

Personal Development Resources

Quick Guide to Developing your Self-Awareness

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Have you ever worked with someone who was very self-aware?

This person considered the needs and feelings of others, took responsibility for her mistakes, was humble about her strengths, never said thoughtless things, and was aware of how her words and actions affected others.

Put simply, this person was great to work with!

Self-awareness is one of the most important qualities that you can have as a leader, and developing self-awareness is important in both your personal and professional life.

In this Quick Guide, we'll look at self-awareness in more detail, and we'll explore how you can develop yours.



What Is Self-Awareness?

Researchers Shelley Duval and Robert Wicklund published the first major theory of self-awareness in the early 1970s. They said that self-awareness is the ability to look inward, think deeply about your behavior, and consider how it aligns with your moral standards and values.

They argued that when your behavior is out of alignment with your standards, you feel uncomfortable, unhappy and negative. By contrast, when your behavior and values are aligned, you feel positive and self-confident. Self-awareness also gives you a deeper understanding of your own attitudes, opinions, and knowledge.

Self-awareness is sometimes confused with self-consciousness, but there's an important difference between these. Self-consciousness is a hyper-sensitized state of self-awareness; it's the excessive preoccupation with your own manners, behavior, or appearance, and is often seen as negative. Self-awareness is focused on the impact your behavior has on other people, and, as such, is much more positive.

Self-awareness is one of the most important elements of emotional intelligence. It gives you the ability to understand and control your own emotions and actions, and it helps you understand how these affect the emotions and actions of others.



Why Self-Awareness Is Important?

Self-awareness brings benefits in both your personal and professional life.

If you're aware of your own strengths and weaknesses, you have the power to use your strengths intentionally, and to manage or eliminate your weaknesses. When you can admit what you don't know – and you have the humility to ask for help when you need it – you increase your credibility with your team.

Knowing your strengths and weaknesses also has positive, long-term benefits for your career, as well as for your long-term health and happiness. In one study, researchers found that workers who were aware of their strengths were more self-confident, were more highly paid, and were happier at work.

On a personal level, having self-awareness allows you to approach people and situations with confidence. In turn, this means that you gain control of your own life, direction, and experiences.



How to Develop Self-Awareness

There are several ways to develop self-awareness. Keep in mind, however, that this takes time and work.

1. Know Your Strengths and Weaknesses

You can start building self-awareness by learning where you are strongest and weakest. Conduct a Personal SWOT Analysis to get a better understanding of this.



How to Develop Self-Awareness continued

2. Reflect on the Impact You Have

When you are self-aware, you understand how you instinctively think, connect with other people, communicate, and make decisions.

A great way to understand these things is to keep a journal, where you write about your day, the things that you did, the emotions you experienced and expressed, and the consequences of these. This helps you think about what does and doesn't work for you, and helps you be more aware of your impact on other people.

Or take time in the evening to reflect quietly about your day, and think about how effectively you worked with people. What did you do really well? And what could you have done better?

3. Focus on Others

People who are self-aware are conscious of how their words and actions influence others.

Take time to think about what you say carefully, and think about how it will affect the person that you're speaking to. If you find yourself taking your stress, anger, or frustrations out on others, stop immediately. Instead, see if you can find something positive about the situation. Take a few deep breaths, or even walk away if you find that you can't control your emotions.

When you manage your own words or actions, it doesn't mean that you're being false. Rather, it shows that you care about other people enough not to say or do something that might affect them in a negative way.

Showing humility is an important part of this. When you're humble, you focus your attention and energy on others and not on yourself.

4. Ask for Feedback

Getting feedback is important for developing self-awareness – after all, this is often the only way that you can find out about issues that you may not be able to face directly.

When you ask for feedback from the people around you, this gives you a chance to see your behavior from their point of view. What's more, it can help you identify weaknesses that you can't see, or that you'd prefer to ignore.

Achieving Goals

- By developing self-awareness, you get to know what does and doesn't work for you, and you learn how to manage your impact on other people.
- People with high levels of self-awareness are more effective as leaders, because they deal with people positively, and they inspire trust and credibility in their team members.
- As a result, these people also often have more satisfying careers and higher incomes.
- To develop self-awareness, learn about your strengths and weaknesses. Take time to analyse the decisions that you make, focus on managing your emotions, and be humble about your accomplishments.