

## ***Independence***

“Independence is the ability to be self-directed and self-controlled in your thinking and actions and be free of emotional dependency. Independent people are self-reliant in planning and making important decisions” (EQ Edge, Stein and Book, p.93)

The following is a self-assessment, adapted from Stein and Book’s, EQ Edge (pages 100-101).

1. Over the next week, record any instances when you turned to someone else to make a decision. Then assess whether you were asking for input (useful information that would better inform your decision) or whether you really wanted the person/people to make the decision for you.
2. Thinking through your answers, where do you think you fall on the scale between being dependent and independent?
3. Has anyone recently implied or told you that you are turning to them too often for help?
4. If you have found yourself behaving independently, how did you feel about your decision(s)? How did you feel about yourself and how others might regard you? If you felt bad, consider some of the “costs” you will incur for independent behavior.

When I was at the university, I had an opportunity for summer employment in a national park. The pay would be considerably less than I would make if I went back home, lived with my parents and worked. I was prepared to take the step to go work in the national park, but my parents told me that if I did, they would no longer help me with my university expenses. Ouch!

1. In this situation, what would you have done?

I chose to go home and work and continue to be more independent by providing for more of my own university expenses. My parents were really not against me going to work elsewhere, but they wanted me to see the cost of taking this independent step. I had to weigh the cost as well. Many of you are university students who are also beginning to be more independent from your parents (and you want to be). Exercise assertiveness (done humbly and with sensitivity) as you take these steps. Your parents do want you to grow up and be independent and self-sufficient, but they also are not sure you are ready. Act responsibly with decisions you make, communicate your love and appreciation to them, but slowly ask them to allow you to make more and more of your decisions, independently. It is part of growing up.

Finally, from The Student EQ Edge( p.69), you may want to do the following:

Do something by yourself that you would normally do with others that will make you slightly uncomfortable (eat alone, go to a movie, go shopping etc). Afterwards, assess what emotions you felt and why you think you felt them. How did you feel after completing the activity?

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