

Who are you?

How your character affects behaviour



Imagine you are interviewing a recent college graduate and as the interview starts to go badly the young woman says: “Do you know who I am?” This statement itself may tell people far more about someone than the speaker realises. This statement speaks volumes about one’s character. If it is spoken by the next generation of a family of wealth, it is often a sad reflection on the impact of privilege. Consider for a moment what adjectives come to mind to describe this young person’s character.

Imagine working your whole life to accumulate enough wealth to provide for you and your family. Then your worst nightmare happens. You see it first in your children; their behaviour is far from the values you believe you taught them. Then in your quieter moments, you are afraid that some of the same dynamic may be true of you and even your spouse.

Defining Applied Intelligence

Applied intelligence is defined as aligning your behaviour with your true character. The first step to AI is becoming aware of your true character: who you are and who you want to be. The next step is conveying this authentically to others.

Applied Intelligence assumes you have a positive, healthy character and that you care if your behaviour causes unnecessary suffering for others. Although this is an important assumption from a philosophical point of view, there is a far more pragmatic one. In the vast majority of situations helping people look at their behaviour, the issue is not if they have a good character, but instead it is the struggle to be aware of how others would see their behaviour and get past merely defending it.

Our behaviour is all other people have to go on when they are forming an opinion of us. How others perceive us leads to the image they form of us: our reputation.

The way we define ourselves may be very different from the perception others have of us. When the perception others have of us is negative or does not align with who we are, there are consequences. For instance, if people perceive my quietness as being aloof instead of shy, then they may not want to hire me. If people perceive my ability to show up on time as being professional and respectful, then they may be more ready to recommend me to a peer.

Consider the adjectives you might use to describe the person in the opening paragraph. This is the perception you would have of that person, which would create her reputation – maybe self-absorbed. Likely

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this is not the reputation or impression that she has of herself and hopefully is not her true character. The lack of the person's ability to show her true self is an example of the need to work on her applied intelligence, to narrow the gap between self-perception and reputation.

Applied intelligence is cultivating the ability to mindfully convey your character through your behaviour. It builds on the technical training of your formal education; the self-awareness learned in life; and whatever social intelligence you have been taught, experienced, or developed.

Wealth and AI

Wealth is many things to many people: status, power, freedom, stewardship, and perhaps ultimately, a magnifier of our character. Many of us are confined (and even defined) by economic constraints. Having great wealth often removes two powerful mechanisms that keep our behaviour in check.

The first is we may no longer feel a need to reign in our attitude: why do I need to put up with this bad boss, the lousy professor, or anyone else's shortcomings? The second is feedback. Who confronts the very wealthy or powerful? Who tells the CEO, the movie star, or the politician what is honestly seen in their behaviour? When no one speaks honestly to you it makes it difficult to see how others perceive you.

The next generation and AI

If character is developed through testing one's mettle, adversity, plain hard work, and trying times, then what kind of character is developed when all these opportunities are removed? This is especially true when the wealth is passed down and is given at a young age before one's character has been forged through life's experiences.

Even if the next generation's character is carefully cultivated, then they must battle the mixed feelings others have, the love/hate relationship most people may have with the wealthy.

Tips for the senior generation

Be a good role model: Children pay close attention to their parents and learn much of their behaviour from watching the people they are around the most. The saying "actions speak louder than words" rings true. If one's child witnesses them talking down to a waiter or making excuses for being chronically late, it is teaching the child that this is acceptable behaviour even if the parents' talk a different game. Again, it is the behaviour that conveys the message.

Instill financial responsibility through setting rules and following through with consequences: Instilling the value of a pound and teaching financial responsibility are critical when preparing

children for life with wealth and are great tools to build Applied Intelligence. Kids who are spoiled when growing up can acquire an attitude of entitlement, which often carries over as an adult. This is especially true if parents set boundaries, but do not follow through on the consequences.

For instance, a valuable way to teach financial responsibility is to set a child up on a budget at a young age and require them to be responsible for some of their expenses. Say a parent gives their son £100 for back to school clothes. He buys one pair of jeans and then comes back for more money complaining about £100 not being enough. If the parent gives in, and does so regularly, it can have negative consequences on the child's future reputation. Other people may often be very willing to look the other way for powerful, wealthy, and influential people, but the behaviour will likely not be perceived well. This example is more applicable to a child still in school, but these concepts are valid at any age.

Take advantage of teachable moments: In today's society there are examples of poor Applied Intelligence all around. From the stories of trust fund babies on the covers of magazines to the despicable behaviour of children portrayed on shows like MTV's Super Sweet 16 to examples children share about their classmates' embarrassing behaviours. It is likely the individuals in these examples would not be happy with the reputation their behaviour is creating and would disagree that other's perception of them conveys their true character. AI is about being aware of how others perceive your behaviour, not defending or justifying your behaviour.

Though it is unfortunate a lack of Applied Intelligence infiltrates our lives, it provides continual opportunities for parents to take advantage of teachable moments. It is recommended for parents to talk to their child about how their friend sounded when she was yelling at the teacher for not giving her the best seat in the classroom or how the taxi driver feels when the 16-year-old on television is shown berating him for not driving fast enough. Describing one's experience interviewing a perfect candidate for a job opening at her company and how the candidate's lack of professional dress and talking with his mouth full made him not get the job will help convey the importance of AI. Parents can help their children be more aware of how behaviours can be interpreted by others and can create negative consequences.

The key to AI is not about changing one's behaviour so others will like them, but instead to be aware of how their behaviour is being interpreted and ensuring it aligns with their true character. It is, in a phrase, mindfully taking ownership for the reputation you create.

Tips for next generation family members of wealth

Ask for Feedback: Often we do not realise or are not aware of how our behaviour is perceived by others. Asking for honest feedback can be very helpful in the quest to show one's true character. After giving a presentation at work or in school it is helpful to ask a colleague how they thought one did. The key is to ask for specific, constructive feedback. Just hearing how great one did feels good, but does not accomplish the objective. Also once the feedback is given, it is critical for one to not act defensive. Responding to someone's suggestion by explaining how they are wrong will ensure they never give honest feedback again and will impact the relationship with the individual and harm one's reputation. Be willing to look in the mirror and take responsibility and ownership for your behaviour.

Take responsibility for one's actions: When one drops the ball, is the apology an excuse that defends their behaviour, or is it acknowledging the inconvenience that was imposed on the other person? Which one conveys empathy and a better character? Which would you rather receive? Consider how it feels when someone shows up an hour late for a meeting or outing and then makes a lame excuse or does not even acknowledge their tardiness. What impression does that behaviour convey? How respectful is it of someone else's time? Being late, being rude, or making a mistake will happen. The key is to honestly apologise and make an effort to not make the mistake again. This says a tremendous amount about one's character; it shows Applied Intelligence.

Be aware of (verbal and nonverbal)

communication style: Applied Intelligence includes everything beyond one's technical competence. An area the majority of us have a blind spot in is our communication, which includes appearance, listening skills, and non-verbal behaviours. One's appearance conveys something about them. Most do not realise that 55 percent of another person's perception of them is based on how they look. Ninety-five percent of employers say a jobseeker's personal appearance affected the employer's opinion of that applicant's suitability for a job. One's ability to be present and really listen to someone is important when trying to convey true character. Making eye contact, leaning forward, and truly listening without thinking about what to say next conveys the message that what the other person is saying matters.

Take ownership

The goal of Applied Intelligence is to have one's behaviour effectively convey his or her true character. This is a powerful practice that helps all of us take far greater ownership for our behaviour, be much more effective in our personal and professional lives, and cultivate far greater empathy for others. Once you have shifted your vision or thinking to seize this concept, then the next step is to work to put it into practice.

Conclusion

Though Applied Intelligence applies to everyone, it is perhaps most relevant to people of great wealth and great power. Why? Because of three factors: a scarcity of objective feedback, the power that comes with wealth, and the risk of not having as many opportunities to develop your character.

With having wealth and abundance there is a profound need to develop the ability to mindfully use your status and power to cultivate and convey to others the best of your character. It takes a level of not only self-awareness to practice this, but also the ability to see things from the other person's perspective; to not defend your behaviour, but to learn how to empathise with others' points of view.

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An example of putting AI into practice

John is from a family of wealth. He is very involved with his family's philanthropy and has a full-time job at a non-profit organisation. He has done extensive work to develop self-awareness and taken numerous leadership workshops, one recently where he learned about AI.

John has had a tough day at work and shows up 45 minutes late for a scheduled dinner with his wife and her friend, Mark, who he is meeting for the first time. He sits down at the table and begins complaining about the day, making no mention of his tardiness. His wife says she is disappointed he is late and he exclaims, "I work a ten hour day, something you have never done and had to come home to be yelled at".

He rolls his eyes and begins eating.

A bit of time goes by and John considers the impact of the recent interaction. He cares about his wife and his true self is one who is respectful, timely, and a good listener. He considers how Mark perceives him and how Mark would describe his night to others. He asks his wife the next day what Mark said. She shared that she had to defend John's reputation; she told him Mark said he felt John showed a lack of respect for their time by showing up so late and felt he was rude to not even apologise. Mark told others John took out his frustrations on them, did not act like he even cared about his wife, and that he did not want to go to their house again.

At first, John felt defensive because he was none of those things and Mark had no right to talk so badly about him to others as he did not really even know him. John finally realised he did not act with Applied Intelligence and actually showed the opposite of his true self to his wife and Mark. It was eye opening to see how impactful a first impression can be and how his reputation was damaged because of his poor behaviour. He sincerely apologised to his wife and called Mark to express his feelings. He asked Mark to give him another chance and took him out for lunch the following day.

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