

SELF AWARENESS

Compiled by

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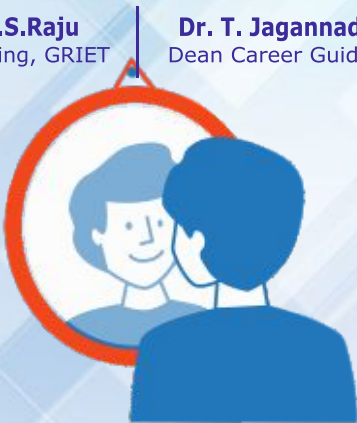
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GOKARAJU RANGARAJU

Institute of Engineering and Technology

(Autonomous)

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SKILL
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Definition: Conscious knowledge of one's own character and feelings.

What is Self-Awareness?

Simply put, self-awareness is an awareness of the self, with the self-being what makes one's identity unique. These unique components include thoughts, experiences, and abilities. Self-awareness means the habit of paying attention to the way you think, feel, and behave. Self-awareness means the habit of paying attention to the way you think, feel, and behave. More specifically:



It means looking for patterns in the way we tend to think about and perceive what happens to, how we explain things to ourselves and make sense of the world around us.

It means understanding our own emotions and moods. Instead of trying to avoid or “fix” how we feel, we observe and stay curious about our feelings, even the difficult, uncomfortable ones. It means paying attention to how we tend to act and behave in certain situations. What are our default responses to things? What are our habits and tendencies?

In short, self-awareness means paying attention to and trying to learn about our own psychology.



What are the benefits of self-awareness?

It's hard to overstate the benefits of self-awareness, so I'll just list a few of the most common positives that come from increasing our self-awareness:

Better relationships. It's difficult to ask for what we want and need in a relationship when we're not very clear about those things ourselves. What's more, the less self-awareness we have, the easier it is to get defensive in our interactions with people, which is a recipe for disaster in any type of relationship. If you want to improve your relationships, start by trying to become more self-aware.

Improved moods. Our mood and how we tend to feel hour-to-hour is largely dependent on how we choose to think and behave. When we improve our awareness of the relationship between thoughts, behavior, and emotion, it becomes easier to regulate our feelings and moods.

Clearer thinking and better decision-making. Poor decision-making often comes from muddled thinking and strong emotional reactions. When we become more aware of our habits of thought and feeling, we can more easily distinguish between short term impulses or desires and long term values and goals.

More effective communication. Achieving a clearer sense of what you believe and what you really want makes it far easier to communicate in any aspect of life, whether it's with a spouse, manager at work, or best friend. The better we know ourselves, the easier it is to communicate assertively, to be honest about what we would like and respectful of the wishes of others.

Increased productivity. The most common cause of procrastination and poor productivity isn't a lack of effort or commitment, it's interference from ourselves. When we struggle to get to work, it's usually because on some level our own thoughts, emotions, or habits are getting in the way. Improving self-awareness can help eliminate many of these hidden obstacles to productivity.

Levels of Self-Awareness

So how exactly do children become aware of themselves as separate beings? Researchers suggest that children progress through a series of levels of self-awareness between birth and approximately age 4 or 5. Self-awareness is observed by how children respond to their own reflection in a mirror.



Level 1: Differentiation - At this point, children start to become aware that what it reflected in a mirror is different from what they simply perceive in the environment.

Level 2: Situation - This level of self-awareness is characterized by a growing understanding that self-produced movements can be seen in the mirror's surface. Children are also aware that it is their own movements they are observing.

Level 3: Identification - At this point, children recognize the image in the mirror as themselves rather than someone else staring back at them.

Level 4: Permanence - Children can not only identify themselves reflected in a mirror, they can also identify their own image in pictures and home movies.

Level 5: Self-consciousness or "meta" self-awareness - At this level, children are not only aware of themselves from their own perspective, but also become aware of how they are in the minds of others.



Types of Self-Awareness

Psychologists often break self-awareness down into two different types, either public or private.

Public Self-Awareness

This type emerges when people are aware of how they appear to others. Public self-awareness often emerges in situations when people are at the center of attention, such as when giving a presentation or talking to a group of friends. This type of self-awareness often compels people to adhere to social norms. When we are aware that we are being watched and evaluated, we often try to behave in ways that are socially acceptable and desirable. Public self-awareness can also lead to evaluation anxiety in which people become distressed, anxious, or worried about how they are perceived by others.



1. LEADERSHIP
WISDOM



2. LEADERSHIP
IDENTITY



3. LEADERSHIP
REPUTATION



4. LEADERSHIP
BRAND

Private Self-Awareness

This type happens when people become aware of some aspects of themselves, but only in a private way. For example, seeing your face in the mirror is a type of private self-awareness. Feeling your stomach lurch when you realize you forgot to study for an important test or feeling your heart flutter when you see someone you are attracted to are also examples of private self-awareness.

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How Does Self-Awareness Develop?

Researchers have proposed that an area of the brain known as the anterior cingulate cortex located in the frontal lobe region plays an important role in developing self-awareness. Studies have also used brain imaging to show that this region becomes activated in adults who are self-aware. The Lewis and Brooks-Gunn experiment suggests that self-awareness begins to emerge in children around the age of 18 months, an age that coincides with the rapid growth of spindle cells in the anterior cingulate cortex.

However, one study found that a patient retained self-awareness even with extensive damage to areas of the brain including the insula and the anterior cingulate cortex. This suggests that these areas of the brain are not required for most aspects of self-awareness and that awareness may instead arise from interactions distributed among brain networks.



How to increase self-awareness

1. Pay attention to what bothers you about other people

Often the things that irritate us the most in other people are a reflection of some quality we dislike in ourselves.

2. Meditate on your mind

You've probably heard of mindfulness meditation. It's the simple practice of keeping your attention focused on your breath or some other physical sensation.

3. Read high-quality fiction

It's often said that great writers are great observers of the world around them. And it's this capacity to notice subtle details and features of life that allow them to recreate it so movingly in their work.

4. Identify your emotional kryptonite

Nobody likes to feel sad, anxious, ashamed or any other variety of negative emotion. Which is understandable since they feel bad, sometimes painfully so. And while we all recoil from negative

emotions, each of us tends to have one particular negative emotion that we especially dislike and try to avoid.

5. Draw a timeline of your life

One of the most eye-opening “tricks” I perform as a psychologist often happens in the second session with my clients. At the end of our first meeting, I sometimes ask them to spend 20 minutes drawing a timeline of their life at some point before our next meeting. I instruct them to sit down with a blank sheet of paper and a pencil and, starting with their birth, mark the major events in their life along the timeline. Specifically, events that had a big impact on them—big or small, positive or negative.

6. Ask for feedback (and take it well)

Here’s a question: How often do you deliberately seek out feedback about yourself?

If you’re anything like me—or most people, I suspect—probably not often. Which is a shame because good feedback is one of the fastest and most effective ways to grow and improve ourselves.

Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

Choose a solid relationship in your life: parent, spouse, best friend, etc. Someone with whom you have enough relationship credit that they would be willing to point out something negative.

Start small. Ask about something initially that's not too big or threatening. This is about building up the other person's confidence that you can take criticism well. They'll be more likely to tell you about a major personality issue if you've shown them that you can take criticism about household chores well.

7. Do some micro-travel

New places and strange environments get us out of our routines and force us to be more self-aware.

Micro-travel is the simple idea that we can still engage in travel but on a local scale. For example, if you live in a large city or urban area, you're likely familiar with your own neighborhood, downtown, and maybe a couple other spots. But there are probably whole neighborhoods you haven't spent much if any time in. This is an opportunity for micro-travel.

8. Learn a new skill

Just like traveling forces us to become more self-aware by throwing us into novel situations, learning something new increases self-awareness by forcing us to think and act in novel ways.

9. Identify cognitive distortions

Cognitive distortions are inaccurate thoughts and beliefs that warp how we see things, including ourselves. Just like we all can get into unhelpful physical habits (e.g.: nail-biting, snacking late at night, etc.), we all have certain mental habits that aren't doing us any favors.

10. Make time to clarify your values

Here's a frightening question: How often do you make time to deliberately and carefully consider your highest values and aspirations?

If you're like most of us, the busyness of daily life tends to sweep you up—day after day, week after week—in a constant stream of activity without much time for reflection, especially reflection on the most important things.

Summary

Unfortunately, the term self-awareness can come across as a bit magical and esoteric, complicated psychological jargon for a mysterious process deep within human nature.

But it's not.

Self-awareness is simply the capacity to observe our selves—to take notice of and pay attention to patterns within our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. And it's a skill that we all have.

Some of us may have more or less of it to start, but there are plenty of straightforward exercises anyone can take advantage of to improve their own self-awareness no matter where it stands right now.





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