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Reflection and Goals

Throughout my life, I have always felt as though my interpersonal communication skills were one of my strengths. I am someone who enjoys socializing with my family, friends, co-workers and classmates. I have been told that people like being around me. My previous jobs demanded me to be an excellent communicator. No matter what the goal was, I reached for the top, and I think communications was one of the main reasons I got there. I am now 38 years old and focusing on school instead of work. Learning about interpersonal communication has made me take a closer look at how good I really am at communications. I realize I am not an expert by any means. My goal is to focus on three concepts of interpersonal communication I need to improve on and explain three of my interpersonal communication strengths.

One concept I intend to improve in my interpersonal interactions is how I manage conflict. I have been known as someone who does not handle conflict well. I approach conflict by saying things I wish I would not have said, letting my temper flare up, and leaving the room. In the process of me handling conflict in this manor, I have lost relationships, trust, and respect. My goal is to apply the correct conflict management strategy when facing conflict. According to researchers Robert Blake and Jane Mouton, "your options for dealing with conflict are based on two underlying dimensions: your concern for your own needs and desires, and your concern for the other party's needs and desires" Author Floyd states, "those dimensions give rise to five major strategies for engaging in conflict: competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising,

and collaborating" (Floyd, 2017). I will use the competing style when there is only one person who can win. I will use the avoiding strategy when I have no business getting involved. I will be accommodating in situations where the other person's needs and desires are greater. I will use the compromising strategy when the result seems reasonable for both parties. Finally, I will use the collaborating strategy when looking for what author Stephen Covey calls, a "Win-Win". Now quickly deciding which strategy to use in every situation will take practice. I will practice on my wife, parents, classmates, and friends. My desired outcome is to change any prior perceptions of me being a person who does not handle conflict well, to someone who does.

Another concept I plan to improve on is, removing my emotions when problem solving. According to my Emotional Intelligence Assessment, "my result indicates that I may be derailed by my emotions when faced with decisions, and this could mean I appear indecisive and overly rash." I agree with this statement. I do find it tough to make decisions when my emotions are involved and there are times my decisions come across thoughtless. For example, my wife will call me and ask when I am coming home, and I will tell her when I am done with my studies. She sometimes gets upset, and seams irritated with me. I then get mad and decide to just do whatever she wants me to do and come home. The EQi assessment provided me with some simple strategies for dealing with my emotions while problem solving. I need to first take some time to myself and write down the emotions I experience when I encounter a problem. Then I need to write down the issue I am facing. Lastly, I need to come up with possible solutions to the problem pick the best one, revisit my list of emotions, and see if they still bother me. In the case of my wife calling upset wanting me to come home I feel anxious, mad, and pressured. The issue is my wife would rather me be at home with our kids, instead of our oldest daughter watching them while she is at work. Possible solutions are me studying at home instead of school when

she is at work. Another possible solution is for me to set up designated times on my calendar for studying that do not interfere with either of our schedules. I personally think sitting down with my wife and building a schedule is best. After agreeing on a schedule, I then need to revisit my list of emotions, to see if they still bother me. This is one example out of the many problems I will face in life, where my emotions are involved. The more I practice separating my emotions from my problems, the more I become a better problem solver.

The third concept I would like to focus on improving in my interpersonal communication is becoming a better informational listener. Listening is something I wrestle with from time to time. My goal is to improve this area of my listening in hopes of becoming a better listener overall. Author Floyd provides a few strategies to enhance informational listening skills. Floyd states, "Separate what is and isn't said". I will practice this when watching TV and listening to the radio. I will then practice with my interpersonal communications, by paraphrasing what I hear someone say. Floyd also states, "avoid the confirmation bias." I will do this by examining all sides and not letting my beliefs sway my thinking. Another strategy Floyd states is, "listen for substance more than for style." (Floyd, 2017). I will practice this by not getting caught up in how cool something sounds or looks and pay attention to the content of what is being communicated to me. I truly believe by practicing Kory Floyd's strategies, I will impress the people I have relationships with now and establish more constructive ones in the future.

Now, one of my strengths in interpersonal communication is my capability of creating a positive communication climate, by using confirming messages. According to the book *Interpersonal Communication*, author Kory Floyd states, "communication researchers have identified three types of confirming messages" Floyd describes these three types of messages as: Recognition, Acknowledgment, and Endorsement (Floyd, 2017). I can remember using these

sorts of confirming messages interchangeably with my colleagues at work. For example, when inside meetings to discuss requirements for a new database to be built at my work. I make sure everyone participates in the meetings with their thoughts, ideas, and expertise. I also provide my input, ideas, and understanding of what the database needs. After we decide on the requirements for the database, I make sure everyone agrees. By recognizing, acknowledging, and endorsing people in meetings, I create an environment where people feel important and part of the company, including myself.

Another one of my strengths is building relationships with clients. I have spent the last ten years of my professional career traveling all over the United States and other countries, spending time with healthcare providers both inside and outside of the seminars we teach. I have learned about their accomplishments, challenges, and suggestions. I listen to what they have done to make their practices successful, which provides me with the opportunity to share those experiences with other clients. I have gotten to know some of our clients so well, we spend time after seminars, eating, going to sporting events, working out, and interacting with other cultures and co-cultures. In my experience of having relationships with our clients, I have built stronger loyal relationships, where we all feel like we are part of one big family. Over the years, my relationships with clients has helped me grow personally and professionally. When having a personal relationship with a client it is important for me to separate the personal relationship from the professional one. Even though someone has a relationship with me, does not mean they do not expect me to provide them with the best product we have to offer. There will also be times when clients try to use their relationship with me to their advantage (Floyd, 2017). At the end of the day, I feel I am confident in being able to make the right business decision when

relationships with clients are involved, and I will continue to represent both myself and our clients to the best of my capability.

I strive to improve myself and look for meaning in life. I have been this way my whole life. According to my EQ-I assessment, I scored the highest on the Self-Actualization component of Self-Perception. The EQ-I assessment states, "Students with high Self-Actualization want to be the best versions of themselves; they consistently try to improve and engage in personally meaningful work and relationships." After reading my results, I was wowed by how accurate the assessment is, I am always trying to improve myself. For example, I was told by multiple people that I should go back to school. At first, I felt insulted, unwanted, disrespected, and that I must be incapable of doing my job. I did however recognize the opportunity I had to grow professionally, made the decision to go back, and am glad I did. When I told my colleagues, they were happy for me. They reassured me that I was making a good move. Being in school has been positive in so many ways, the main one being the knowledge I have gained.

All in all, I have three solid strategies for improving my interpersonal communication when dealing with conflict, emotions, and listening. I know I will not become a pro overnight, however, I plan to start practicing immediately. My reward will be when others start to notice and compliment me. I will not stop there, I will continue to push myself to the next level. My strength of always trying to improve myself forces me to be this way. I plan to keep creating positive communication climates, while building friendships that encourage each other and help each other out. I will always stay loyal to the relationships I have built with clients, and I will seek to build more.

Works Cited

Floyd, Kory. *Interpersonal Communication*. Third ed., New York, McGraw-Hill Education,

    2017.