

Living Fully Beyond the Quotients and It Is What It Is; A Journey of Heart, Spirit, and Mind Toward a Life of Meaning and Alignment 2



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In this personal essay, I explore how the integration of all forms of intelligence—IQ, EQ, SQ, and NQ (neuro- and nature intelligence)—shapes what I have come to lovingly call *the puzzle of life*. Understanding and aligning these layers of awareness has shown me how personal change, meaning-making, and purpose are deeply interconnected, and how these individual shifts naturally ripple into broader systems and organizations. This perspective has become the cornerstone of my life, guiding me to live with joy, passion, clarity, and a sense of purpose.

It is this understanding that drives my mission to help others navigate their own journeys toward inner alignment and fulfillment. I want people to experience what it means to live from clarity rather than confusion, from meaning rather than mere survival. By sharing my story, I hope to illuminate a path toward living fully, so that when people look back on their lives, they can say they lived with purpose, felt successful in their own terms, and truly enjoyed the experience.

Living Fully Beyond the Quotients and “It Is What It Is”: A Journey of Heart, Spirit, and Mind Toward a Life of Meaning and Alignment

Growing up in an environment where lower forms of awareness across all the quotients — SQ, IQ, EQ and NQ — were the norm, I constantly had to fight for my perception of these things. Being able to perceive more of the world around me and within me made me the punchline for pathologizing. My experiences of life, my understanding of myself, and my natural sense of relationships led me to voice my values and norms to a world that felt upside down to me, as if I stood on one side and everyone else stood on the other.

On multiple occasions, I was told that I was wrong simply because the person I was speaking with had never encountered the concepts or levels of awareness I was describing, and therefore lacked the knowledge or understanding of what I call Life’s puzzle of understanding. Their limited comprehension resulted in me being pathologized — told that my view was wrong, that *I* was wrong, that I was too sensitive, too straightforward, deviant, and many other labels. This left me experiencing my childhood and teenage years as a social outsider, a nobody, a ghost moving through spaces that were never built for someone like me.

Throughout my life, many people insisted that “it is what it is,” never truly grasping that personal and individual change naturally influences the systems we are all part of. We make up the systems; therefore, when we evolve individually, the systems evolve through us. This fundamental misunderstanding led to repeated conflicts, as my perception of life and reality challenged theirs. The pushback was intense. At one point in my bachelor’s degree, I even questioned whether I needed to check myself into a psych ward — not because I was unstable, but because

society’s functioning on lower awareness across the quotients (some intentionally, most unintentionally) created a constant inner conflict for me. I knew I could not live the way most people accepted as normal.

When I graduated from my master’s degree, I received the comment that “there is not one assignment you coloured inside the lines (of their understanding of science and life), so we aren’t sure that you belong in the field of science.” This came after they attempted to coerce me into changing my reflection form for every professor I had. While my reflections were true to my experiences, they interpreted my honesty as a personal attack — something many people do when their own perception, intention or execution is contradicted.

The more knowledge I integrated, the more my understanding of all quotients grew. Still, it took a deep spiritual connection and a meaningful social relationship that fell apart — through choices I did not make — for me to realise that I was not okay internally. My focus had been on external approval, and the constant pathologizing, dismissing and diminishing of my perception had placed me in conflict with what I knew to be true. Shifting from external validation to a constant inner understanding as the starting point from which I operate was the most difficult, yet most rewarding journey I will ever undertake.

Since then, understanding that my perception comes from a higher awareness across all quotients — and that I am not wrong, not a freak, not exaggerating or making life more complicated than it is — has brought me a peace I had never experienced before. My self-awareness has grown significantly. I am no longer in continuous conflict with myself over what is “right,” because I now understand that rightness is either a social construction or an individual experience shaped by one’s own perception of life.

Adopting a natural noticing perspective, as Mooji teaches, has given me a continuous sense of contentment with myself. This sense of inner peace has become so central to my life that I made it my purpose to help others achieve the same state of being okay, content and happy with themselves. Of course, this mission has caused conflicts with the lived realities of others around me. I see their suffering, their conflict, their numbness, and at times I want to shake them — not hard, but firmly — so they can see what I see, so they can experience life with the clarity and freedom I now have. I genuinely believe that many people would be far happier, more successful in their own perception, and live life with far more joy than the resignation of “It is what it is” or “Life is hard / Life is suffering.”

Understanding the Puzzle: A Layered Theoretical Perspective on My Life’s Journey

The spiritual dimension of my growth aligns closely with Zohar and Marshall’s (2000) concept of *spiritual intelligence (SQ)*, which they describe as the capacity to derive meaning from life’s challenges and to integrate experiences into a coherent sense of purpose. Throughout my journey, I repeatedly found myself turning painful or confusing moments into opportunities for deeper understanding—what I call “life’s puzzle of meaning.” This ability to step back, notice patterns, and transform experiences internally reflects precisely what SQ theory identifies as higher-order awareness. Rather than viewing my sensitivity and expanded perception as flaws, SQ helped me understand them as expressions of a form of intelligence that is often misunderstood in environments operating from narrower states of awareness.

My emotional development runs parallel to Goleman’s (1995) theory of *emotional intelligence (EQ)*, which emphasizes self-awareness, empathy, and emotional

regulation. Growing up, I sensed emotional dissonance in others long before I had the language for it, and I unfortunately internalized that difference as “wrongness.” EQ theory explains why these misattunements created so much tension: emotional competencies differ widely between individuals, and those who perceive and feel deeply often challenge the comfort zones of others.

Gardner’s (1983) broader theory of *multiple intelligences* supports this understanding as well—the idea that human intelligence is multidimensional validated my lived sense that knowledge and IQ alone cannot capture the holistic experience of our perception. My awareness, of both inner and outerworld, was never a deficiency; it was simply a different configuration of intelligences than the one my environment recognized.

Another turning point came when I understood that our perception of reality is constructed rather than objective and absolute. Just like Berger and Luckmann (1966), who argue that what we consider “reality” is largely shaped through social processes and shared belief systems. This resonated deeply with my confusion when others dismissed my insights, knowledge and experiences: they were not denying reality, but defending the only version of reality their world had taught them to see. Phenomenology further supports conceptual understanding of life as Merleau-Ponty (1962) explains that we perceive the world through the lens of our embodied experiences. Beck’s (1976) *cognitive schema theory* adds that these lenses are formed through past emotional and relational patterns. With this understanding, the conflict I felt within my environment and within society as a whole, became less personal: people were responding from their own data and experiences, and I from mine. This realization did not erase the pain that they

caused, but it clarified the mechanism behind their actions and reactions.

To my surprise is the **constructivist theory also involved in my personal growth**, which explores that people generate knowledge through lived experience rather than passive absorption (*Piaget, 1972*). Every internal battle I faced, every moment I felt like an outsider, every situation in which I had to fight for myself became part of the knowledge I constructed about myself and society as a whole. I used these experiences in ways that provide direction and purpose to my life. Which also got described by *Frankl's (1959) meaning-making theory*, which proposes that humans are compelled to interpret suffering to provide direction and purpose in their lives. In retrospect, the spiritual depth I found through struggle aligns with *Tedeschi and Calhoun's (1996) model of post-traumatic growth*, where adversity becomes a catalyst for increased spiritual development, personal strength, and a renewed sense of identity. My self-development journey from external validation to internal groundedness can be understood from the perception that this was a natural outcome of integrating painful experiences into wisdom forming the cornerstones of my life.

Another theoretical lens that strongly illuminates my journey is Singer's (2007) work in *The Untethered Soul*, which centers on the practice of remembering we are "the observer" — the awareness behind our thoughts, emotions and experiences. Singer's distinction between the inner witness and the narrative mind helped me understand the intense internal conflicts I experienced growing up, when external voices questioned my perception and I was forced to take their judgments as truth. His framework suggests that freedom arises not from changing external conditions but from releasing the inner tension created when we resist reality. This aligns deeply with my own shift toward natural noticing and inner

alignment. When I learned to observe my experiences rather than react from them, the emotional chaos of societal misunderstanding lost its power over me. Instead, I found an inner steadiness, a grounded "okayness" that no longer depended on external validation. Singer's model validated what I intuitively practiced: that peace is not something found in the world, but that it is accessed through consistent awareness beyond the mind.

Finally, my shift toward inner self-determination aligns with *Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory*, which explained that human flourishing arises when autonomy, competence, and relatedness. For most of my life, autonomy was hindered by external pathologizing; competence was questioned when my understanding did not fit conventional frameworks; and relatedness felt impossible when others misinterpreted my intentions or simply did not (want to) understand me. The moment I reclaimed my inner authority—when I stopped seeking approval for my perception and existence—these psychological needs began to realign. From that point, well-being, purpose, joy and excitement for life followed naturally.

This theoretical foundation confirms what my life has shown me: that inner alignment is not only a personal victory but a model for how our being can actively participate in society, and change it, from a foundation of clarity, compassion, and authentic presence.

Living Through Integration: Translating Lived Experiences and Theoretical Understandings into Practice

Teaching these understandings to our youngsters, and encouraging them to participate in creative exercises that demonstrate these principles, can lead to a deeper sense of personal leadership, emotional maturity and awareness. The integration of these forms of intelligence creates people who are fundamentally okay,

and therefore experience a greater sense of well-being. This way of being forms an entirely new foundation for community care. Where community care now focuses on the symptoms of not being okay on a fundamental level, community care from the starting point that “I am okay,” filled with joy, love, excitement and contentment, creates an overflow of these experiences into the collective. This overflow seeps into the roots of our society, into the darker corners that are now often neglected, and can gradually decrease the fundamental issues we struggle with as a society: criminal behaviour, discrimination, separation, and so many more — ideally, reducing them to an active minimum.

For those who actively want to participate in the most rewarding journey of their lives, here are some advices. First, begin with recognising that you are not okay and that you are therefore trying to mould the world into something that will make it okay for you. And understand that everybody else is doing exactly the same thing. Second, realise that nobody will ever fully agree with you on how society, its systems, and everyday life should be, because they have not lived the same experiences you have. Third, focus on your own well-being; everything else will naturally follow in its own timing and path. So stop saying “it is what it is.” You are alive, which means you are inherently an active participant, not a passive (and thereby often passive-aggressive) voice. Ask yourself, “What can I learn from this? Is there a lesson here for me?” Fourth, explore what makes you feel alive. Try new things, read something new (not just social media posts), meet new people, start that hobby, or dust off that dream that has been on the shelf for too long. Begin actively pursuing whatever makes you feel alive. Do this every day, in small or big ways, and see how your life begins to transform for you.

Conclusion: The Harmony of Heart, Spirit and Mind; Integrating all Forms of Intelligence for a Fulfilling Life

Looking back at my life’s journey, I see that the integration of IQ, EQ, SQ and NQ is not merely an intellectual model, nor a framework for better functioning. It is a greater form of awareness that has allowed me to transform pain into insight, misunderstanding into clarity, and loneliness into purpose. What once felt like a burden—perceiving more, sensing deeper, and layered understanding— has become the cornerstone of my life. Through spiritual connection, the practice of natural noticing, and the courage to honour my own perception, I discovered that *The world does not shape my sense of self; my awareness of self shapes the world I experience.*

This understanding has brought me a profound and stable “okayness”—a grounded inner peace from which I can meet joy, excitement, passion as well as challenge, conflict and hardships without losing my self in them. It is in this place of stillness that meaning-making becomes effortless. Every experience, even the painful ones, becomes part of a larger spiritual growth, a lesson that enriches my awareness instead of diminishing it. When we recognise that what we call reality is only our perception of it, shaped by our history, knowledge, emotions and position, we gain the freedom to respond instead of react, to grow instead of shrink, and to be alive instead of merely surviving.

The implications of this reach far beyond the individual. Cultivating these forms of intelligence in our youth and in our communities has the potential to reshape our collective foundation—from one built on scarcity, fear and symptom-fighting, to one rooted in inner well-being, creativity, self-leadership and connection. A society made up of individuals who are fundamentally okay radiates that okayness

outward; it softens conflict, reduces harm, and nurtures the kind of community care that arises naturally from people who feel alive and whole.

My hope is that this reflection encourages others to embark on their own journey inward. Not unto the journey of fixing what is “wrong,” but the journey of discovering what is already true, already there, already whole beneath the external noise. Begin by recognising that and where you are not okay, and approach that truth with honesty, not judgment. Follow what makes you feel alive—read, explore, create, connect, start again and again if needed. Ask yourself, gently and without judgement: *What is this moment/situation teaching me?*

Life will provide the answer.

About The Author:

Michelle is a multipassionate, portfolio careerist whose work spans public speaking, authorship, artistry, podcasting, innovation design, and experience curation. She brings together creativity, strategic thinking, and facilitation expertise to inspire change, guide transformation, and help individuals and organizations unlock new perspectives. Through design sprints, brainstorm facilitation, and vision-to-experience projects, Michelle turns complex, cross boundary ideas into meaningful action.

Passionate about helping people live with purpose, awareness, and joy, Michelle’s work is grounded in her belief that understanding oneself and integrating multiple intelligences—mind, heart, spirit, and intuition—can create both personal fulfillment and systemic change. She shares her insights openly, encouraging others to explore their own paths, cultivate inner alignment, and lead lives with purpose, meaning and impact.

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