

Improving Self-Awareness

Career Development

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



PHYSICAL Self

- Awareness of our bodies
- Interconnectedness of the physical self and the physical environment
- Physically uncomfortable leads to emotionally uncomfortable



EMOTIONAL Self

- Emotion often gets undervalued
- Cannot avoid feeling emotions
- Managing how we react to our feelings and emotions



MENTAL Self

- Concerns our thoughts and our imagination
- Can come upon us without our control
- Thoughts can get distorted and do not accurately reflect a true situation



SPIRITUAL Self

- Not meant in a religious sense
- Continuing sense of identity
- What a person values

STRATEGIES FOR AWARENESS

Scanning:

- Allows you to focus your attention throughout your body
- Take note of how things stand
- Practicing can make you aware

Progressive Relaxation:

- Can improve one's ability to relax
- Release any muscular tension that you were holding in your muscles
- Progressive relaxation is a prelude to relaxation response

Physical Stressors:

- Become more aware of physical elements that create stress
- Examples: Smoking, losing sleep, eating unhealthily, or setting up your work space non-ergonomically are examples

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AWARENESS OF THE EMOTIONAL SELF

VALIDITY OF EMOTIONS

The validity of emotions means that in any situation, if you feel an emotion, such as anger, regardless of the cause, it is valid to acknowledge to yourself that you do indeed feel anger.

UTILITY OF EMOTIONS

When we feel emotions they provide us with important information about both our environment and, more importantly, our assessment of that environment.

EMOTIONAL AROUSAL

Emotions primary characteristics: the level to which they excite us, known as arousal; and the degree to which we experience them as pleasant or unpleasant, known as valence.

EMOTIONAL VALENCE

Emotional valence refers to whether the emotion is experienced as a pleasant condition or an unpleasant condition.

TIPS FOR ACKNOWLEDGING AND MANAGING EMOTIONS

1. Recognize and accept emotions
2. Consider physical self and its impact to manage emotions
3. Use emotions to drive positive performance

YOUR PERSONAL TIPS:

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DISTORTED THOUGHTS

Magnifying and Minimizing to magnify the importance of things, or on the contrary, minimize or shrink them into being insignificant	Thinking in the imperative having a fixed idea of what other should or shouldn't do, setting expectations in others that can't be met	Dichotomous reasoning an all or nothing mentality, thinking a situation can ONLY be one way or the other	Destructive labeling Definitive overgeneralization of some one or something, attributing a single error or misfortune to be a failure for forever	Personalizing Considering yourself the cause for a negative event that is external to you and that you are not responsible for

HERE ARE SOME APPROACHES TO COUNTERING DISTORTED THOUGHTS:

1. **Rephrase a thought into a complete sentence.** For example, instead of thinking "loser!" you may rephrase that into "if I don't pass this test, I am going to turn out to be a loser." Once you have rephrased the thought into a complete sentence, the nature of the distortion becomes more evident (in this example, magnification).
2. **Counter your distorted thought with a question or a statement that clarifies your reasoning.** For example, if you notice you are magnifying, ask yourself if it is really that bad, or how likely will that worst case scenario come to pass. If you are engaged in destructive labeling, ask yourself for specifics. Identify what specific behavior or situation makes you think this.
3. Try this rule of thumb for expanding your focus and reframing the problem: **The real problem is not _____; the real problem is _____.** This allows you the possibility of finding alternative solutions to a problem that might under other circumstances seem unsolvable.
4. **Write down your thoughts in a journal.** When you have all sorts of negative thoughts tying your brain in knots, keeping a journal is a surefire way to untangle all those knots.

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HERE ARE SOME SPECIFIC WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR POSITIVITY:

- **Practice meditation daily.** While most meditation methods are beneficial in cultivating positivity, the loving-kindness meditation is particularly helpful, especially in countering resentments.
- **Let go of resentment** and forgive others. We often think that forgiveness is a way to let wrongdoers off the hook, but forgiveness isn't about the person you're forgiving so much as it is about your letting go of anger that weighs you down. Nevertheless, it would be irresponsible to suggest that forgiving someone is an easy thing to do. One practice that can help is whenever you are angry with someone else, try to make a list of all the things you find good about that person.
- **Celebrate successes** no matter how big or small. Celebrate not just your successes, but other people's successes as well. Human beings are hardwired to connect with each other. When you take an active interest in another person's achievements, you help to reinforce those connections that so enrich our lives.
- **Work to foster positive emotions** such as enthusiasm through singing, dancing, and listening to upbeat music.
- **Exercise.** It's been mentioned many times in this course but bears mentioning again because it is such a benefit.
- **Help others.** Helping out a person in need can have a profound effect on your own thought processes. When we volunteer our time for others, it takes us out of thinking about ourselves, which is often a great source of negativity.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS THAT YOU CAN DEEPEN YOUR OWN HUMILITY:

- **Appreciate others.** When you focus on the abilities, concerns, and accomplishments of others, this takes you out of being self oriented. At every opportunity take time to thank other people.
- **Share praise and credit.** Whenever you accomplish anything, if you look carefully, you will find that you didn't do it alone. Other people are always helping us in ways that are sometimes obvious and sometimes subtle. While it may be tempting to bask in people's praise and adoration, when you find ways to share credit and share praise, you not only help to deepen your humility, but make it so others want to help you even more.
- **Allow others to be first and foremost.** Insisting on being the first in line, the first to raise your hand in a class, the first to get the parking spot, and so on, has a tendency to inflate one's sense of self importance. However, when you allow others to have the spotlight or be first, it gives you a better vantage point to appreciate their gifts and what they are able to bring to the table. And when you can do this, you actually find yourself in a better position to lead others because you understand how they can best contribute.
- **Don't insist on being right.** Nobody likes to be wrong, including other people. When you are wrong it puts you in a vulnerable position, which can be scary. However, vulnerability is often what makes a person beautiful and appreciable. Allowing others the legitimacy of their beliefs without correction from you is a charitable act.
- **Listen to what other people think more than telling them what you think.** Dale Carnegie once said that the sweetest sound to anyone is the sound of their own voice. Really paying attention to what other people have to say without having to correct or undermine them helps you to stay oriented outward rather than being self-absorbed.
- **Try not to judge others.** An old saying goes like this, "When you point a finger at someone else, you have three fingers pointing back at you." While it is tempting to judge another person, to assess what they are doing and how they are doing it, when you do so, you are presuming that you know better. Unfortunately, unless you have lived the experiences of another person, you cannot know what is best for them. Your grasp on another person's situation will always be incomplete because you don't have the complete picture.

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HERE ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN FURTHER DEVELOP YOUR EMPATHY:

- **Listen.** You may not always understand where another person is coming from. Even the most creative and open minded of people can fail to grasp an individual's unique circumstances. Consequently, the only way you can understand where someone else is coming from is by listening to them. However, listening in this sense is not merely listening to the words a person says, but listening for the underlying needs that the person may be expressing even while failing to articulate this.
- **Validate.** Particularly in times where people seem far apart in their political and social beliefs, it's really easy to look at a person with whom you disagree and see an enemy. However, we all have the capacity to feel the same types of emotions, whether these are fear, anger, or joy. We also all have the same basic needs. When you try to recognize that beneath any disagreement are two people who need love and respect, it's not so easy to see someone you disagree with as the enemy.
- **Consider your own attitude.** When you find yourself in a disagreement with someone else, ask yourself what you are wanting out of the interaction. Do you want to see the other person punished? Is this about winning or being right? Wanting to see another person punished presumes that you know best, a dangerously arrogant attitude. Wanting to win or insisting on being right is a kind of vanity that indicates navel-gazing.
- **Suspend your own viewpoint.** When you are trying to understand another person's feelings, your own point of view isn't a necessary perspective. In fact, it gets in the way of seeing another's point of view. Remember that suspending your views is not the same as dropping them or changing them. Your viewpoint will still be there if you still need it.

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1. What of your original answer would have changed if you knew the insights provided today?	2. Which insights of Self-awareness from today's session will you apply immediately? Tomorrow?	3. YOUR ACTION PLAN:

Recommended Reading List

Capra, Fritjof (1997) *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*

Covey, Stephen (1990) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (Deluxe Anniversary edition 2013)

Covey, Stephen (2005) *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*

Meadows, Donella H. (2008) *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*

Murray, Andrew (2012) *Humility*

Sills, Franklyn and Maura Sills (2008) *Being and Becoming: Psychodynamics, Buddhism, and the Origins of Selfhood*

Williams, Tatyana (2014) *Emotional Intelligence: Utilize the Power of Emotional Intelligence in Business, Relationships, and Your Quality of Life*