

Dr. Jean Greaves



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By Mikell Worley

Dr. Jean Greaves, in collaboration with Dr. Travis Bradberry, is co-author of the book *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* and co-founder of TalentSmart®, a global consulting company that serves more than 75 percent of Fortune 500 companies.

Drs. Greaves and Bradberry are best known for their work with emotional intelligence, and we are honored that Dr. Greaves has agreed to share her journey and offer her insights for the readers of *Women-CONNECT*.

Jean hails from a small mill town in the Midwest near the Great Lakes. Her parents' heritage is Swedish, and she is the youngest of three children, with two older brothers. Her father was one of two pediatricians there.

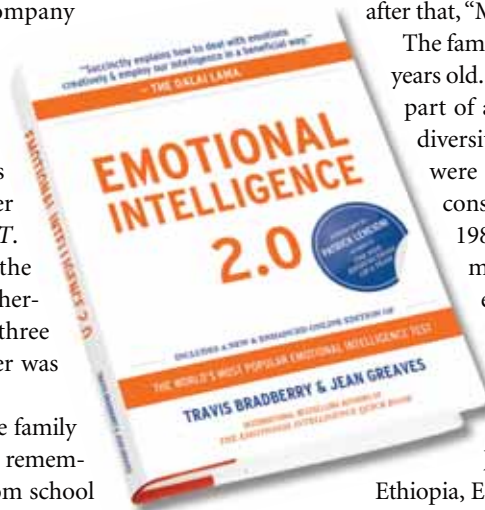
Life was pretty uneventful until one day the family heard about some vandalism in the town. Jean remembers that, "My oldest brother came home from school and reported that the kids at school speculated that a group of Hispanic youths were responsible. My father knew most of the families in town and was convinced that they were unjustly accused. He was concerned that if he raised us in that environment we might be more

likely to make those kinds of judgments instead of having a more global view." The incident proved a turning point in Jean's life. Shortly after that, "My parents made the decision to move."

The family moved to California in 1972 when Jean was nine years old. She enjoyed school, meeting new people, and being part of a more diverse community. "Most of the cultural diversity in my high school was Asian. My closest friends were Korean and Chinese American and to this day I consider them family. I entered Stanford University in 1981 and had a number of experiences that broadened my perspective on the world." Jean studied in Vienna, Austria, and spent one summer helping at a clinic in a small Mexican village.

Helping others became a pattern for Jean. After graduating from college in 1985 she worked for the International Rescue Committee in San Jose, California, relocating political refugees from Ethiopia, Eastern Europe, and Vietnam. She saw firsthand the challenge for refugee families entering the workplace in a new culture, and Jean decided she wanted to make a difference on the corporate level.

In 1987, Jean began her graduate studies in organizational psychology. She graduated in 1991 and became director of workforce



planning for a healthcare company that employed 10,000 workers.

During the next seven years, Dr. Greaves developed a strategic staffing system by planning the future workforce and putting systems in place that would shape the people the organization needed.

In the 1990s, Dr. Greaves married and had the first of two daughters in her early thirties. It was a challenge trying to balance a family and a high-level corporate job, so she decided to start an independent consulting business. She rented office

space, committed to a regular work schedule, and found that she had enough work for herself and others. This was the beginning of the most significant phase of Dr. Greaves's career.

At that time the 360 degree assessment, a performance tool designed to provide managers with feedback from supervisors as well as peers and subordinates, was introduced. Another important idea gaining worldwide interest was Dr. Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Quotient. The original concept, presenting a new way to understand and assess interpersonal skills, had been developed in the 1970s and 1980s by psychologists Howard Gardner, Peter Salovey, and John Mayer. The concept argues that IQ, or intelligence quotient which serves as the conventional measurement of human potential, is too narrow and does not address the significance of human interaction as it relates to personal success.

As her consulting business continued to grow, Dr. Greaves found she was spending too much time traveling and not enough time with her family. "My business partner and I decided that if we built a product line around emotional intelligence, we could put learning tools in the hands of people in organizations without becoming overextended." With the Internet boom, she notes that "more people were discovering us on the web and requests for our emotional intelligence assessment were increasing dramatically. We proceeded to develop a shorter, less technical assessment [than the 360. Our version provided] a results report with simple strategies that clients could practice to improve their emotional intelligence." Jean says, "When the strategies of emotional intelligence are applied, it is startling how quickly misunderstandings can melt away. Some of them are very simple, yet can have a powerful impact."

Dr. Greaves gives several examples from clients she has coached. "A chief of staff of a family practice division received feedback that her staff was frustrated because she didn't acknowledge their efforts. After

further conversation the client realized that her reluctance to recognize her staff resulted from habits she developed early on in her relationship with her mom. When she gave her mom a sincere compliment, her mother's reaction was to assume that she wanted something. Her mom associated praise and recognition as a motive." Dr. Greaves explains that when her client was a girl, "she learned to stop giving praise to others because that's what worked with her mother. Now this woman was a leader in charge of many managers who needed encouragement." When she became aware of why she felt hesitant to express positive feedback, she was able to take steps to improve her communication style with her staff.

"Another executive received feedback that she was inaccessible. She viewed herself as friendly and approachable and was troubled by the results of her assessment. Further discussion revealed that it wasn't the executive's communication style but physical barriers that gave others that perception. The chairs in her office were covered with stacks of paper and co-workers interpreted it as an effort to discourage interaction."

A director who had worked in an office for more than three years shared his story with Jean. "A frustrated co-worker asked him if he was thinking of leaving. He was startled by the question and asked what gave him that feeling. The reply was that he had no pictures on the walls or personal items in his office that gave any indication that he was planning to stay."

Dr. Greaves was especially touched when she received a letter from a prisoner who stated that his life would have been different if he had known how to react to emotional situations in a way that would have resulted in more positive outcomes. "Raising our awareness of how we respond to situations that impact us emotionally gives us more choices about how to manage those situations. What we say or do causes other people to respond to us in either a positive or negative manner. Developing emotionally intelligent skills can improve every area of our lives."

When Jean's father's relocated his family in the hopes of giving them a more global perspective he could not have imagined the impact his daughter would eventually have on improving the lives of so many people. Drs. Greaves's and Bradberry's best-selling books have been translated into 23 languages and are sold in more than 150 countries. Their emotional intelligence training programs are now delivered by more than 300 certified facilitators worldwide. Estimating the impact is simply unfathomable.

To learn more about TalentSmart®, emotional intelligence, and other products and tools that can impact your career and your personal life, visit <http://www.talentsmart.com>. ❁

Mikell Worley is the founder and president of Mikell's Treasures. She has spent more than 20 years designing and delivering self-improvement trainings, has had several cover stories in various magazines, and recently illustrated her first children's book. She is an advocate for women and children.