

# Self-Awareness

Session #2 within "Self-in-Context" Unit



VETERANS



**ONWARD**

## Training Materials:

- Whiteboard and pens or flipchart and pens.
- Paper and pen for all participants.
- Print outs or links to access self-assessment questionnaires:
  - Masculine Behavioural Scale (MBS) [can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/mbs.pdf>]
  - Attitude Toward Self (ATS) scale [can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/content/attitudes-toward-self-ats>]
  - Self-Consciousness Scale (SCS-R) [can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/content/self-consciousness-scale-scs-r>]

## Learning Objectives:

1. Define what is meant by “self-awareness” and consider theories relevant to self-awareness.
2. Consider the benefits of developing self-awareness.
3. Complete a self-awareness assessment to increase levels of personal self-awareness.
4. Identify and apply a range of strategies to enhance self-awareness in personal and professional settings.

## Training Script

Hello everyone, how are you today? My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am going to be your tutor today for this training module on Identity.

This module will take between 90 and 120 minutes to complete.

You will need a pen and paper to jot down your own ideas and thoughts in response to some of the tasks.

Today’s session focuses on self-awareness. It follows on from and is very much connected to the last session on identity.

Before we look at today's learning objectives, is there anything anyone wants to ask or comment on from the last session about identity?

[Allow up to 5 minutes to discuss any points arising from previous session].

In today's session on self-awareness, I very much hope that by the end of the session, you will be able to feel confident about our learning objectives for the session. Those objectives are to:

5. Define what is meant by "self-awareness" and consider theories relevant to self-awareness.
6. Consider the benefits of developing self-awareness.
7. Complete a self-awareness assessment to increase levels of personal self-awareness.
8. Identify and apply a range of strategies to enhance self-awareness in personal and professional settings.

We will get straight onto objective **1: Define what is meant by "self-awareness" and consider theories relevant to self-awareness.**

The dictionary defines self-awareness as:

*Conscious knowledge of one's own character and feelings.*

The Greek philosopher Aristotle, who lived between 384–322 BC, once said:

*"Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom."*

So, self-awareness can be considered a form of wisdom. Developed, advanced self-awareness can be a difficult skill to master. Benjamin Franklin put it like this:

*"There are three things extremely hard: steel, a diamond, and to know one's self."*

We already have at least some degree of self-awareness: if we have mental capacity, then we will have some sense of our sense of self: what we feel and what our character is like. So, to start to connect with our existing self-awareness, let's try a simple task – an acrostic poem using our name.

On your paper, write your first name, placing each letter vertically down the page.

So – if you are called “Simon”, write:

S

I

M

O

N

Now, for each letter – think of a word, or even a phrase that expresses something you know to be true about your character, your sense of who you are.

For example, if “Simon” is a person who loves to laugh, joke and play the fool – he might begin with:

**Silly jokes are my speciality!**

Let’s take 5 minutes to have a go at that for ourselves.

[Allow the group time to complete. Invite some participants to share their responses with the group if they feel comfortable doing so].

So – that task gives us a chance to express on paper something of the awareness we have about ourselves.

We are also going to consider some theories and ways of thinking about self-awareness during our session today.

A leading researcher in the field of self-awareness is psychologist Doctor Tasha Eurich. Having studied what it means to be self-aware, Dr. Eurich speaks of two categories of self-awareness:

- Internal self-awareness – how well you know yourself.

- External self-awareness – how well you understand how others see you<sup>1</sup>.

Dr. Eurich's research has shown that having high levels of both internal and external self-awareness can lead to a range of positive benefits. We will explore and look at some of these benefits later. For now, it is important to recognise that Dr. Eurich's research shows that only having internal self-awareness, without external self-awareness, can lead to negative outcomes. Effective self-awareness also includes learning more about how others view us.

The diagram below helps to show Dr. Eurich's findings on how different levels of internal and external self-awareness might be combined into four different self-awareness archetypes. Those who Dr. Eurich label as "aware" exhibit high levels of both internal and external self-awareness. They know themselves and they also seek to know others' opinions to help comprehensively develop self-awareness.

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<sup>1</sup> Eurich, T. (2018). What self-awareness really is (and how to cultivate it). Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2018/01/what-self-awareness-really-is-and-how-to-cultivate-it>

## The Four Self-Awareness Archetypes

This 2x2 maps internal self-awareness (how well you know yourself) against external self-awareness (how well you understand how others see you).

	Low external self-awareness	High external self-awareness
High internal self-awareness	<p><b>INTROSPECTORS</b></p> <p>They're clear on who they are but don't challenge their own views or search for blind spots by getting feedback from others. This can harm their relationships and limit their success.</p>	<p><b>AWARE</b></p> <p>They know who they are, what they want to accomplish, and seek out and value others' opinions. This is where leaders begin to fully realize the true benefits of self-awareness.</p>
Low internal self-awareness	<p><b>SEEKERS</b></p> <p>They don't yet know who they are, what they stand for, or how their teams see them. As a result, they might feel stuck or frustrated with their performance and relationships.</p>	<p><b>PLEASERS</b></p> <p>They can be so focused on appearing a certain way to others that they could be overlooking what matters to them. Over time, they tend to make choices that aren't in service of their own success and fulfillment.</p>

SOURCE DR. TASHA EURICH

© HBR.ORG <sup>2</sup>

**Task:** Take time to look at the diagram showing the four-self awareness archetypes.

- Do you have any sense of which archetype you feel you fit into? Can you say why?

Before we explore the benefits of self-awareness, let's look at one more theory that can help us to gain a better understanding of what we mean by self-awareness.

Objective self-awareness theory was proposed by psychologists Shelly Duval and Robert Wicklund in the 1970s<sup>3</sup>. Duval and Wicklund considered that humans could be both subjective and objective at the same time. By this, they meant a human could experience some feeling, desire or thought, for example, hunger and a desire to eat lots of chocolate and cake. They were having a subjective experience of this feeling, desire or thought. At the same time, humans can also notice and observe this feeling objectively: they can "weigh up" the feeling, desire or thought and measure it against

<sup>2</sup> Eurich, T. (2018). What self-awareness really is (and how to cultivate it). Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2018/01/what-self-awareness-really-is-and-how-to-cultivate-it>

<sup>3</sup> Duval, S., & Wicklund R. A. (1972). *A theory of objective self-awareness*. Academic Press.

standards they value. In the case of feeling hunger and a desire for cake: a person subjectively experiencing this can also objectively notice and compare that against social standards and personal values around healthy eating, greed and gluttony. At this point, the person has a choice: to choose to refrain from excessive eating of sweet treats to conform to social and personal standards, or to avoid self-awareness and objective noticing of feeling, desire or thought.

This theory is helpful to our learning today as it makes it clear that self-awareness means we can objectively observe and notice our own subjective experience. A phrase that explains this in simple terms is: “you are not your feelings, desires or thoughts”. Self-awareness allows us to observe and notice our feelings, desires or thoughts.

### **Task:**

This task may be more challenging than it first appears, as self-awareness can be a difficult skill to master.

Take a minute to close your eyes, or to cast your eyes downward. Try to notice any feelings, desires or thoughts that arise or emerge within the minute. Aim to simply observe these feelings, desires or thoughts and notice any reactions you might have to these feelings, desires or thoughts.

In this way, you are exercising what Duval and Wicklund call “objective self-awareness”.

[Allow for 5 mins discussion following this task, for participants to feed back anything they noticed from the task].

Having defined what is meant by “self-awareness” and considered two theories relevant to self-awareness, we will move onto learning objective 2:

## **2. Consider the benefits of developing self-awareness.**

Here, we turn again to Doctor Eurich’s research which is documented in her 2017 book, “Insight”<sup>4</sup>.

Eurich calls self-awareness the “Meta-skill of the 21st-century” (Eurich, 2017).

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<sup>4</sup> Eurich, T. (2017). *Insight: Why We’re not as Self-Aware as We Think, and How Seeing Ourselves Clearly Helps Us Succeed at Work and in Life*. Pan Books.

Research shows self-aware people are:

- More fulfilled
- Better at communications
- More confident
- More creative
- Have better relationships
- More effective leaders
- Run more profitable companies
- Less likely to lie, cheat or steal.

Eurich's research also showed there was no gender, age, racial or any other demographic pattern associated with developed self-awareness. This means self-awareness is not something that one gender is better at than another. Self-awareness is a skill, and like any skill, it can be developed with deliberate practice, so that anyone can, in theory, begin to reap the benefits of increased self-awareness.

Another benefit of self-awareness is that it is an important component of emotional intelligence. If we have both internal and external self-awareness, we are more in tune with ourselves and our emotional states and also how our behaviour impacts others. This gives us information and data that we can use to make choices that support our own emotional wellbeing and is likely to allow us to make choices that support relationships.

**Task:** Write down the 3 benefits of developed self-awareness that seem most attractive to you and your life.

[Allow 5 mins]

Our third learning objective for this session is to:



### **3. Complete a self-awareness assessment to increase levels of personal self-awareness.**

There are many different assessments and tools that we can use to increase our sense of self-awareness.

A simple one which allows us to benefit from developing both internal and external self-awareness is to take some simple questions, such as the ones I am going to give you in a moment. Answer some of these for yourself to gain increased internal self-awareness. Then ask someone else: someone you trust who is caring and kind enough to be honest, open and give you useful feedback to answer the same questions about YOU. That way you also benefit from the chance to develop your sense of how others see you: your external self-awareness. Even better if we can consult a few different, trusted people so that we get multiple feedback. It's then up to us what we do with the feedback – consider whether we want to act on it, dismiss it, integrate it etc. This sort of task is common in the world of business and management where people complete what is termed a “360 degree analysis” of an employee or manager to provide feedback that gives a chance to gain a wider view of how others see us.

We are going to give that a try now.

First, from this list of 8 questions, choose 3 that you are comfortable answering for yourself, and asking someone else to also answer for you.

Write your own answers down.

1. What am I good at?
2. What is the most important thing in my life?
3. What stresses me out?
4. What makes me angry?
5. What are the qualities that make me a good friend?
6. What things do I value in life?
7. What makes me afraid?
8. What 3 words would people choose to describe me?

[Allow 5 mins]

Now find someone else and ask them to tell you their answer for you to the same 3 questions. For example, if you have answered question 1: what am I good at? Ask someone else in the room what they think you are good at. Keep asking as many people as time allows.

[Allow 5 mins, then have a chance for discussion and debrief following the task].

I mentioned there are a range of tools that can be used to measure our self-awareness. Many of these have been created by psychologists who want accurate tools to help measure and study concepts related to self-awareness and are more developed and detailed than the assessment we just did there. I am going to give you one or more of these to take away as homework to complete for our next session.

You have 3 to choose from:

- o Masculine Behavioural Scale (MBS) [can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/mbs.pdf>]
- o Attitude Toward Self (ATS) scale [can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/content/attitudes-toward-self-ats>]
- o Self-Consciousness Scale (SCS-R) [can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/content/self-consciousness-scale-scs-r>]

Try to find a quiet spot where you can concentrate. If it feels manageable, also consider asking a trusted person what they would answer for you to increase your opportunity to develop external self-awareness. Remember, with external self-awareness, another person's view is not necessarily correct! It is simply feedback they are offering you, which you can then assess as to its reliability or usefulness.

[Hand out questionnaires for participants to take away].

Our final learning objective for today covers practical ideas for developing our self-awareness. That's really important if we want to gain the various benefits that we know enhanced self-awareness can result in.

Learning objective 4 is:

**4. Identify and apply a range of strategies to enhance self-awareness in personal and professional settings.**

We have already mentioned some ways or techniques we can enhance self-awareness. Can you think of any?

So far, we have mentioned:

- Taking time to ask ourselves questions and reflect upon our thoughts, feelings, sensations, and desires.
- Asking trusted, reliable others for feedback, and then reflecting on what we want to then do with this feedback.
- In the workplace, completing a 360-degree analysis to gain feedback from others.
- Completing self-assessment questionnaires.

So – let's look at 3 more tips and strategies to enhance our levels of self-awareness:

**"The Daily Check-In":**

This involves a deliberate focus on looking back over a given period to develop self-awareness. Asking ourselves, usually at the end of the day:

1. What went well today?
2. What didn't go well?
3. What can I do to be wiser tomorrow?

It is really important that you remember the goal of asking these three questions is to develop self-awareness. It is not to develop self-attack, and self-shame. Try to answer the questions objectively by either writing them down in a journal, simply thinking them through, or talking them through with a trusted other. The focus upon question 3 is especially important as it ensures that your introspection and reflection has a forward focus: something that Dr. Eurich’s research has shown to be an important factor in gaining the benefits of self-awareness.

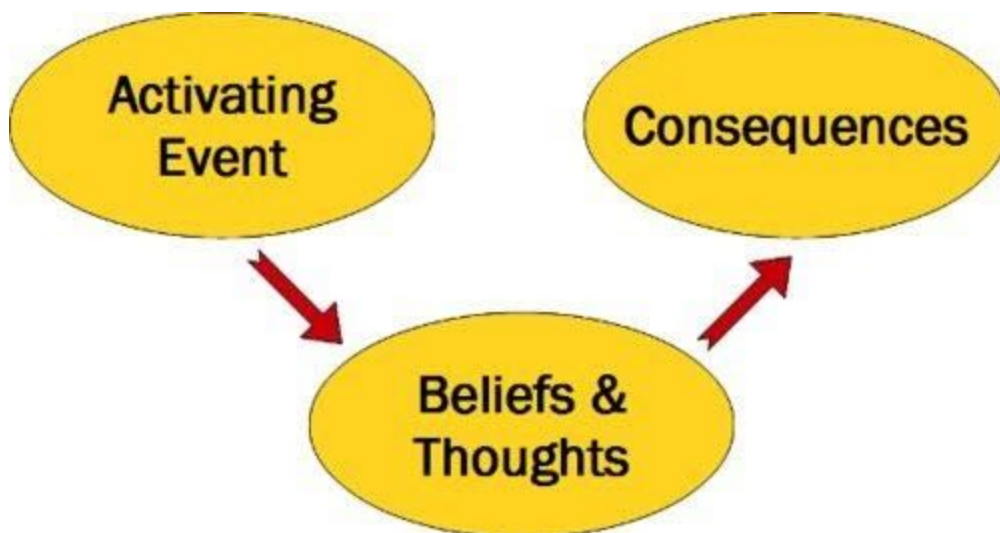
### **Albert Ellis’ ABCs.**

Albert Ellis was an American psychologist who developed Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, which was the forerunner for CBT: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. One of Ellis’ concepts is helpful for developing self-awareness around what motivates and prompts us to behave in certain ways. The model is called A,B,C.

A stands for “Activating Event”.

B stands for “Belief”

C stands for “consequences”.



So, with reflection, we are able to become more self-aware of typical patterns in our life that cause us difficulty and then unpack and gain self-awareness around the beliefs (often faulty or inaccurate) we hold that feed into these patterns.

For example,

Activating Event = receiving criticism or feedback that feels negative.

Belief = “People must like me at all times”.

Consequences = I feel a failure and I turn to alcohol to avoid that feeling.

In this scenario, self-reflection can help to uncover the belief that is driving the consequences. It is a faulty belief as it is not true that people must like you at all times. That will be impossible. Once a person has this self-awareness, they are able to challenge the belief and this allows them to change the pattern they have identified.

Remembering the ABC model can give a framework to your own self-reflection and help with the development of self-awareness.

## **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is simply the practice of observing what is going on in your mind, body, and environment with focus, clarity, and, importantly, acceptance of what is happening.

You aim to focus with some degree of concentration on what you are thinking and feeling at a given moment. Then you must clarify and describe those thoughts and feelings: where do they occur in your body, how exactly do they feel—warm/cold, tight/open, exciting/fear-inducing etc.—are they fleeting or enduring, and so on.

**Task:**

Choose 1 of the three strategies for developing self-awareness that we have covered here:

- **Daily Check In**
- **Albert Ellis' ABCs.**
- **Mindfulness.**

Have a go at thinking and reflecting through on using this technique in the next 5 minutes.

For the **daily check in** – ask yourself the three questions about your day so far.

For **Albert Ellis' ABCs**, have a go at unpacking the A, B and C of a recent difficult emotion or behaviour you experienced.

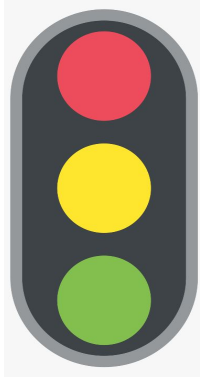
For **Mindfulness**, take the 5 minutes to observe, notice and describe what is going on in your mind, body, and environment.

[Allow participants 5 minutes to practice one of the three strategies.

Following this, facilitate a supportive discussion highlighting and describing how people found the technique. Emphasise that all of these techniques take practice to master].

We have covered all of our objectives for today. So, we are going to reflect and evaluate our learning now:

Using a simple traffic light system, I'd like you to evaluate your own learning today. For each objective, you are going to decide whether you feel you are:



**RED / STOP**

You have made no progress in learning this and are still at a "standstill."

**AMBER**

You have some understanding but aren't quite ready to apply it yet.

**GREEN / GO**

You have a good grasp of this objective and are ready to go and apply this learning in the real world.

1. Define what is meant by "self-awareness" and consider theories relevant to self-awareness.

**RED AMBER GREEN**

2. Consider the benefits of developing self-awareness.

**RED AMBER GREEN**

3. Complete a self-awareness assessment to increase levels of personal self-awareness

**RED AMBER GREEN**

4. Identify and apply a range of strategies to enhance self-awareness in personal and professional settings.

**RED AMBER GREEN**

What do you want to do as a result of your learning today?

Thank you to everyone for your engagement and participation in the session. I hope you have learnt some useful ideas that can be applied in your daily life.