# Chapter One

# Journey into Self-awareness

# Chapter Overview

A central thesis of our book is that managers must first understand themselves in order to be effective in working with others. In this chapter we introduce the concept of self-awareness: what it is, why it's important, benefits of self-awareness and means to gain self-awareness. We discuss ways to build self-awareness and strategies for being effective at identifying strengths and overcoming limitations. We also address how strong self-knowledge can enhance one’s ability to manage others. The chapter begins with a case and discussion questions and concludes with a number of exercises that can be used in groups or as individual assignments.

# Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student/reader will be able to:

* List strengths and understand how these might guide them to a major and career path.
* Identify personal motivators that define personal and professional happiness.
* Assess personal limitations and develop a plan for improving in these areas.
* Identify preferred work style and how this affects working relationships with others.
* Identify personal biases that might hinder understanding and appreciation of others.

# Chapter Outline

# What is Self-awareness?

The capacity for introspection and the ability to reconcile oneself as an individual separate from the environment and other individuals. Knowing your motivations, preferences and personality and understanding how these affect judgment, decisions and interactions with others.

# Why Self-awareness is important

* Understanding yourself in relation to others
* Developing and implementing a sound self-improvement program
* Setting appropriate life and career goals
* Developing relationships with others
* Understanding the value of diversity
* Managing others effectively
* Increasing productivity
* Increasing ability to contribute to organization, community and family
* Developing a career that is satisfying
* Increasing global leadership competencies

# Lack of Self-awareness

It is also important to assess the negative effects of a lack of, or faulty, self-awareness. These can include:

* Making poor decisions
* Developing unrealistic notions of your competencies and strengths
* Derailing your career

# Strategies for gaining Self-awareness

**Self-analysis** – analyzing and reflecting on behaviors, personality, attitudes and perceptions.

**Behavior** – the way in which we conduct ourselves or act.

* Four components:
* *Motivation* – the drive to pursue one action over another.
* *Modes of thinking* – the way you process inputs and external stimuli.
* *Modes of acting* – the course of action you apply in a given situation.
* *Modes of interacting* – the way in which you communicate, share ideas and feelings with others.

**Personality** – the relatively stable set of characteristics, tendencies and temperaments that have been inherited or formed by heredity and by social, cultural and environmental factors.

* *Big Five Model* – five broad personality factors that are representative of the characteristics that can be linked with satisfaction and success.
* *Extroversion* – the degree to which a person is social or outgoing.
* *Agreeableness* – the degree to which a person is friendly or reserved, cooperative or guarded.
* *Emotional Stability* – the degree of consistency or inconsistency in reacting to certain events or situations.
* *Conscientiousness* – the degree to which an individual is dependable, reliable, or committed.
* *Openness to Experience* – the degree to which one is interested in broadening horizons, open to new ideas, people, or situations.

**Self Monitoring** – the tendency to adjust behavior relative to the changing demands of social situations, dangerous at either end of the continuum.

* *High Self-monitors* – sensitive to external cues and constantly adapt or conform to situations or a set of expectations.
* *Low Self-monitors* – never adjusting or conforming to situations, not interested in what others think.

**Attitudes** – are evaluative statements or learned predispositions to respond to an object, person or idea in a favorable or unfavorable way. They are narrow in focus and can vary from situation to situation.

**Perception** – the process by which individuals gather sensory information and assign meaning to it; it is not necessarily reality, it is an individual's view of reality.

Filters that affect perception:

* *Stereotyping* – making assumptions about individuals or a group based on generalized judgments rather than facts.
* *Selective Perception* – interpreting information for meaning and accuracy and discarding that which is threatening or non-relevant.
* *Projection* – the attributing of one’s own attitudes, characteristics or shortcomings to others.
* *Expectations* – forming an opinion about how we would like an event or situation to develop or a person to act, feel or think.
* *Interest* – basing our activities and inputs on things that are likeable or appealing to us.

**Attribution Theory** – developing perceptions based on whether we believe the perceived causes which result in specific behavior in others or ourselves are internal or external.

* *Self-serving Bias* – individuals tend to blame external factors for failure and credit internal factors for success when evaluating themselves.
* *Fundamental Attribution Error* – individuals tend to overestimate the impact of internal factors and underestimate external factors when evaluating others.

**Others’ Perceptions** – gaining self-awareness through understanding how others view us and understanding how we are shaped by other’s opinions.

* *Social Mirror* – a process of viewing ourselves based on other people’s views.

**Self-Disclosure** – gaining awareness through sharing ideas, thoughts and feelings with others without self-deception or distortion.

**Diverse Experiences** – increasing self-awareness through acquiring multiple experiences in diverse situations and with diverse others

# Teaching Notes

**Motivating the discussion:**

* At the start of the session, ask students, "How many of you could easily describe your best friend's strengths, weaknesses, style, etc.?" (Probably most could.) Then ask, "How many of you could do the same for yourselves? How well do you know yourselves? What you like, what you hate, what you're good at, etc." As a follow-on probe, ask students to consider how others would view their personal strengths and weaknesses; how would others view them? our best friend? A parent? A teacher?
* Other questions to ask are "Do you sometimes act one way and wonder why later?" "Do you know what your core strengths are and how they might guide you to a career path?" "Do you understand what your preferred work style is and how this compares and contrasts with that of others?" "Do you regularly establish personal self-improvement goals?"
* "Why is self-awareness important?" First, in order to be effective interpersonally (with others), you need to be effective intrapersonally—comfortable with yourself and able to understand yourself and how you interact with others. How can you interact well with others if you don't know yourself? You need to know what your work style is and how you relate to others, both personally and professionally, in order to be able to work with and manage others. You might think others see you as warm, open and easy to talk to, yet others might have a different impression of you. You might think coworkers and superiors see you as a competent and capable manager. Yet promotions seem to go to others.

Second, understanding and monitoring your strengths and skills over time is critical to being considered a "valuable commodity" in the workplace. As technology and competition evolve, so too does the need for new and different skills. Self-awareness enables you to stay marketable by understanding your strengths and keeping your skills current.

* Knowing yourself has lifelong consequences as well. Do you know that a 2013 survey showed that nearly 80 percent of workers in their 20s said they wanted to change careers, followed by 64 percent of 30-somethings and 54 percent in their 40s.? (Or some other statistics that illustrate the importance of having self-awareness.) Why live sub-optimally? By knowing what makes you tick, you can work toward and select a career that suits you best, allowing you to achieve greater satisfaction and happiness in your professional, and by extension, personal life!
* The best managers are those who understand their strengths and limitations and know how to complement these with the skills and qualities of others in the workplace. They undertake a "continuous improvement" approach to self-development. One suggestion is to take a self-assessment test or class at least once per year. It's a great way to demonstrate willingness to grow, learn and change.
* Emphasize the importance of self-improvement. Some qualities are innate. But many qualities can be fostered if we are committed to doing so. Change takes time and commitment but it can be done.
* Acknowledge that some may be less comfortable with self-awareness than others. Those who are naturally more reserved will be less inclined at the outset to share about themselves personally. This is OK; remind them that many CEOs are introverts! But self-awareness is important because those who are able to relate personally to others and who can appreciate their own and others' strengths and weaknesses are more effective in business, and in life.

**Ideas for presenting material:**

* Other ways to get students to see that they are unique is to compare that uniqueness with others' uniqueness. Ask "Have you ever worked in a group situation and could not understand or appreciate the way in which others worked? Perhaps you were organized, on time, and completed assignments as agreed while others did not. Perhaps you were the person who always seemed to solve disagreements and conflicts while others seemed to relish in creating them. Perhaps you could make decisions fairly quickly while others took excruciatingly long to do so. Is it possible that others find your uniqueness annoying? Let's learn about ourselves and how that relates to others."
* Another approach is to ask students to complete one or more personality-type assessments (from the exercises or others available on the Internet) and then try to make sense of their findings. Do they make sense? Why or why not? What could account for these findings? Past experiences? How we were raised? What's important to us?

When using any self-assessment test with individuals or in groups, acknowledge that they won't always agree with the results, nor should they. Any S/A test is simply a way to use words to describe similarities and differences. We're all unique. None of us like to be labeled. If we don't agree with a result, we should ask, “Is there anything here that might be true?” And if not, then what other answer or result would we prefer? Even a "wrong" answer can be a good source of learning. Examples are Myers-Briggs, Insights, DISC, Strengths Finder, kiersey.com, CareerLeader, Next Step.

# Discussion Questions

**Why is self-awareness so important?**

* Understanding yourself in relation to others
* Developing and implementing a sound self-improvement program
* Setting appropriate life and career goals
* Developing relationships with others
* Understanding differences
* Managing others effectively
* Increasing productivity
* Increasing ability to contribute to organization, community and family
* Increasing managerial and organizational effectiveness
* Understanding the organization in which you are working

**You may have heard the term "personality clash" before. What does this mean and how can this be avoided?**

* Personality is a set of stable traits a person possesses.
* When two individuals with opposite personal characteristics or traits have a hard time communicating, making decisions and in general working together, we might call that a "clash".
* By knowing your and others' uniqueness, you can be strategic about how you approach certain situations and how to respond to others whose styles are different from yours.

**We contend that knowing yourself is critical to a successful and satisfying professional and personal life. Why is this so?**

* Picking a career that best suits you comes from knowing yourself well.
* Having insight about yourself enables you to be a better manager and colleague.
* This insight also helps you create better, more intimate relationships with loved ones.

**Why do different people interpret the same situation or conversation differently? Is one person smarter or more intuitive than another?**

* Perception refers to our frame or filter. What we take in from a situation is impacted by a host of things (culture, past experiences, religion, gender, ethnicity, goals, and feelings about the specific object or event). If you really like your boss, you might take her comments about your performance as helpful and constructive. If you really hated your boss, you might perceive her comments as "yet another lecture…what complaints does she have this time?"
* We see and hear what we are conditioned to see and hear.

# Notes on Selected Exercises

# Exercise 1-A JOURNAL WRITING

**Purpose:** To allow participants to record their thoughts, perceptions and insights and to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses with the skill areas while setting goals for interpersonal development.

**Time:** Will vary with the type and length of criteria to be included in each journal entry.

**Resources/Set-up:** A notebook or journal (the type may vary dependent on the need of the instructor – tear out pages, etc.), or an on-line ongoing document.

**Activity Instructions:** Instruct the participants to complete an initial journal entry. Give them a list of criteria or examples of what should be covered in this and in subsequent entries. You should assign a time frame for completion as well as when entries should be written and how many entries should be included. For example – an entry after each class meeting or a journal entry after certain topic areas or exercises etc. This should be coordinated with your syllabus.

**Discussion/Debrief:** See questions in chapter.

Some instructors may choose to assign the journal as part of course requirements. Since most journals are pretty private, we do not recommend class-based discussions of journal entries. Instead, students may be asked to turn in their journals periodically for feedback/grading.

# Exercise 1-B THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TEST

**Purpose:** To begin to examine personality profile and identify personal strengths and weaknesses.

**Time:** 15-20 minutes to complete and score questionnaire.

**Resources/Set-up:** Copy of the Big Five Personality Test with scoring and interpretation from chapter.

**Activity Instructions:** Have participants complete the questionnaire (a homework assignment, perhaps) and obtain a score using the scoring information that appears after the questionnaire.

**Discussion/Debrief:** Discuss advantages or disadvantages of results in each of the five dimensions of personality in small groups. Ask groups to make notice of any themes or similarities among group members. In addition, ask groups to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the dimensions relative to types of jobs or careers. For example, while salespeople likely benefit from being sociable, authors need not be sociable to be effective.

Discuss means to gain awareness of potential weaknesses and ways to improve in areas that they identify as ineffective.

# Exercise 1-C SELECTIVE PERCEPTION

**Purpose:** To illustrate how each person will have a unique perception and how various filters can affect our perceptions.

**Time:** 30 min.

**Resources/Set-up:** Participants will need the worksheet to write out their perceptions.

**Activity Instructions:** Read the following situations to the class (or you may develop your own scenarios):

1. A man is walking down a street at dusk near the beach. His jeans are a little grimy…he is wearing sandals with white socks …his hair is a little matted and dirty, just like his coat. He walks toward you….
2. A father and daughter are sitting and discussing dating. If you were eavesdropping on their discussion, what would you see/hear, etc.

* Have participants complete the scenario according to the criteria in the worksheet.
* Create a flipchart with the three columns (see below) and ask participants for input on each scenario.
* Have them complete the questions individually, as a small group or use as a debrief with the entire group.
* Offer or solicit variations to the situations to see how perception can change.

**Discussion/Debrief:** (see questions following exercise in chapter)

* Why do different people interpret the same scenario differently? (history, biases, values, experience, upbringing, education)
* Managers are supposed to be objective; is this possible? (No, but knowing your filters is the first step in becoming aware of all that’s going on in a team or work setting). This opens up a discussion to introduce the various filters discussed in the chapter.
* Why is it important to know what our biases are, in general, and as a manager, in particular? (Need to know how our/others' communication, behavior, etc. is influenced by these filters. Goal of communication is to achieve common ground yet with our collective biases, this is tough.)

# Exercise 1-D THE SOCIAL MIRROR

**Purpose:** To identify how others perceptions and views have affected and shaped our personalities, identities and self-image.

**Time:** 20-30 minutes

**Resources/Set-up:** This activity can be done as a homework/reflection exercise or as a class activity.

**Activity Instructions:** For an in-class activity, you can assign this to be completed before the class meeting to allow time for reflection.

With a class that is comfortable disclosing, you may put them in small groups to discuss the questions, reminding them to disclose only that information with which they feel comfortable.

As a large group discussion, you could ask for generalizations and discuss the process of how the social mirror could affect or has affected them.

**Discussion/Debrief:**

* Were any questions more difficult to complete than others? Which ones and why?
* What did you learn about yourself in this exercise?
* What are some specific steps you could take to turn your weaknesses into strengths?
* Who could help you make these changes or give you feedback about your progress?

# Exercise 1-E EXPANDING SELF-AWARENESS

Discuss questions listed in the chapter and assign activities.

# Exercise 1-F INTERPERSONAL SKILLS CHECKLIST

Follow instructions as described in text and facilitate discussion.

# Exercise 1-G REFLECTION/ACTION PLAN

This can be done by the participants as an assignment or discussed in pairs or a class discussion can be facilitated by the instructor.

# Additional Resources:

Tom Bachhuber, [www.CenterforLifeTransitions.net](http://www.CenterforLifeTransitions.net).

Isabel Briggs-Myers, creator of the *Myers Briggs personality test* based on the work of pioneer psychologist Carl G. Jung. <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/>.

Tim Butler and Jim Waldroop, [www.CareerLeader.com](http://www.CareerLeader.com).

Stephen Chen, “Effective Global Leadership Requires a Global Mindset,” *Industrial and Commercial Training,* 2010, v.1.

Cary Cherniss, “The Business Case for Emotional Intelligence.” 1999. *The Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations,* the State University of New Jersey, Rutgers. <http://www.eiconsortium.org/>.

James G. Clawson, “Finding Fit,” Darden Business Publishing, Darden Graduate School of Business, University of Virginia, 2013.

Martin Couzins, Scot Beagrie, “How to…Develop Your Self-Awareness,” *Personnel Today* (January 17, 2005), p. 31.

*DISC Profile*, Inscape Publishing, <http://www.onlinediscprofile.com>. Personality assessment test frequently used in business by individuals and teams.

Karen Dowd and Sherrie Gong Taguchi, *The Ultimate Guide to Getting the Career You Want*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Michael J. Driver, Kenneth R. Brousseau and Phillip L. Hunsaker, *The Dynamic Decision-Maker*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1993.

<https://www.emergenetics.com/>. Profile assessment that measures thinking style and behavioral preferences. Emergenetics was developed to specifically test and assess the way personality emerges through life experiences from the building blocks of genetics.

Bill George, Peter Sims, Andrew McLean, Diana Mayer, “Discovering Your Authentic Leadership,” *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 2 (February 2007), pp. 129–138.

Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee, “Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance,” *Harvard Business Review* 79, no.11 (December 2001), pp. 42–51.

Bernard Haldane, “Career Satisfaction and Success,” Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works, 1996.

<https://www.insights.com/us/>: a self-assessment instrument administered through a consulting firm of the same name based in Scotland. Insights helps individuals gain deep insight into yourself and your colleagues, uncover meaning in preferences and behaviour, and learn to adapt and connect with others to create strong and effective relationships.

Mansour Javidan, “Global Mindset,” self-assessment of global competencies, Thunderbird School of Management, Phoenix, AZ.

Robert E. Kelley, *How to be a Star at Work: 9 Breakthrough Strategies You Need to Succeed*, Times Books, May 1999.

Kiersey Temperament sorter online <http://www.keirsey.com/>. Interactive Web site on personality and work style.

*Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA.

Robert Nozick, *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations*, Simon and Schuster, 1989.

NextAvenue, where grown-ups keep growing, <http://www.nextavenue.org/channel/work-and-purpose/>.

Tom Rath, “StrengthsFinder 2.0,” New York: Gallup Press, 2007.

Edgar Schein, *Career Anchors*, San Diego, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2006.

*Strong Interest Inventory*, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA.

Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger, *Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, Little Brown & Co; 2nd edition (September 1, 1995). The authors show you how to use personality type to find the right career.