

## Ethics Reflective Paper

The road to self actualization is not a life led with perfection but rather a life filled with successes as well as mistakes- the trick to the contentment part of self actualization is whether we choose to learn from our mistakes or if we choose to live with regret. I choose the former- I choose to own my mistakes and learn from them. It is easy in life to get defensive when we are faced with a reprimand and to try to rationalize away our indiscretions and to not own up to them, but I believe that if we do that, we miss out on a chance to learn about ourselves in a new way.

I will start with a bit of a summery as to how my micro choices resulted in a macro mistake. Earlier this year I was due to write the QAP tool, I studied for it and prepared the best that I could. I was presented with the opportunity to write the tool with a friend whom I had gone to school with, and since we often meet up for continuing education it seemed like a great way to have a reason to connect again. I was aware that the tool was meant to be taken alone, but I chose to write it in collaboration. At the time I rationalized it in a few ways, I had heard through the grape vine that many people over the years have written it in partners or groups for support- so I rationalized that it was only fair that I also had support. Another way I rationalized it was by telling myself that since it was open book and I could use the internet, that having a partner in the room wasn't really an advantage other than moral support as we each submitted answers that we thought to be correct. I am also a very community oriented person; I am always looking for ways to incorporate inclusiveness in every area of my life- my home life, work life, and learning life. I find every area of life is improved if one can find a way to bring a community mind set into it. This is the mindset that I brought from my previous career of youth work and into my Dental Hygiene education and career. I was awarded the Henry Schein Community Health for having a community mindset in school. I used this community mind set as another way to rationalize that providing an avenue for community was more important than following all of the rules. Although even at the time that I was doing all this rationalizing, my conscience was telling me to take a different path. However, I chose not to listen.

This situation was one of those moments in time that I very much regret. I hear all the time how people say not to regret the past as it has shaped who you are today, but I do not subscribe to that at all. I do regret the decision I made and my initial reaction was one of severe anxiety, depression, self doubt and many other conflicting emotions (I know as the College of Dental Hygiene you may think you have taken a hard line in this case, but rest assured I took a much harder line with myself). Although since working through the initial stages of regret, I have been trying to shift my thinking to take it as an experience to learn from, something in life that I have to constantly remind myself to do.

This process has actually led me along a very interesting path of introspection. I took some time to reflect on the situation and have learned a lot, and am still continuing to learn even as I write this reflective paper. A little bit of a back story: I often ride quite a high horse-

especially when it comes to issues of morality and ethics, and I always have even since I was a small child. I see the world in a very black and white way. I was even our class rep in my Dental Hygiene program where I mediated issues within my own class and with issues between the class and faculty. I am often a compassionate ear to my friends and family who have gone through different situations in life where they are wrestling with poor decision making, and I always strive to show a lot of grace, because after all- they are only human, and everybody makes mistakes. Although through the situation of choosing to collaborate with another registrant and disregarding the statement of understanding showed me how easy it was to allow the micro decisions to lead to a macro mistake how hard it was to show myself grace, has shown me just how shallow my pool of grace actually was. It was easy to be gracious to others who were making mistakes I could never imagine making on my own- from way up on my high horse.

This whole process has made me stop and really look at how I hold myself in comparison to others. It has allowed me to work through a few issues within myself that have led to me having a more positive view of myself, and more confidence in my abilities and choice of career. When I first got the email saying that I was being reviewed, I was so embarrassed that I actually almost quit and walked away from the dental profession- which was a pretty extreme reaction, but that was just how embarrassed I was that I made a mistake. Admitting to those around me that I had done this, and was going through the inquiry process, did the opposite of what my inside voice told me it was going to do. Rather than those around me (friends, family, boss) judging me for my poor choice, they surrounded me with love and support. The fact that I found that love and support to be surprising showed me a bit of how I view myself and how I believe others view me. I feel more stable and validated in my workplace after admitting my mistake and seeing them encourage and support me through the many phone calls and emails as well as my trip to Vancouver for a meeting with the investigator. I have also felt love and support from those friends and family that I have shared this experience with. So in that regard I have been thankful for those outcomes.

The process itself has been a very tough one but I have the utmost respect for those at the CDHBC that have been ushering me through this process. The patience that they have all demonstrated has been very nice to see. Even though I was clearly in the wrong with collaborating on the QAP, I have never been treated with disrespect by anyone I have had to connect with at the office. The person I was the most surprised to be impressed with was my investigator. She was such a great communicator and so professional that I felt secure that she was representing me in the case well. Everyone else that I have dealt with have all been very professional and respectful as well.

In summary, I do very much regret making the decision to collaborate with another registrant on the QAP and disregard the statement of understanding, even though I learned some very valuable lessons through this journey- if I had the chance to turn back time and listen to my conscience, I would do so in a heartbeat. I am thankful that this has reinstalled in me the

importance of following the rules and using my own mistakes to help others is the best thing that I could ever hope for after all of this.