

The Spiritual Intelligence Project

David B. King, BSc, MSc Candidate, Trent University, Canada



The Spiritual Intelligence Project is a long-term research project dedicated to the investigation, empirical validation, and measurement of a previously unrecognized but unique manifestation of human intelligence underlying spirituality.

Investigation of a spiritual intelligence was initiated in 2006 by David B. King, a graduate student at Trent University in Peterborough, Canada, under the supervision of Dr. Teresa DeCicco. Research on this emerging construct will continue beyond David's thesis, in order to better develop and validate spiritual intelligence as a viable component of human mental capacity.

What is "spiritual intelligence"?

In the current model, **spiritual intelligence** is defined as a set of adaptive mental capacities which are based on nonmaterial and transcendent aspects of reality, specifically those which are related to the nature of one's existence, personal meaning, transcendence, and expanded states of consciousness. When applied, these processes are adaptive in their ability to facilitate unique means of problem-solving, abstract-reasoning, and coping.

An extensive literature review suggests four main components of spiritual intelligence:

- I. Critical Existential Thinking:** the capacity to critically contemplate meaning, purpose, and other existential/metaphysical issues (e.g., existence, reality, death, the universe); and to come to original existential conclusions or philosophies; also the capacity to contemplate non-existential issues in relation to one's existence (i.e., from an existential perspective).
- II. Personal Meaning Production:** the ability to derive personal meaning and purpose from all physical & mental experiences, including the capacity to create and master (i.e., live according to) a life purpose.
- III. Transcendental Awareness:** the capacity to identify transcendent dimensions/patterns of the self (i.e., a transpersonal or transcendent self), of others, and of the physical world (e.g., holism, nonmaterialism) during normal states of consciousness, accompanied by the capacity to identify their relationship to one's self and to the physical.
- IV. Conscious State Expansion:** the ability to enter and exit higher/spiritual states of consciousness (e.g. pure consciousness, cosmic consciousness, unity, oneness) at one's own discretion (as in deep contemplation or reflection, meditation, prayer, etc.).

Scientific Criteria for Intelligence

The current model relies on a general consensus of intelligence criteria (i.e., the criteria that must be met in order to support the establishment of a new human ability set), rather than only one perspective of intelligence. In particular, the following criteria rely heavily on those which have been proposed by Howard Gardner (1983), Robert Sternberg (1997), and Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey (2000).

A number of common criteria can be derived from the current body of intelligence theory and research. An intelligence should:

- (1) include a set of interrelated mental abilities (distinct from behaviours, experiences, etc.).
- (2) develop over the lifespan (from birth to old age).
- (3) facilitate adaptation and problem-solving in a particular environmental context.
- (4) allow an individual to reason abstractly and make appropriate judgements.
- (5) demonstrate a biological component or foundation in the brain.

Spiritual intelligence actually performs quite well according to traditional criteria for intelligence. The above model satisfies the primary criterion: spiritual intelligence represents a set of mental abilities, as opposed to behaviours or experiences.

