

Life Changes

Concepts and skills introduced

- Emotional intelligence
- Self-perception

Situation & Exercise

Martin is a 40-year-old dad who has very recently become a widower. His wife, Ana, was three years younger than him and died in a car-crash where the bus she was in was hit by a speeding van. Due to this, Martin is now solely responsible of Hugo, their 13-year-old children, who also happens to have Down's Syndrome.

Martin is a hard-working plumber who is self-employed, and Ana used to tend a counter in a store. They both moved to Madrid for work when they were young, met one another and eventually formed a family. Given that both come from traditionally catholic backgrounds, and trusting that their jobs were well-established and secure, they went forward with the pregnancy, even though they knew Hugo would have Down's Syndrome. Now that Ana has sadly passed away, however, the challenges have multiplied exponentially.

Although Martin is still working and can provide for their bereaved family, the nature of his work forces him to spend quite long hours travelling throughout the greater Madrid metropolitan area in his van. It used to be the case that Ana, working closer by, would pick Hugo up from school every day, and bring him home early, but sadly that is just not possible anymore. Martin, although it pains him greatly, has no family support to rely on, and must trust Hugo to take care of himself on the way home from school until he arrives in the evening, which makes him immensely worried, with Madrid being such a large city.

To complicate things, Hugo is entering a complicated age, with mood swings that are only worsened by the fact of having lost his mother. This is affecting his performance at school, where the attention and resources given to students with special needs are by no means the best available, considering

it is a part of the largely overburdened Spanish public schooling system. An alternative that might be able to remedy this would be for Martin to make Hugo switch schools and attend a private school with specialists working with children with special needs, but in order to afford it, he would need to work even longer hours. It all has come to such an impasse that Martin is feeling quite overburdened by the whole situation and entering a state of depression where he sees no way out.

Getting to know yourself

Now that you have read about this case, try to reflect on what happened within the framework of the emotional intelligence skills you have acquired through PeerCare.

What we propose for you to try is to complete an online survey whose results you will be able to use in order to train your ability to become self-aware and act proactively.

The VIA Institute on Character has a short survey available in many languages, which is meant for people all around the world to discover which characteristics are predominant in their personalities and engage in self-perception and mindfulness activities.

The first step of this activity will be for each participant to complete the 10-minute survey (<https://www.viacharacter.org/Survey/Account/Register>), and download the report it generates at the end. Everybody checks their results out and engages in a discussion about their top three strengths.

- Do they agree with what the report shows? If not, how does their self-perception differ from the survey results?
- Can the participants provide three weaknesses to counter their strengths? What are they?
- Can participants think of any ways to put their strengths to use and minimize their weaknesses when tasked with caretaking?

Once this little activity has been completed (either in person or through the platform), participants will hopefully have acquired a better understanding of themselves and taken the first steps towards improving their emotional management skills, that is to say, knowing themselves.

