

Cadet Peña, Derek

Monarch High School

Coconut Creek, FL

People all around the world experience the beauty of emotions. Joy, anger, fear, excitement, sadness, and love are some of the most common emotions that everyone experiences in their day to day life. The Persian adage “This too shall pass” encapsulates the idea of human emotions wonderfully. For every moment of pain and suffering, there is a moment of bliss and happiness. My experiences in JROTC have helped to build me up as an emotionally intelligent person that is empathetic and understanding towards others, as those are the hallmarks of a great leader. In fact, what I believe it means to be emotionally intelligent is understanding your own emotions, and making intelligent choices based on them and the effect those choices will have on others and their emotions. Having this level of management of one’s emotions can help to make you a better citizen by improving your amiability and cooperativity, which are important skills when working with others in the real world.

Everyone has varying levels of emotional intelligence or maturity. Some act in the heat of the moment, yelling and arguing when they are angry or bursting into tears when they are depressed. However, others take a moment to consider the consequences of their actions and control their emotional outbursts in order to make the best decision given the situation. This isn’t to say that they do not have intense emotions, as everyone does, but these people are self-aware of themselves and the impact they can have on others. This is the mark of one who is emotionally mature. Emotionally intelligent people understand that these intense feelings will fade if given enough time to calm down, while the consequences of their outbursts can last much longer. Additionally, when being confronted with someone who is experiencing intense emotions, they will make smart decisions as to not aggravate them further and instead help them calm down. Instead of escalating the situation, they try their best to ease the upset person in hopes of preserving companionship and building trust between the two of them. People with a

strong grasp on human emotions do have arguments and become upset, but they don't let these powerful emotions take hold of them.

While I do not believe I am fully emotionally intelligent at this moment, I do try my best to understand and empathize with others. When thinking about arguments and problems I have with others, I always consider the other person's feelings when deciding how to approach the situation. My goal in every issue with someone else is to make peace with the other person. They do not have to like me or be my friend after the issue has been resolved. I only wish to resolve the issue at hand in a mature fashion and I am able to do this by being aware of what other people are thinking and feeling. I put myself in the other person's shoes and see things from their perspective in order to better understand the issue as a whole, which will hopefully lead to a peaceful resolution or compromise. Additionally, empathy helps me better relate to those around me and help them through obstacles in their own lives. Being able to relate to friends and family members and offer them emotional advice strengthens our bond and trust. My empathetic nature helps me understand the importance of expressing emotions, while also being aware that emotions are only temporary and "this too shall pass."

Emotionally intelligent people are usually more cooperative with others as they understand differing viewpoints easily, making them excellent citizens in society. In fact, the mission statement of JROTC is to "Motivate young people to be better citizens" and teaching cadets to be emotionally intelligent is a major factor in achieving that mission. If cadets are taught how to manage their emotions, later in life they will be able to handle intense situations with grace and dignity. They won't have to face ugly arguments or deal with the consequences of rash actions as they have been educated in the art of emotional intelligence. A good citizen is one who helps build up his society to a higher standard and contributes to the community in a

meaningful way. Those with impressive emotional maturity will be able to understand the value of selfless service and abiding by the law, as they will consider the lives of their fellow citizens when deciding on how they will be influencing their community. Once an emotionally mature mentality is achieved, then being a successful and productive member of society just comes down to using your knowledge of your own emotions and the emotions of others and applying it to your everyday life.

A strong grasp of emotional intelligence leads to the creation of a successful citizen and a strong leader, as shown by the various students who have fully enriched themselves in the JROTC program and gone on to become prosperous individuals, whether it be in the military or just regular civilian life. These teenage years are the years when one's emotions can be most volatile due to the high amount of hormones present in the body, yet this is also the most important time for analysis of one's own emotions and the development of emotional intelligence. JROTC really helps to facilitate this mental growth, as it has done for me. Since joining the program, I have developed into a much more caring and empathetic person that seeks to understand other people's viewpoints and ideas. I seek to reach that level of inner peace where I fully understand my heart, mind, and soul, and am able to help others achieve a similar transcendent way of being. I long to be able to calm someone who is undergoing emotional turmoil, whisper to them the famous adage "This too shall pass," which will hopefully spark a change in them for the better.