**Reflection Exercises and Assignments to Enhance Students’ Emotional Intelligence**

**Abstract**: There is agreement regarding the needs and benefits of cultivating emotional intelligence, so it is often included in management courses. There are quick ways of highlighting emotional intelligence and encouraging students to reflect on it in their lives. The exercises and assignments presented in this session illustrate ways in which students can reflect on their current practices and emotional states to build self-awareness and mindfulness. The facilitator will share experiences of using these reflections in an upper-level undergraduate management elective. Attendees at this session should come away with concrete ideas for using these exercises and assignments in their own classes.

**Keywords**: emotional intelligence, self-awareness, reflection exercises, reflection assignments

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**Type of Session:** symposium

**Introduction**

 The term “emotional intelligence” (abbreviated EQ for emotional quotient) is attributed to Mayer and Salovey (1990). As a relatively new construct in management sciences, it has gained incredible popularity as one of the key “ingredients of life success” ([http://www.danielgoleman.info/topics/emotional-intelligence/)](http://www.danielgoleman.info/topics/emotional-intelligence/%29). Goleman (1995) popularized the term by bringing it out of academia into the mainstream. Bradbury and Greaves (2009) have commercialized EQ training.

**Theoretical Background/Teaching Implications**

The current model of emotional intelligence is a 2 x 2 matrix as illustrated below:

 

One dimension is the self vs. the other (personal vs. social competence). The other dimension is awareness vs. management (what I see vs. what I do). All four dimensions of emotional intelligence can be developed, and they can be developed simultaneously. However, training programs often start with the dimension of the self and personal competencies. Fittingly, the majority of the reflection exercises planned for this session also target the self and personal competencies.

**General Discussion**

 Through undergoing a certification program in Emotional Intelligence, the facilitator generated ideas for bringing exercises to increase emotional intelligence, specifically self-awareness and self-management, to his classes. The Jesuit identity of his university coupled with other mindfulness practices further fueled the development of series of reflection exercises and assignments that he integrated into an upper management elective in Fall 2017. A list of the reflection exercises is as follows:

•Food Log

•Sleep Log

•Movement Log

•Gratitude Journal

•Somatic Responses to Emotions (self-awareness)

•Observations of other’s emotions (social awareness)

•Where You Are (self-management)

•RAIN mindfulness reflection (self-awareness and self-management)

 The ideas for first three reflections (food log, sleep log, and movement log) came from Rath (2013). Inspiration to have students compose a gratitude journal, came from Huffington (2014). The practice of having students be aware of somatic responses to their emotions and observe other’s emotions was derived from spiritual direction he received at his university. “Where You Are” was a creative thought process developed independently. Finally, the RAIN mindfulness reflection comes from Brach (2014).

**Session Description.**

The following is a summary of the proposed session:

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| **Activity** | **Time** |
| Introduction of Facilitator and Session Purpose | 10 Minutes |
| Explanation, Practice, and Discussion of 8 suggested reflections | 50 minutes |
| Conversation on integrating these exercises into classes  | 15 minutes |
| Discussion of effectiveness and challenges | 10 minutes |
| Wrap Up & Closing  | 5 minutes |
| **Total Time** |  **90 Minutes** |

Introduction of Facilitators and Session

The session starts with a brief introduction of the facilitator and an overview of the session. The facilitator has successfully integrated all of these reflection exercises into his management classes over the past four years.

Explanation, Practice, and Discussion of 8 Suggested Reflections

The facilitator will spend the bulk of this session talking attendees through each of the reflections so that they understand the objectives, implementation, and are prepared to answer any student questions. Some of them might be self-explanatory based on the names (food log, sleep log, movement log, gratitude journal). Others have more involved processes that likely bear explanation (Somatic Responses, Where You Are, and RAIN). Attendees will have ample time to ask questions and gain clarification where necessary.

Conversation on integrating these exercises into classes

After having attendees experience the activities and discuss the execution, the facilitator will work with the attendees to consider the learning outcomes for their own courses and how these reflection exercises might be integrated. Attendees will be asked to reflect on their own teaching philosophies, learning outcomes, teaching styles, their personal experiences with mindfulness reflections, and student characteristics. There should be opportunities to flesh out ideas and ask questions.

Discussion of effectiveness and challenges

In this part of the session, the facilitator will share his experiences getting students to engage with these reflection exercises, the ways in which they met learning outcomes, and students’ responses to the reflection exercises. While the overall impact was positive and met with enthusiasm from students, there were some challenges that the facilitator would like to share with the attendees.

Wrap Up and Closing

The session will conclude with a summary of learning points, teaching points, and exhortation to try these reflection exericises. I hope that attendees will have formed a cohort that can mutually supportive and encouraging as we boldly try new ideas to enhance student learning.

References

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