

How to increase self-awareness

Developing self-awareness is a great way of learning more about yourself and what you're capable of. Why does it matter, you ask? Because by practicing self-awareness, you open up opportunities that you may not have recognised before. There are some great ways you can work on your self-awareness, but what you do next is entirely up to you. With self-awareness, the world is your oyster.

Self-awareness is really just about being aware of who we are. It can relate to knowing your own values, your beliefs, personal preferences and tendencies.

Because we are all different in the way we react to things, it can be really helpful to start thinking about how we work best, including things like

- > *How we learn best*
- > *Our talents and abilities*
- > *Personality traits*
- > *Political beliefs*
- > *Values*

Why does it matter?

You know how famous people always say "Stay true to yourself"? This is actually really important advice, but it's not easy to stay true to yourself if you don't know who you are. By becoming self-aware and understanding your strengths and limitations, you open up opportunities that just aren't available if you don't know who you are.

You're also able to have more honest and genuine relationships because the people that you're attracted to will be attracted to you for who you actually are.

So how can I work on it?

1. Assess your self-talk. The first step in self-awareness is to listen to ourselves. What's going on in your mind? Is it a series of negative thoughts that make you feel pretty crap? Or are you always looking on the bright side?

In practice – Take a couple of minutes each day to just sit in silence and listen to what you're thinking. One way of getting your inner voice going is to stand in front of a mirror and hear what you're saying to yourself about how you look. It might even help to write down your thoughts so you can get a better idea of how positive or negative they are.

This might help if you...

- > *Want to know more about yourself*
- > *Don't understand other people's reactions to stuff you're doing*
- > *Feel like you're weird or different*
- > *Want to be more confident*
- > *Want better self-esteem*



2. Use your senses. Our senses (sight and sound in particular) provide us with a huge insight into the world, ourselves, other people and situations. But these senses are often viewed through a filter of our own self talk.

For example, a frown does not always mean someone's angry, someone groaning doesn't mean you're boring – but, when our mind is determining how we see things it can be easy to start feeling hurt.

In practice – Next time you feel like someone was judging you or has made you feel bad about yourself, take a step back and write down why you thought this. Ask yourself, could these actions have been interpreted differently? You might actually find that your interpretation was clouded by your own negative thoughts.

3. Get your feeling's out. This can be hard if you're not the kind of person who likes to think too deeply about your feelings, but it can be really worthwhile. Our feelings are spontaneous and emotional responses to the things we experience. Like our senses, they give us good information about what's going on around us.

Sometimes it can be hard to tune into feelings, but there are a couple of physical signs that you can look for which might help. Some examples include;

- › A warm feeling in your face might mean you're embarrassed
- › A feeling of 'butterflies' in your tummy can mean you're nervous
- › Clenching your teeth might mean you're angry

In practice – Look out for physical signs which might indicate how you're feeling. By engaging with how you're feeling, you can get a better insight into what you like, what makes you uncomfortable and what makes you angry.

What next?

These are just first steps. There are heaps of others way you can become more self-aware but give these a try and see how you go. You can also check out the mindfulness factsheet about how this might help you get to know yourself better. You're already somewhat self-aware because you've come to this fact sheet! Delve deeper into it and see what you can find out about yourself.

We're stuck with ourselves for the rest of our lives, so we might as well get to know the real you. And as the famous people always say "Stay true to yourself"!

Take action...

- › Take comfort in the fact that self-awareness is an ongoing pursuit
- › Discover how others have worked on their self-awareness
- › Find out how to form new patterns of thinking