



TOUCHSTONES

Small Group Discussion Guide

Emotional Intelligence

Preparation: (Read the *Touchstones Journal* on the theme and the questions below.)

Business: Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

Opening Words: “Channeling emotions toward a productive end is a master aptitude. Whether it be in controlling impulse and putting off gratification, regulating our moods so they facilitate rather than impede thinking, motivating ourselves to persist and try, try again in the face of setbacks, or finding ways to enter flow and so perform more effectively—all bespeak the power of emotion to guide effective effort.” *Daniel Goleman*

Chalice Lighting (James Vila Blake), adapted (In unison) *Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.*

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Read the Wisdom Story: Take turns reading the following wisdom story.

Heaven & Hell: A Zen Parable
from *Tapestry of Faith*

Long ago in Japan, a samurai—a warrior of those ancient times—went to visit a monk named Hakuin. The samurai was elaborately dressed in armor, and by his side swung a gleaming, sharp sword. He was a big, proud fellow, used to getting whatever he wanted.

“Hakuin,” the samurai bellowed at the temple door, “I want to have a word with you right now!”

Unruffled, the monk ended his meditation with a slow bow. He rose from his meditation bench and took some time to stretch his legs before turning toward his visitor. The large figure of the impatient samurai blocked the temple entrance.

“Well, monk,” grunted the samurai, “If you know so much and are so wise, tell me all you know about heaven and hell!”

Hakuin inspected the fierce-looking samurai closely. Finally, he replied, “You disrupted my meditation to ask something every fool knows? What kind of second-rate soldier are you? You look like a tramp in that outfit! Did you steal that sword from a child? It wouldn’t slice a cucumber! Leave this temple and never bother me again!”

If you can picture the reddest plum you’ve ever seen in your life, you can picture the color of the insulted samurai’s face. He was furious! No one ever dared to speak to a samurai rudely—they would surely lose their life before they had time to apologize! In a flash the samurai unsheathed his sword and raised it high over Hakuin’s head. “You will die for those words little monk!” he roared.

Hakuin looked directly at the warrior. “This is what hell feels like,” said the monk calmly. The samurai froze, his sword poised in mid-air.

In an instant he understood that his anger did feel like fire—the fires of a terrible place! The samurai slowly lowered his sword to his side and re-sheathed it. By the time his gaze met the monk's, his anger had vanished as quickly as it had appeared. He felt as if cool water had extinguished the fire: he was grateful and calm.

“And this is what heaven feels like,” said Hakuin, looking at the samurai's peaceful face.

Source:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/grace/session3/115178.shtml>

Readings from the Common Bowl: Group Members read selections from Readings from the Common Bowl as follows. Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

“Emotions can get in the way or get you on the way.” Mavis Mazhura

“Emotional self-control—delaying gratification and stifling impulsiveness— underlies accomplishment of every sort.” Daniel Goleman

“The only way to change someone's mind is to connect with them from the heart.” Rasheed Ogunlaru

“Our feelings are not there to be cast out or conquered. They're there to be engaged and expressed with imagination and intelligence.” T.K. Coleman

“In a very real sense we have two minds, one that thinks and one that feels.” Daniel Goleman

“Life is a juggling act with your own emotions. The trick is to always keep something in your hand and something in the air.” Chloe Thurlow

“Socrates's injunction ‘Know thyself’ speaks to the keystone of emotional intelligence: awareness of one's own feelings as they occur.” Daniel Goleman

“Emotional health is more important than a fit

body. Unknowingly most of us focus on the latter hence the lack of inner-happiness, peace, love, and fulfillment.” Maddy Malhotra

“I feel therefore I am.” Amit Abraham

“Emotional versatility is the art of making peace with the entire emotional spectrum by honing your capacity to channel various feelings along creative and constructive lines. It is not about controlling or condemning your feelings.” T.K. Coleman

“There is no weakness in being able to love fully. It takes courage, tenacity, and an emotional intelligence that most people are incapable of.” Alafia Stewart

“Shift your attention, and your emotion shifts. Shift your emotion, and your attention shifts.” Frederick Dodson

“Our emotional mind will harness the rational mind to its purposes, for our feelings and reactions—rationalizations—justifying them in terms of the present moment, without realizing the influence of our emotional memory.” Daniel Goleman

“We all have the same pallet of emotional paints. It is how we pigment them on the canvas of life that dictates our artistry.” Ged Thompson

“Emotions are the richest source of energy we possess.” Karla McLaren

“The essence of all spiritual life is your emotion...” The Dalai Lama

“Emotional intelligence begins to develop in the earliest years. All the small exchanges children have with their parents, teachers, and with each other carry emotional messages.” Daniel Goleman

“The human mind and what we've achieved with it is remarkable. But it does not come close to what we can do, be, see, and heal with our

hearts.” Rasheed Ogunlaru

“Bad feelings make us miserable, but they often come bearing gifts. A negative emotion’s gift sometimes comes in the self-examination it provokes.” Evelyn Whitehead

“Emotions are *movements* between us and the world. The meaning of *e-motion* in the literal significance of its root is a ‘movement out’ both from the person to the world and from the world to and through the person.” Glen Mazis

“When it comes to love, we are emotional illiterates.” Sam Keen

“If your emotional abilities aren’t in hand, if you don’t have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can’t have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.” Daniel Goleman

“To develop emotional ...intelligence we need to practice enlarging our inner passion at every moment. It doesn’t matter what’s going on in our world, or even how we feel about ourselves in the moment.” Alexandra Katehakis

“An emotion does not cause pain. Resistance or suppression of emotion causes pain.” Frederick Dodson

“Feelings are self-justifying, with a set of perceptions and ‘proofs’ all their own.” Daniel Goleman

When time and emotions gel, a new awareness forms.” Joel McGrath

“The world of the living contains enough marvels and mysteries as it is—marvels and mysteries acting upon our emotions and intelligence in ways so inexplicable that it would almost justify the conception of life as an enchanted state.” Joseph Conrad

“For better or worse, intelligence can come to

nothing when the emotions hold sway.” Daniel Goleman

“I never met a pig I didn’t like. *All* pigs are intelligent, emotional, and sensitive souls.” Sy Montgomery

“The finest emotion of which we are capable is the mystic emotion. Herein lies the germ of all art and all true science. Anyone to whom this feeling is alien, who is no longer capable of wonderment and lives in a state of fear is... dead...” Albert Einstein

“The way I see it, our emotions are music and our bodies are instruments that play the discordant tunes. But if we don’t know how to read music, we just think the instrument is defective.” Charlette Mikulka

Sitting in Silence: Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

Reading: “In his brilliant book *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman describes seven key abilities most beneficial for human beings: the ability to motivate ourselves, to persist against frustration, to delay gratification, to regulate moods, to hope, to empathize, and to control impulse.” Gavin de Becker

Living the Questions

Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving to the next.

1. What did you learn about feeling and expressing emotions as a child? Was this helpful or not? Why?
2. How did you learn to manage your emotions? What about learning to recognize what other people are feeling and going through?
3. How do you know if your words or actions have a positive impact on others? A negative impact?
4. How do your emotions affect you?

5. Which emotions do you find the most difficult to manage? Why?
6. What kinds of activities help you get a better handle on your emotions?
7. How might emotional intelligence help you take the perspective of and find compassion for someone who you really disagree with?
8. Which of the abilities listed by Gavin de Becker—the ability to motivate ourselves, to persist against frustration, to delay gratification, to regulate moods, to hope, to empathize, and to control impulse—do you find most important? Why?

The facilitator or group members are invited to propose additional questions that they would like to explore.

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person for the time claimed. Using a timer allows the facilitator to also listen fully.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together and the experience of exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice: (Elizabeth Selle Jones)
We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Closing Words: (Rev. Philip R. Giles)
(In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*