

What It Is

Self-awareness is the conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires.

How Improving It Helps You

The key word in the definition of self-awareness is "conscious."

You may subconsciously be aware of your emotions and their effect on you, but if you're not consciously addressing them then you won't be able to manage them. They'll manage you instead!

Self-awareness is foundational in how you relate to yourself and others. Gaining a better understanding of your own emotions, why they're arising, and how you're reacting to them will help you to choose more mindful and beneficial responses.

Having a clearer understanding of the motives behind your everyday actions is the first step in making intentional, positive changes in your attitudes, behaviors, relationships, and circumstances.

Take some time to think about why you want to gain more self-awareness, and write your response here:

Why do I want to improve my self-awareness?

Practices to Be More Self-Aware

Journaling

Take quick notes throughout the day on emotions that you've felt. Try to use one or two specific words to name the emotion and describe why you think you felt that way. Be honest with yourself, even if you think it isn't good to feel a certain emotion. You can keep this journal private, so don't worry about others judging your emotions.

To gain more insight into your emotions, here is some further information you can record about your interactions throughout the day and how they made you feel:

- Who you interacted with and your relationship to them
- The topic of the interaction
- What emotions you felt during the interaction
- How strongly you felt those emotions
- Whether you felt in control of those emotions

Mood Meter App

If you'd rather not use a journal, download the free Mood Meter app, developed by researchers at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.

This app allows you to record your emotions whenever you want, choosing from pre-selected words on a grid. You can set reminders to check in, describe why you're feeling the way you are, and view reports of past emotional check-ins. Learn more at www.moodmeterapp.com.

Assess Your Self-Talk

What you think affects how you feel, and what you do and say. Pay attention to how you speak to yourself in your own mind. Are you often bolstering your own confidence? Or do your thoughts tend to be self-defeating?

Self-talk can change your emotions for better or worse, so it's important to evaluate how you address yourself. Start listening in and pose these questions to yourself:

- Would I be comfortable saying these things to someone I love?
- Am I overreacting to this situation?
- Am I making assumptions about what others think?
- Am I giving myself labels?
- Am I making things more black and white than they really are?
- Are these thoughts helping me to move forward or making me feel stuck?

Be More Mindful

Mindfulness has been scientifically proven to have innumerable benefits, and each of the techniques above could fall under improving mindfulness. Being mindful and being aware of your own thoughts and feelings go hand in hand. Here are several more ways to increase your self-awareness through mindful practices:

1. Learn simple meditation techniques that help you to focus on the present moment.
2. Eat slowly and intentionally, noticing how your senses respond to the experience.
3. Practice yoga, tai chi, or any physical activity with slow, controlled movements.
4. Go for a walk or run in a natural setting as regularly as you can.
5. Close your eyes while listening to music you enjoy, paying close attention to each aspect of it.

Mindfulness is all about keeping yourself present. When your mind is focused on the present moment, you'll be more adept at noticing how your emotions are affected by both internal and external sources.

Choosing from these techniques or others you've learned, commit to at least one method of improving your self-awareness and write it here:

To improve my self-awareness, what steps am I going to take right now?

Questions For Reflection

Once you've spent some time using these or other practices to focus on improving your self-awareness, think through the questions below to reflect on what you've found.

What are some patterns I can see through my journal entries?

***Is there a particular emotion that I feel more often than others?
When and why do I feel it?***

Are there certain situations or interactions with certain people where I could improve how I respond to my emotions?

How would I describe my own self-talk? Harsh, gracious, critical, supportive, cynical, mindful? Is it primarily one view or multiple?

What are some things I've learned about myself by paying more attention to my emotions?

How am I going to use these insights?
