

Starting To See the Change

Concepts and skills introduced

- Emotion management.
- Observing and identifying emotions.
- Strategies for daily life.

Situation & Exercise

Sarah is 45 years old. Her husband, Peter, is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis for 17 years. The disease, as the years go by, has been progressing and deteriorating his health. Now Peter is dependent for all the activities of his daily life, such as dressing, grooming, eating or moving.

They have great support from the Multiple Sclerosis Association of their community: every day, Peter goes there to perform different types of therapies. To do this, every morning has a Home Hygiene Service that the City Council provides, so Sarah has all the mornings available to go to work (in a supermarket).

In the afternoon, Sarah and Peter go to pick up their 11-year-old son at school and spend some time together. However, in addition to work, Sarah still has obligations at home with domestic chores, tasks that only she can take care of. Peter, during the afternoons, also requires her attention, whether to drink water, change the diaper or give him dinner (which is also responsible for Sarah). So, at the end of the day, Sarah ends up very tired.

Often, Sarah also needs to go for a walk alone, or visit some of her friends, but usually does not have enough time. She would love to take up her old hobby and return to painting classes, but the time she has in the afternoon is to dedicate it to her husband and son. Therefore, Sarah does not perform any activity that satisfies herself.

The professionals of the association have told her that, since there is no free public service that can help her in the afternoons with Peter's care or household chores, maybe she should hire someone to help her. In this way, Sarah would have time for herself. However, she is reluctant: she says that they do not have so much money to hire a person every afternoon, and that

she has a moral obligation to take care of her home, son and husband. She explains that, for a long time, she left aside her own hobbies and she assumes that her life is like this now.

One day, talking with the association's psychologist, Sarah and the professional come to an agreement: Sarah would organize a plan that she would like to do, just for one day. That day, she would have to hire someone who can stay with Peter (the association can provide trusted staff) or, perhaps, she could ask someone she knows and trust. After doing this programmed activity, Sarah must write down what her emotions are at that moment and analyse them.

A few days later, Sarah informs herself about a thematic painting workshop that will take place in her neighbourhood, and decides that this will be the event she will attend and for which she'll hire someone to take care of Peter. The association recommends Martin, a worker specialized in caring for people with disabilities. Sarah accepts.

The day arrives, and before going to the workshop, Sarah feels some guilt for leaving her husband and son. Her feelings and emotions are contradictory, since she feels bad, but at the same time, she has a great enthusiasm to repaint and meet new people.

After two hours of workshop, Sarah returns home with a big smile, excited and confident that she will resume her love for painting from that moment. It has served to disconnect and focus on an activity with which she tunes. She feels calm and satisfied. In addition, he has met other very friendly neighbours with whom he has had pleasant conversations. With a smile on her face, Sarah begins to write what she feels on paper, just as she told the psychologist.

Debate

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.

Try to reflect on these issues:

- What emotions do you think Sarah feels in this story? Try to mention three that are nice, and three that are unpleasant.

- In your opinion, which are the strategies Sarah uses that reflect an adequate emotional intelligence?
- What can Sarah improve on her daily actions to have a better quality of life?
- What do you think Sarah will write on the paper, after having carried out the activity? Have you ever felt a similar sensation?

