

Symposium 2009: Dr. Robert Frazer

Becoming Emotionally Intelligent, High Performing, Authentic and Significant

Dr. Frazer began his presentation by sharing the results of a study done by Harvard on leaders. They selected 20 thousand leaders from a sampling of different industries and boiled the group down to those who were considered the “stars” of their profession. These leaders credited 25 percent of their stardom on their technical competency. They have to be good at what they do. The remaining 75 percent was attributed to emotional intelligence. This is true for anyone; if you are successful in your career path it is because you have high levels of emotional intelligence.

Basic Emotions

Babies cry to express every emotion they feel. How their caregivers respond to those emotions will have a profound effect on the type of adult that child will become. Studies have shown that children deprived of nurturing in the first 18 months of life can experience emotional damage from which it is very difficult to recover. Dr. Frazer pointed out that his presentation was not only about emotional intelligence but also about becoming whole. When we are babies, we are completely transparent; sharing every emotional experience spontaneously. As we grow older we become more guarded, suppressing our emotions. Dr. Frazer’s mission is to help people become whole again.

Dr. Frazer didn’t always enjoy high “EQ”, or emotional intelligence. Early in his practice days, he employed what he calls the “King – Twit” structure of management. He was the king and everyone else in the practice was a twit. These so-called twits would come into the office from nine to five each day, do their job and leave. All of the actual responsibility was left to the king. This worked relatively well for the first few years of his practice, until he happened to bring Dotty on board. Dotty was a high achiever and Dr. Frazer quickly realized that she was the best thing that ever happened to him. After a relatively short time of treating her as a “twit” Dotty told Dr. Frazer that she would not be able to continue working for him. Dr. Frazer realized that he would need to

change his management model in order to keep Dotty and the “King – Queen – Twit” model was born. Predictably, this didn’t work well either and succeeded in completely alienating Dotty from the rest of the staff.

Finally as Dr. Frazer’s EQ increased he modified his management model again. The new model resembled a wagon wheel with the leaders represented in the center of the wheel supported by employees, clients and suppliers branching out. This created a much more successful and harmonious practice and is the model he uses today.

Turning back to the goal of the presentation, he emphasized the importance of authenticity and shared a few inspirational quotes, starting with the following from Depak Chopra, MD: *“Affluence, unboundedness and abundance are our natural state. We just need to restore the memory of what we already know.”* It is important to remember our childlike state of being authentic, fluid and unbounded. Dr. Frazer suggested that everyone should have an eight-year-old friend because that friend will tell you exactly what he or she is thinking without holding anything back.

“Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature. Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing!” This quote from Helen Keller illustrates the fact that how we frame what happens in our lives makes all the difference in our experience.

The following quote is from R. Lewis Stevenson: *“The purpose of life is to be who we are – and to become who we are capable of becoming.”* A part of emotional intelligence is to decide what you are going to do with the gift of life that is uniquely yours, and then to do it.

Key Components

Dr. Frazer continued by defining a few concepts that are key to understanding emotional intelligence.

High performance is to execute or carry out tasks at an elevated level. The motivations for high performance include recognition, fulfillment, growth, sharing information and autonomy.

Authenticity is being genuine and real from the inside out. Authentic people write their own

biography; choosing not to live the mythology of others.

Success is to have achieved an external state of material fiscal wealth, accomplishment and status as judged by others and by you as worthwhile.

Significance is about the depth of your life and the concept of “making a difference.” Dr. Frazer defined significance as an internal state of knowing and a sense of satisfaction that you have made a positive difference for a cause greater than yourself. To further illustrate this point Dr. Frazer asked the attendees to recall a past success and a significant accomplishment and recount their stories with another attendee. Several participants found unexpected commonalities between their stories. Dr. Frazer pointed out that success can sometimes get in the way of significance if you don’t make a conscious effort to prioritize the things that are important to you. There are often very successful people who are searching for ways to find significance in their lives.

The final stage of life is to look back with either integrity or despair. This concept is closely tied to the theme of success versus significance and their relative importance. Dr. Frazer has found fiscal success to pale in comparison to the significance he has found in teaching others. He is not alone in this opinion. Many parents and teachers have also found great significance in their lives by raising their children and molding minds. These jobs may not bring great monetary rewards, but the significance felt by people in these fields has a value of its own.

Emotional Intelligence—Defined

A study headed by Bob McClelland was done at Harvard in the 1970s on emotional intelligence at the request of the Massachusetts State Department. The State Department realized that their members who were most qualified on paper were actually the worst diplomats. The ones who barely qualified with their credentials were the best diplomats in the field. Dr. McClelland videotaped actors portraying human emotions, focusing on their facial expressions. He then played the tapes back with the language garbled to 25 of the lowest scoring diplomats and 25 of the highest performing diplomats and asked them to guess what the conversations were about. They were able to see facial expressions and hear the tone and inflection in voices without understanding the language. The low-scoring diplomats were often able to pinpoint

what the conversations were about while the high scoring ones could not. This was the first study to definitively show there must be another level of intelligence and where the concept of emotional intelligence really got its start.

Daniel Goleman defines emotional intelligence as, “Our capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships.” Dr. Frazer pointed out that while we all know you cannot raise your IQ, emotional intelligence can be learned and improved with recursive learning.

With emotional intelligence, you know your feelings and use them to make life decisions you can live with. Dr. Frazer equates this with your “gut feeling.” You are able manage your emotional life without being hijacked by it. Depression and worries do not paralyze you and anger does not dictate your actions. Emotional intelligence enables you to persist in the face of setbacks and channel your impulses to pursue the goals that are important to you. It allows for empathy and the ability to read the emotions of others and respond appropriately to them. Emotional intelligence brings with it the talent to handle feelings in relationships with skill and harmony and the ability to articulate the unspoken pulse of a group.

The four main domains of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Within these domains are eighteen sub-competencies of which even “star achievers” on average only display six or seven. Essentially, we each have our own unique emotional intelligence.

Biology of Emotional Intelligence

Going deeper into the subject of emotions, Dr. Frazer explained that the amygdala is the primal part of the brain where all emotion begins and is the root of immediate reactions. He illustrates this immediate reaction using a lizard. A lizard sits on its rock observing the world around it and when something comes into its vision it asks first, ‘Can I eat it?’ second, ‘Can I mate with it?’ and third, ‘Can it hurt me?’ These are basic instinctual questions that will govern how the lizard reacts to its environment. This instant reaction also happens in our brain and specifically, in the amygdala. If you pay attention you can see this behavior in society as well as in a dental practice. When our internal ‘lizard’ comes out we act on instinct and do not use emotional intelligence. We have increased

impulsivity and general anxiety, our strategic thinking is disrupted and we focus on vivid and trivial details. Our brain is set to recall similar past events and we take actions of which we are not fully conscious. In a dental practice, when the patient's lizard is out it is important to comfort them. The lizard and the amygdala will begin to settle down.

Emotions are biological reactions to chemicals released in our brain. We have synapses that read and react to the emotions of the people around us. Emotions are contagious. As a leader it is important to remember this. Leaders have increased emotional leverage in a group. The emotional climate of a group is a reflection the emotions of its leader. The most effective leaders will share what they are feeling and why. When the group understands the situation they can be more effective. By raising emotional intelligence and being more emotionally present, Dr. Frazer believes that the rate of case acceptance will immediately increase.

Conflict Resolution—The Awareness Wheel

"One moment of true awareness can change the most stuck relationship." (Ram Dass)

The awareness wheel is a very simple yet powerful tool for conflict resolution created by Alice Miller. It allows for communication that creates understanding in a conflict situation. Practicing the following steps even in the most basic of conflicts can train us to be more successful in resolving the ones we face that are more complex.

The first step is sensory data report. You state what you have seen or heard without judgment. For example: *"Betty, I notice that you are ten minutes late everyday."*

Second, interpret what you have seen or heard. *"I imagine that you have to get your kids to school, and I also imagine that you don't think missing ten minutes has much of an effect on me or the practice."* Dr. Frazer pointed out that it is important at this stage in the awareness wheel to describe only what is in your head and not what you think is in his or her head.

Third, share your emotions and how you feel about what you have seen and interpreted. *"I am frustrated, confused and anxious about your lateness. When you're a little late for the morning huddle I'm distracted because you are an important part of our team."*

The fourth step in the awareness wheel is volition. State what you want or need from the person. *"Betty, I want to understand why you aren't here on time, and what you need to change so that you can be here on time in the morning."*

In a normal conflict it is often necessary to "go around" the awareness wheel three to five times to come to a resolution. Dr. Frazer led the audience in an exercise using the awareness wheel to resolve a made-up conflict. Some attendees were given scripts that included using the awareness wheel and others were not. The attendees learned that even if someone is emotionally charged you can respond to them by listening using the awareness wheel to diffuse the situation. This simple tool is effective in all conflicts, large and small. Dr. Frazer suggested that the attendees practice these techniques with minor incidents that come up to prepare for the larger conflicts that life inevitably brings.

Becoming Emotionally Intelligent

There was a study done by Michigan State showing that for every two percent increase in emotional intelligence within an organization that serves people profitability increases by one percent. Emotional intelligence in dentistry creates personal effectiveness at every position. It cultivates leadership that gets results. It increases case acceptance and elevates customer service.

To grow emotional intelligence you need to define your ideal self and your true self. Ask a friend who can be honest and kind to describe you. This will provide the information you need to determine the gaps between your ideal and true self and develop a learning agenda. Then practice new behaviors like using the awareness wheel to develop trusting relationships. These steps will help transform you from your true self to your ideal, emotionally intelligent self.

Dr. Frazer is a highly sought-after speaker who has presented to many Seattle Study Clubs. He has led a very successful dental practice and although he still sees patients selectively he has shifted his focus to leadership, strategic planning and issues surrounding emotional intelligence. His interactive presentation clearly showed Symposium attendees how cultivating emotional intelligence can transform lives both personally and professionally.