

MICKEY LEBOWITZ, MD '85

The EQ Prescription

In a new book, Mickey Lebowitz, MD '85, offers a practical approach to emotional intelligence as a tool for enhancing fulfillment and strengthening patient care.

For Mickey Lebowitz, MD '85, connection in health care doesn't begin with a diagnosis or a treatment plan. It begins in the seconds before a word is spoken—when posture, tone, and expression quietly reveal how a person is really doing.

"In health care, connection often happens, or is missed, in seconds," Dr. Lebowitz writes in *The EQ Prescription: Put Yourself First to Thrive in Health Care* (River Grove Books, 2025), his recently released book that focuses on emotional intelligence as a practical, learnable skill for clinicians. The idea is simple but powerful: before physicians can give their best care, they must be well themselves—emotionally and physically—and able to read the emotional landscape of the people around them.

Lebowitz has spent four decades navigating medicine from nearly every angle: private practice endocrinology, hospital medicine, quality leadership, medical education, healthcare administration, and research. Along the way, he has become increasingly convinced that emotional intelligence, often referred to as EQ, is not a soft skill, but an essential clinical competency.

He learned that himself the hard way. In 2007, after 17 years in private endocrinology practice and struggling with the reality that practicing medicine did not meet his expectations, he made the difficult decision to step away. "It was a gut-wrenching decision," he says, writing candidly about his frustration with the insurance-driven health-care system and its impact on his own burnout in his first book, *Losing My Patience: Why I Quit the Medical Game* (2009). Looking back now, he sees the decision as one that opened doors to broader impact.

"I still wanted to play for my team of patients and clinicians," he wrote, "though on a different place on the field."

That "different place" included a formative period at the Syracuse VA Medical Center, where Lebowitz served as a hospitalist and educator. He later spent seven years as senior medical quality director at Crouse Hospital, where he focused on patient safety, systems improvement, and leadership development, work that shifted his lens to shaping care for entire populations.



Mickey Lebowitz, MD '85, is an advocate of building emotional intelligence as a means to professional and personal fulfillment.

"After leaving my bubble of seeing patients all day every day, I was able to see the distress that so many of my colleagues were experiencing that was similar to my own," he says. "I wanted to do something that could help my colleagues stay

well, have professional fulfillment, and take great care of patients without burning out and leaving practice prematurely, like I did."

It was during these leadership years that Lebowitz began to formalize ideas that would later become *The EQ Prescription*. Through training with Six Seconds, a global emotional-intelligence organization, and collaboration with colleagues on clinician resilience, he began to connect emotional intelligence with the concept of a "resilience zone"—a state in which clinicians are regulated, effective, and at their best.

"How do you know if you're in your zone or not?" he asks in the book. "That's

self-awareness. How do you know if the person you're dealing with is in their zone? That's social awareness." Emotional intelligence, he offers, helps clinicians pause, respond instead of react, and navigate high-stakes conversations without escalating conflict.

The EQ Prescription is written primarily for health care professionals, but anyone can use these strategies successfully in their personal lives. Lebowitz emphasizes that EQ is a competency, not a fixed trait—something that can be practiced, strengthened, and improved over time. "The difference between IQ and EQ is that EQ is learnable," he says.

Today, Lebowitz continues to practice clinically as an inpatient endocrinologist and leader of the inpatient diabetes program at Crouse Hospital while also speaking nationally on his EQ research and the benefits of the emotional intelligence zone in healthcare education and clinical practice. He gratefully hears from readers who successfully apply its strategies at work and at home.

At its core, Lebowitz says, the message comes down to control. "I can't control the system," he reflects, "but I can control me." Emotional intelligence, he believes, gives clinicians the tools to do just that—and, in the process, to care better for themselves and for others.

—Renée Gearhart Levy