

“AQ” ADVERSITY QUOTIENT: A Complement to Emotional Intelligence

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Alongside the concept of Emotional Intelligence, Paul Stoltz of PEAK Learning, Inc. has been developing and measuring the concept of what he calls Adversity Quotient, or what we might title in our series on Emotional Intelligence, “Adversity Intelligence”. Basically, the concept has to do with how we respond to life’s events, or our capacity to respond productively in times of stress.

Stolz lists four dimensions of AQ:

- **Control** – the extent to which you feel able to influence a situation positively, and the extent to which you can control your own response to a situation or event;
- **Ownership** – the extent to which you take personal responsibility for improving a given situation, regardless of its cause;
- **Reach** – how extensively you allow a particular kind of adversity to affect other areas of your work and life;
- **Endurance** – your perception of how long an adverse situation will last.

The above suggests an acronym (CORE) similar to the one we saw in Social Intelligence.

For people with low AQs, the typical response to adversity is a feeling of powerlessness and despair that reduces or sorts out any evidence that the situation may not be as dire as it initially appears. For example, let’s say that your organization or family makes a decision that excludes you, e.g. downsizing your department or not inviting you to a family event. What can you do to change the decision? To what degree do you feel that the consequences of this situation will affect your life? And what other decisions do you think you may be excluded from?

If you have, on the other hand, a high AQ, you might remain optimistic and resilient in the face of difficulty, focusing on what you can control and how you might influence this and future situations.

Stolz calls the latter, high-AQ types, “Climbers”. Low-AQ types he classifies as “Quitters”. Those in the middle – some 80% of the workforce, according to his research – are referred to as “Campers”. These people handle most adversities relatively well, but they also have a fair amount of untapped potential. Moreover, difficulties wear them down more than they should.

To improve your AQ, Paul Stolz suggests you simply begin by listening to your response to a difficult situation. The very act of noticing your response affects your CORE style of reacting, he suggests. Then conduct a searching analysis of the situation, and your ability to control or influence its reach or duration. This is similar to the approach suggested in TEAM *International* and CCL’s Leadership Development Program®, where we “listen” to the tapes we have running for ourselves in determining our reaction to, for example, a change event in our lives.

What’s your AQ?

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