

My Strengths and Weaknesses in the Area of Conversing with Coevals

Student's Name

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Title of Course

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Growing up in a large family, I got used to constantly being surrounded with a large number of people from an extremely young age. Our house was always loud and full of life. It was virtually impossible to find a place to be left alone for longer than half an hour or so. I could only dream of peace and quietness during the day. And since I am an introvert and like to spend most of my time performing solitary activities, it was quite a struggle during my teenage years. Besides, I was the youngest of four children. Dealing with my siblings wasn't always easy and I had to find my voice quickly. I had no choice but to learn how to assert myself, for due to their advantage in age and size, they tended not to regard me as an equal.

Since we had only two bathrooms, our house used to become more like a battlefield every morning when we were all getting ready for high school. Every family member needed to take a shower, and clean his teeth, blow-dry hair, and nobody cared that everybody else needs to do that as well. We all loved each other very much, but when you are a fourteen year old girl who is going to be late for school and doesn't even have her makeup on because her brother wouldn't let her in the bathroom, you don't really care if he has to shave. The confrontations happened every single day; I would often end up in tears, because my older and pushier siblings would get in before me and leave me hanging. I asked my mother to intervene, but she always told me I should handle it on my own. I decided to face it in an adult and constructive way and look for a solution that would work for everyone. It was not usual for our family to discuss things all together; everyone would just take a course of action that seemed right to him. I started reforming that practice by facilitating communication between the members of my family. I was acting as a mediator, hearing everybody's demands and suggestions and organizing our time to accommodate all of them. Suddenly, my position in the family changed. Not only did everybody start treating me with respect, they actually began coming to me to solve their conflicts. I was triumphant, my 19-year-old sister and 17-

year-old brother wanted my assistance in settling their quarrel, while I was only fourteen. Just a few months back they were treating me like a baby, who had no say in anything, now I had more authority than my parents.

This success gave me an idea that I could accomplish the same level of interpersonal effectiveness in high school. I didn't have any particular problems with my peers, however, outside of my circle of friends not many people knew me. My goal was not to gain power or become the most popular girl, I just wanted to be known and respected. I started paying more attention to my fellow students and tried to understand them as they are. It is not easy to communicate with all the other teenagers in high school; some are very difficult to identify with, others are not willing to accept just anybody into their clique. I became aware of a big range of peculiar social dynamics. Fitting in came naturally to me, but in order to be a part of the popular crowd I would have to compromise some of my core values and pretend to be someone I'm not. However, as I mentioned above, it never was my goal, so what I tried to do instead was to become an effective conversationalist and a person easy to communicate with. I did my best to learn how to really listen and put myself into other people's shoes. I realized that it was crucial to think about inner motives and driving forces when forming opinion about people, instead of just looking on the surface and making hasty judgments. No miracles happened; there were no drastic changes in how I was perceived by my coevals, however, I learned how to get along with practically anybody. Now I know how to express my opinion without hurting somebody's feelings or provoking aggression. I can hold my own in a group and communicate effectively one on one.

Additionally, after paying such close attention to my coevals, I could see how important it was to act with confidence. The more self-confident you are, the more you will be respected by others. It is particularly so with the domineering types, who will not even

give the insecure kids the time of day. I learned how to appear confident and poised at all times and how to make others take me seriously.

Observing people made me understand that we all are just as much alike as we are different. There are things that all human beings have in common. We all have fears and insecurities, we all get anxious in unfamiliar situations and we all have bad days. At the same time, everybody is unique and entitled to understanding and respect for his personal qualities.

The deeper I delved into observation and researching of people's psychology, the stronger grew my interest in human mind. This is why I would like to study psychology in college. I believe, I could further improve my intra- and interpersonal skills and acquire knowledge necessary to help people solve their problems. I would find great joy in being able to tackle challenging social situations, not just for myself, but for others as well. Moreover, I could even assist people in solving their inner conflicts.