanya as a colleague, but they had never had to work closely together. Now that he was directly managing her, he at first found her deliberate, perfectionist style frustrating. He knew that high quality was important, but got impatient waiting to see results.

Discussing this with Tanya, they came to a new agreement: she would quickly produce drafts of the work she was doing for Norbert to see and for them to discuss. This helped them both to work well together.

#### Level 3 Re-evaluation of Others: Reinforcing

Humans need a measure of certainty to feel grounded, able to make decisions, and act safely. So you must also reinforce the new structure of a relationship so that both you and they feel certainty about the new way of getting on, so you can both act with confidence.

Ottillie had had a row with her builders over the mess they had made in the early stages of preparing for her kitchen extension. They had cleaned it up properly and she wanted to put that behind her. So, on Friday, she wrote a brief note to the boss thanking him and his team for tidying up promptly when she had asked, and she brought a case of beers back for the team and gave it to them before they knocked off for the weekend.

### Re-evaluation of Relationships

As with the initial evaluation of relationships, you will want to review the impacts you have on others, those that others have on you and also the impacts others have among themselves. And, as with re-evaluation of others, you will start by diagnosing the shifts that are happening.

#### Level 1 Re-evaluation of Relationships: Diagnosing

How is society changing and how are alliances shifting? Discerning the changing natures of relationships is a fundamental aspect of what people recognise as wisdom. Using knowledge well to assess this is the first step, and it gives you new knowledge about changes in the landscape. How will you use that, to influence future change?

Paolo is a local councillor who wants to make real changes that people will value. Over a number of Saturdays, he arranged to go to local care homes and drop in centres to talk with residents and service users, their relatives and carers, and the staff and volunteers.

He didn't have an agenda: he simply went with a spirit of curiosity to find out how people use the services. He learned a lot that surprised him.

#### Level 2 Re-evaluation of Relationships: Strengthening

After diagnosis, one way to act is to strengthen the relationships which you perceive to bring benefit. Much of politics – both within and outside of the formal structures of society's executive and governance structures – is about this. The purpose, of course, is to create the conditions in which your ideas are accepted and the ideas of others are rejected.

Qing is a volunteer manager at her local museum. Seeing visitor numbers dropping, she gets her volunteer team together and plans a special evening event, for all volunteers and teachers from the local schools. Some of her volunteers are retired teachers and, as she suspects, the event is convivial and educational, not just for the visitors, but for her volunteers.

Over the next few months, there is an increase in the number of school visits.

The other broad initiative in the political sphere is to do the opposite...

### Level 3 Re-evaluation of Relationships: Breaking

Some relationships do not serve us or society and it falls to the wise among us to spot this and to find ways to weaken and break those relationships.

Sometimes a strong relationship can result in a poor assessment of evidence, as “*group-think*” takes over. Here, group harmony becomes a greater objective than right action, and members of the group focus on an increasingly narrow range of evidence and interpretations, about which it is easy to agree. Inconvenient truths are pushed out of sight.

Having the courage to break the group and to introduce diverse thinking and new evidence is essential for effective problem-solving and sound decision-making in a complex world.

Rhys has just taken over as Property Manager of a mid-sized housing association. Everything is running very smoothly, but he does worry that maintenance costs seem a little high.

Looking through his records, he finds that the same plumbing and decorating contractors have been doing all of the work for several years. Rhys decides it is time to speak with other local firms and get some competitive quotes, and estimates that he can save between 10 and 20% on these elements of cost.



### Conclusions

By any measure, the concept of Emotional Wisdom is not mature. I have encountered the term, loosely defined, in the writing of Warren Bennis and, to my knowledge, it is not authoritatively discussed anywhere else. But it is, I feel, an important development of one of the most successful ideas of the late twentieth century.

In 1995, when Daniel Goleman wrote his book “Emotional Intelligence” the term was unknown outside a narrow academic circle. By the time he wrote his follow-up, “Working with Emotional Intelligence” in 1998, he was responding to a huge demand in the business world to apply this knowledge. Through the next ten years, that knowledge became codified, applied and is now firmly in the main-stream.

So, it is time to wade from the stream into the river and on to the open sea. I invite you to consider the concept of Emotional Wisdom and report back.

*Mike*

**Dr Mike Clayton, January 2013.**

**Smart to Wise** is the eighth book by Mike Clayton.

It was published in June 2012 and is available from all booksellers, including [Amazon](#).

There are regular articles and ideas about wisdom at the Smart to Wise website: [www.smarttowise.co.uk](http://www.smarttowise.co.uk) and you can get regular wisdom tweets [@smart2wise](#).

**Mike's Other Books are:**

- The Yes/No Book
- Brilliant Time Management
- Brilliant Influence
- Brilliant Project Leader
- Brilliant Stress Management
- Risk Happens!
- The Management Models Pocketbook
- The Handling Resistance Pocketbook

All of these books are available from [The Wisdom Bookshop](#): <http://j.mp/WisdomBookshop>

... and coming in 2013: *"How to Speak so People Listen"*

