

Example of AppliedEI – Goal Directedness

The story of Joe Simpson and Simon Yates is a deeply moving experience for all who read the book or watch the docu-film *Touching the Void*. How they dealt with what happened on their expedition to climb the 21,000 feet Siula Grande in the Peruvian Andes is complex and challenging from an emotional intelligence perspective. Here we highlight just one aspect of Joe's experience – *Goal Directedness*, while recognising the many, many facets of Simon and Joe's behaviour we are omitting from this remarkable adventure.

As they began their return journey, shattered and close to the edge of their physical ability already, Joe Simpson fell through a snow ledge on to a ridge, driving the lower half of his leg up through his knee cap. This is a disastrous and painful injury in any circumstances, let alone when they are still 20,000ft on a sub-zero mountain that requires every ounce of attention and ability.

Simpson's partner, Simon Yates, then made the choice to aid his friend back down the mountain instead of the other option which was to leave him there. Lowering Simpson 150ft at a time using all the rope they had was going to be a long slow and very painful descent. Then, their position worsened. Yates, lowered Simpson off an 'overhang' leaving him dangling 80 vertical feet above a crevasse entrance. At this time the weather was atrocious. Both men's eyes were being frozen shut as the cold and wind drove relentlessly at them, hypothermia and frostbite were setting in and there was little useful visibility as the wind and snow continued to increase their ferocity.

After dark had fallen, the weather worsened still and they had been in this same position on a near vertical snow face for hours; the weight of Simpson on the rope was making Yates's situation come to head. Cut the rope and have a remote chance of surviving or keep holding on and be dragged to certain death? He cut the rope. Subsequently, Simpson fell into the crevasse, further compounding his injuries and situation. Joe Simpson was now in the most 'hopeless' position imaginable. All these injuries, in a seemingly bottomless crevasse, many days from any discernable habitation on the side of an angry mountain.

Both Simpson and Yates held true to one quality throughout this ordeal. They kept making decisions. No matter how untenable we perceive our situation to be, we can take action, we can make decisions. They avoided the victim mentality that would have seen them in their graves, but chose to live, and by living, have the ability to make decisions.

Out of the crevasse, on his own, high up on a huge glacier strewn with rocks, gravel, blue ice and under a very hot sun Joe made more decisions. He would hop back to base camp (a long distance!). This didn't work. So he decided to crawl. This did work. But it was an agonising feat carrying his worsening and still very painful injuries. Deciding to crawl to base camp was unrealistic, and he soon discovered this. The damage to his morale and his conviction of success was too great with such a lofty goal. So, he did something amazing. He set himself 20 minute goals. Manageable goals. He set himself a target of reaching spot 'x' in 20 minutes. If he did, he felt great and knew he was achieving. If he didn't, if it took 22 minutes, he forced himself to go further/faster. His crawl took 3 days. Joe's ability to focus and measure his success saved his life and gave meaning and purpose in a time otherwise solely inhabited by despair and pain.

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