Application Project

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**Introduction**

As my application project, I chose to develop my emotional intelligence. I chose this particular project because I tend to have a lot of difficulty with anxiety as a consequence of a diminished ability to understand my own emotions and those of others. My failure to properly diagnose my own emotions and those of others lead to a lot of wasted time and productivity, and contributed to some serious disagreements and misunderstandings at home. This project was a catalyst in a watershed change in my life that resulted in an enormous reduction in anxiety and a corresponding increase in empathy and ability to talk with others.

**Process and Learning Experienced**

There were various methods that I used to accomplish my goals for improvement:

* Take inventory five times a day of my own emotions and try to understand them
* Pay more attention to the behavior, facial expressions, and body language in others so I could understand their motivations and emotions better
* Catch and analyze damaging thought patterns (DARTs – Damaging Adaptive Reflexive Thoughts) that catch me in anxiety and depression.
* Find a resource on understanding emotions and learn from it

Initially I was dedicated to keeping exact track of everything to the extent I had planned. However, over time, I became a little more relaxed. Some of this was due to lack of remembering to enter things, but some of it was because the process of thinking and being aware of my own emotions and those of others became habitual and it felt tedious to keep such meticulous track of everything. The accompanying Excel files show the extent with which I kept a record.

In recording and being aware of my own emotions, I realized a few different things. First, a large portion of my emotions were negative and fed off each other. I also realized that I express very little of my own emotions. I tend to hold everything in and very few people really know me. I also came to understand that many of my decisions are based on fear. While the decisions themselves are usually good and correct, the reasons behind them are often not correct. I realized that this focus on fear of retribution or other consequences spilled over into the rest of my life. I realized that difficulties I had been having with judging others harshly or not having patience with the mistakes of others was a direct result of my inability or fear of acknowledging and expressing my own emotions.

Making more of an effort to pay attention to the feelings of others has been critical to my gaining more empathy for others. At the same time, it has been overwhelming. I feel all feelings very deeply, and as I became more aware of the feelings of others around me, I began to feel exhausted from the increase in emotions to deal with.

The forms for catching and analyzing DARTs helped me get in the process of thinking carefully about my own emotions and emotional responses. By filling them out, I found better ways to think about and manage my own responses to difficult situations.

Over the project’s duration, I read portions of a textbook on emotions and a book about how people with challenges similar to my own (Asperger’s Syndrome) experience and manage emotions and social situations. Two of the most helpful things I learned as part of this project were a direct result of these books. First, I realized that in conversations I almost always avoided looking at people’s eyes – I often would focus on their mouths and miss most of what was being communicated through facial expressions. I also realized that I have a lot of difficulty separating the promptings of the Spirit from my own emotions. As a result of these discoveries, I made a couple of changes in my behavior.

First, I started actively looking at people’s entire face while holding conversations. As a result, I became much more aware of the varied emotions that others feel, and I realized that other people are not constantly analyzing my own behavior and are not angry at me all the time (as I often felt before). I began to see a depth and tapestry in the emotions of others that I could not see before.

Second, I made an effort to be aware of how my emotions and the promptings of the Spirit interact. I realized that I often confused my own worry and fear with feelings of need to change from the Spirit. It was very difficult for me to understand when I was receiving a prompting from the Spirit. Because I am now more aware of this, I can focus a lot more effort on making sure I understand why I’m feeling the way I do and exactly how I am feeling. My ability to discern spiritual promptings grew a lot as a result.

**Summary and Conclusion**

It is difficult to describe the full effect this project had on my life. I feel that, for the first time in my life, my anxiety is manageable and I can connect with myself and others freely. I now feel inklings of true charity for others. I am moving beyond merely treating others well because it is the right thing to do, but also because I feel empathy for them. This project has been a capstone to a challenging and exhausting change that I experienced over the past year. It was probably the hardest year I have ever experienced in my life. I came face to face with myself not as I previously understood myself, but rather as others perceived my own actions. While most of my choices in my life were good, I was blind to how uncaring and callous others could sometimes perceive my actions to be. At the same time, I was also blind to how many abilities and gifts that I have. It has been nothing short of overwhelming to realize the influence I have on others – for good and bad – and how much of a responsibility that is. I have thought a couple of times that I am, finally, at age 35, maturing emotionally. I honestly feel that I have, in the last year and especially the last month, experienced what most people experience in their teenage years as they have to rediscover themselves and finally decide what they believe and who they really want to be. Everything that I believed fell into question and I had to make a decision – what would I believe and who did I really want to be? I had to face myself in the mirror and see who I really was and I even began to doubt myself. This project, however, helped me to come full circle and recognize what I really believed, what I really wanted, and it helped me to recognize in myself a spark of divinity that I had hardly noticed before because it was drowned out by fear and unchecked emotion. The song, ‘The Age of Not Believing’ by the Serman Brothers from the film *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* sums up my experience quite well:

*When you rush around in hopeless circles*

*Searching everywhere for something true*

*You're at the age of not believing*

*When all the make-believe is through*

*When you set aside your childhood heroes*

*And your dreams are lost up on a shelf*

*You're at the age of not believing*

*And worst of all you doubt yourself*

*You're a castaway where no one hears you*

*On a barren isle in a lonely sea*

*Where did all the happy endings go?*

*Where can all the good times be?*

*You must face the age of not believing*

*Doubting everything you ever knew*

*Until at last you start believing*

*There's something wonderful*

*In you*

The ‘something wonderful’ that is in me and others is the fact that we are children of a divine Heavenly Father who is perfect and who knows and understands how we feel. He loves us immensely and we have to recognize the potential inside ourselves and others. Only by recognizing and believing this fact can we see the things as they really are and have hope for the future. As a result of this project I finally realize how much wonder and beauty there is in other people and in myself. The learning I experienced as part of this process loosed my tongue. It enabled me to understand and relate to others better than I ever have before. The challenge going forward will be to remember and hold on to this knowledge as times grow increasingly complex and difficult.