

## Developing Self Awareness

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### Abstract

Self awareness is our capacity to take note of ourselves. Self awareness is the key to achieve personal growth. When we become conscious of our inner mental states, notice the flow of our emotions and awaken to the body's physiological processes. We enter a realm of peace and heightened consciousness, which empowers us to take control of our life. Unfortunately as we mature we disregard our innate potential to be aware of ourselves. Understanding the body-mind correlation and the various emotions and intuitions that we have from time to time can help us to take good decisions. .

**Key words:** Self awareness, inner mental states, heightened consciousness intuitions.

### Introduction

Each one of us is born with some innate emotional intelligence which relates to one's level of emotional sensitivity, memory, emotional processing and learning ability. We must know that emotional intelligence subsumes inter and intra personal intelligences. Intra personal intelligence is the ability to understand and form an accurate model of the self, understand oneself-by looking inwards. The greatest power in the world is inside your own brain. It is your subconscious mind. Self awareness or reflective thought is the consciousness that enables us to think inwardly. We acquire through self awareness, abilities like abstract reasoning, free will, creativity, foresight in order to plan ahead. The more aware one is the more fully developed the person is as a human being.

I would like to quote an example in this regard. While conducting two sessions on "Emotional Intelligence" for college teachers at Pune University Staff college, I put across a case study which says-----" You are a professor taking a class, one of the smart studious students stands up and makes a comment on your style of teaching and says that it is no good and that you have not prepared the topic properly, as he did not understand anything for the last one hour, He also gets the support of other students. How will you react in this situation?"

The teachers were given four alternatives.

1. Ignore him and continue with the lecture.
2. Listen to the needs of the students and promise to prepare the topic properly in future.
3. Ask the student to meet after the class in the staff room.
4. Ask the student to just leave the classroom and tell him (infront of all the students) that you cannot change your teaching style.

The obvious result of the group discussion and case study upholds point number two.

This has happened for a majority of the batches.

However there is a hindrance to this : Generally individuals tend to reduce their self awareness, rather than expanding it. Some aspects need candid introspection we should ask ourselves- Do we allot enough time to communicate inwards? We spend more time watching television, listening to radio, communication and entertaining ourselves on cell phones, sometimes we are preoccupied with work to such an extent that we are left with very limited time for self reflection, contemplation or connecting with our 'inner self. We should be aware of the very fact that as 'homo sapiens' the human beings alone have the great gift of self consciousness. Ironically we often suppress it.

According to John Mayer and Peter Salovey "self awareness can be a non reactive, non judgmental attention to inner states." Sterrett refers to Self-awareness as an awareness of ourselves on many different levels-our body and our physical reactions; our emotions, preferences, and intentions; our goals and values; and our knowledge about how we come across to others. The case study mentioned in the beginning must consider this thought process. The teacher in the case study should be entering in the inner states and inquire; Is my style of teaching really not good and have I not prepared the topic properly? This alone can make the teacher not only aware about his or her own state of mind while teaching but also sensitive to the expectations of the students as regards teaching learning process.

### **Self Awareness and Teachers**

Building an attitude would require the support of self awareness or reflective thought. Reflection is the power to turn one's consciousness upon one self, to know one self, "To know that one knows." A "can-do" attitude, a belief in ourselves; overcoming self - doubt and taking reasonable risk, being assertive and not aggressive; being goal-directed and admitting mistakes is a requirement for gaining self confidence. Another attribute necessary towards a stress-free behaviour is self control. One should deal well with stress, through controlling emotional moods or outbursts without over control by being adaptable and balancing rational and emotional considerations. One must agree that in modern times the teachers have to deal with stress and must manage stress. One must find out time for stress relief. The feelings like 'Blissful', Happy, can be brought to surface with deliberate stress relievers.

John Mayer has described distinctive styles for dealing with emotions. With self awareness, some people are aware of their moods as they are having them, they are sure of their own boundaries, and are in good psychological health. They tend to have a positive outlook on life. When they get into a bad mood, they don't ruminate and obsess about it but are able to get out of it soon. In short their mindfulness helps them to manage their emotions.

On the other hand there are other people who are often unclear about what their feelings are. They accept their moods, they don't try to change them. There are two types of such acceptances. The first one is of those people who are usually in a good mood and have little motivation to change themselves. The second types are those who despite their clarity about their moods, are susceptible to bad ones but accept them with a laissez-faire attitude, doing nothing to change them despite their distress. These are depressed people.

Mayer also mentions about -'Engulfed' people who often feel trapped by their emotions and feel helpless to escape them. Their moods take charge of their behaviour, they have no control on their emotional life and they are emotionally out of control.

## **Self Awareness - Tuning In To Our Physical Self**

Let us take this case for study — In the cozy atmosphere of an office, a conflict arises and an argument with your coworker leads to personal attacks on each other; the others in the office are left with no alternative but to witness the unpleasant communications. Earlier, both of you were quite friendly and till this moment of time, both of you had no intentions of disrespecting each other. How will you handle this situation?

There are four alternatives to select from

1. Continue with the argument till you reach at some definite conclusion.
2. Avoid arguments and leave the scene.
3. Sit calmly and consider what triggered the argument between you and your colleague and was it possible to control your anger at that point of time.
4. Apologise and ask your colleague to apologise.

A group discussion on this in the past resulted in the selection of alternative number three. When we do introspect, we tend to resolve the conflict early.

Not being aware of our "self can also get us into trouble when someone "pushes our buttons," We blow up things out of proportion to the situation because our limbic memory was triggered. We are often not aware of what we are feeling until the feelings become quite strong. The truth, however, is that we are always "feeling" something just as we are always thinking something. If we want to grow in intelligence, we must pay more attention to the cognitive process and if we want to be emotionally intelligent, we need to pay attention to what we truly feel. Tuning in to our physical self is where self-awareness must begin.

Look for feedback. Trusted friend and colleagues can help us see how we come across to other people.

Make arrangements to talk with someone who listen well and who can be completely honest with you-someone whom you can talk to regularly about your self. Get them to help you look at your objectively in several broad areas. Discuss whether or not you are focused on your purpose, and evaluate whether or not what you are doing is helping you to fulfill the purpose as you have defined it. Having such an advisor will help to improve your health and your career.

## **Self Awareness - Hunches? Intuitions?**

Edward de Bono states that feelings, emotion, intuition and hunches help us to take decisions. These are strong and real.

Occasionally we must allow ourselves to express our feelings, emotions, intuitions and hunches. The traditional view is that emotions muck up thinking. A good thinker is supposed to be

cool detached and not influenced by emotions. A good thinker is supposed to be objective and consider the facts on their own merit and not for their relevance to his or her emotional needs.

de Bono further states that although it is said that women are too emotional to become good thinkers and lack the detachment that is needed for arriving at a good decision in the end any good decision has to be an emotional one.

It is significant that he places the emphasis on the phrase 'in the end.'

## Assessing Our Self Awareness

Individuals should not be allowed to say 'pass' when they are asked for their feelings. They can use terms like neutral, undecided, confused, doubtful or mixed.

While conducting S.W.O.T. analysis we have to use this concept of reflective thought or self awareness. I suggest a few questions which you may use to ask yourself. This may help you to assess yourself more accurately, Below is a list of such questions -this may help you to appreciate the value of a purposeful career.

What are my strengths? What are my talents and gifts? What are all the assets I bring I bring to the table? What makes me happy? What brings me joy? What do I love to do? What am I most interested in doing? What is my passion? How do I most enjoy contributing to others? Which cause do I most want to serve? What kind of organization am I best suited to? What is my career purpose?

There are further more questions which may help us to realize about ourselves -When am I at my best? .What do I care about most deeply? , What am I deeply committed to?,

How would I like to be remembered?

Self awareness is thus an accurate self assessment and must lead to self confidence. It should lead to taking initiative for self improvement and also lead to the (development of) drive and commitment towards optimism.

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