

Forum #3: Wisdom Strategies for Developing and Maintaining Emotional and Relational Health

A) Introduction

The topic of emotional and relational health fits in beautifully into the idea of the interdependence of the body, mind, and spirit in spiritual formation (Brunt 2016, 242). As such, it helps move me toward my goal of growing in favor with God and man (Rice 2019, SMC#1&2). My two GPS from this course are:

- “Seeking to be an imitator of Christ, I am committed to becoming a supportive husband.”
- “Seeking to be an imitator of Christ, I am committed to becoming a caring physician.”

Growing in self-awareness and self-management (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 24-32) will improve both my primary calling to an ever-growing relationship with God and my functional calling to serve others in relationship (Pettit 2008, 168-170). Social awareness and relationship management (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 38-43) empower me on my journey towards being and becoming the unique human being that God has made me to be, one who lives in reciprocating relationships (King 2016, 215).

Earlier in the course, John Ortberg opened my eyes to see practical ways of moving from “the me that I am today” to “the me I want to be.” He encouraged me to stop trying to grow like the preachers I know but find out how to grow myself. He beautifully brought this point across when he wrote, “Trying to grow spiritually without taking who you are into account is like trying to raise children on an assembly line” (Ortberg 2010, 51). Self-awareness helps me know who I am so that in the words of John Ortberg, I can flourish.

Understanding and growing in emotional intelligence also holds the key to taking care of the temple of the Holy Spirit through exercise, healthy diet, weight control, stress management, and Sabbath rest (Thomas., Ch. 1, Kindle; Epperly 2014, Ch. 1, Kindle; Epperly 2014, Ch. 1, Kindle).

B) How I came to know about the health of my inner life.

Here, I will share how I came to know about the health of my inner life and as a result, increased my ability to recognize and understand emotions in myself and others, and my "ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships" (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 17).

Before this course, I had a theoretical understanding of emotional intelligence. I had been exposed to it through articles and books. The Bradberry and Greaves book was even already in my collection. However, I had neither read the book nor taken the test. I had procrastinated for years that I was going to take time to read it and to take steps to grow in my emotional

intelligence. However, that never happened until this class, and I'm grateful that I got to take this class.

This course has provided several avenues for learning much more about the overall health of my inner life / emotional life and how to develop and transform my inner life in order to develop and manage relationships more effectively.

My Taking Flight (DISC) assessment was very informative. I found out that I was a consistent DC in my public self, private self, and perceived self. My DC style, which is characterized by the Eagle (D) and Owl (C), is very intentional, driven, and facts and results-oriented. While that can be helpful, I could easily ignore the emotions of others to focus on the task at hand. Learning and thinking through this helped me to begin to see how my unique design could be used to serve others and mitigate hurting other team members.

The Emotional Intelligence Appraisal taken earlier in the course, as well as accompanying text (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 50-58), was also very informative and has helped me on my journey towards being able to better recognize and understand emotions in myself. For example, my self-awareness score on the test was quite low. Analyzing those results together with my DC personality style on the DISC, I can see how my dominant style could easily trample over the emotions of team members. The resulting broken, injured relationships, in turn, make it difficult for me to carry out the goals that my driven style enjoys seeing carried out.

Scazzero's text also provided numerous self-assessments, which, together with the content in chapters 1-4, has helped to open my eyes to the nature of my inner life. They made me realize that I don't take enough time to process difficult emotions, and I am not usually able to identify how issues from my family of origin impact my relationships and leadership both in positive and negative ways (Scazzero 2015, 34-59). I also don't approach my shadows well.

The assigned reading from Epperly provided several practical strategies on how to develop and transform one's inner life to lead oneself better as well as develop and manage relationships with others more effectively. Our thoughts and emotions are part of our psychological or mental being. Epperly shows readers how to pursue continuous growth and education, and the role affirmations can play to enhance our mental and emotional lives (Epperly 2014, 74-85). He also gives strategies for creating time for Sabbath rest and quiet time (Epperly 2014, 86-102), igniting spiritual renewal and vision, embracing grief, and building healthy relationships (Epperly 2014, 102-165).

C) What is Emotional Intelligence, and what are its four skills?

According to Bradberry & Greaves, Emotional intelligence is one's ability to recognize and understand emotions in himself and others, and his ability to use this awareness to manage his behavior and relationships (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 17).

Emotional intelligence comprises of four fundamental “skills that pair up under two primary competencies: personal competence and social competence” (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 22).

Personal competence is made up of self-awareness and self-management, while social competence is made up of social awareness and relationship management (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 22).

Personal competence (self-awareness and self-management) skills focus primarily on an individual (as opposed to his interactions with others) and is one’s ability to remain aware of his emotions and shepherd those emotions into empowering behaviors and tendencies (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 22).

Social competence (social awareness and relationship management) is one’s “ability to understand other people’s moods, behavior, and motives in order to improve the quality of his relationships” (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 22).

Thus, the four skills of emotional intelligence are (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 22-48):

- Self-Awareness: One’s ability to accurately perceive his emotions and remain aware of them as they happen.
- Self-Management: One’s ability to use awareness of his emotions to stay flexible and positively direct his behavior.
- Social-Awareness: One’s ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on.
- Relationship Management: One's ability to use awareness of his emotions and those of others to manage interactions successfully.

D) What skill am I going to work on first, and what strategies are needed to increase that particular EQ skill?

Abridged EQ Action Plan

Overall EQ score: 56

Self-awareness score: 63

Self-management score: 55

Social Awareness score: 54

Relationship Management score: 53

I am first going to work on social awareness. The work I've done in this course so far as revealed to me that I am quite deficient in my social awareness skills. I've never taken the time to grow in this area, and my upbringing didn't encourage it.

My DISC personality type is DC. On the EQ Appraisal Report, I did worse on the social competencies than the personal ones. As a result, the following strategies would help me to increase my social awareness skills.

1. Better listening: I will start taking the time to be fully present in the moment, listen to people and pick up on their emotional cues, and not be thinking of my next response when they are speaking. This concept is not new to me. However, I've not actually taken time to practice it consistently (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 160-161).
2. Putting myself in their shoes: This strategy is common knowledge; however, I have never intentionally practiced it (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 169-170). Doing so consistently will help me switch from my right and wrong default to actually seeing things through other's eyes.
3. Living in the moment: The last strategy I will begin applying is living in the moment. When dealing with people, I'm easily distracted into thinking about the past or the future. I am going to intentionally practice being one hundred percent present in that moment and focused on the person in front of me (Bradberry & Greaves 2009, 143).

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