

Learn Self-Awareness

And you? When will you begin that long journey into yourself?

—Rumi, thirteenth-century Persian poet

Reading Points

- What Is Self-Awareness?
- How Can You Gain Self-Awareness?
- What Can Self-Awareness Do for You?

PERSONAL—AND, BY extension, professional—development begins with an introspective self-evaluation. The more honest you are with yourself, the more eager you are to correct your faults or to accentuate your good qualities. This self-scrutiny is one of the hardest things to do for most people, yet it is the most important path to self-awareness. A person who is self-aware, in turn, strives to be authentic, confident but humble, curious and open-minded, and eager to learn and improve. Wouldn't you like to work with or for a person like that? More important, wouldn't you like to be that kind of person?

This chapter discusses what self-awareness means for someone like you—a recent entrant to the healthcare workforce. Here, we define self-awareness, offer common strategies for becoming self-aware, and list just a fraction of its many rewards. We also present examples from our own experiences.

WHAT IS SELF-AWARENESS?

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the term as the “knowledge and awareness of your own personality and character” (Merriam-Webster 2017). For the purpose of career growth, let’s expand that meaning to include work strengths and weaknesses—related to skills and talents, interpersonal or communication styles, behaviors, habits, and so on. In other words, self-awareness refers to a person’s understanding of his or her personal and professional traits, tendencies, behaviors, mind-set, abilities, and limitations.

Admittedly, getting to know yourself may feel unnatural. The self-reflection process is odd, frustrating, and even embarrassing; plus, the deliberate focus on yourself may make you feel like a narcissist. After all, it requires you to lower your defenses and raise your candor. If you’ve ever had a confrontation in which someone—typically, an authority figure—rattled off what’s bad and good about you, then you already have an idea of the discomfort this exercise can cause. The good news is that you do this alone (for the most part), but the better news is that the results of your efforts are noticed and even applauded by those around you.

Being self-aware can yield many positives, including

- intimate knowledge of your character, strengths and weaknesses, and interpersonal style;
- better interactions and relationships, because you understand the need to improve the attitudes and behaviors you have that turn people off;

- greater influence on those around you, because your honesty, humility, and authenticity make you instantly relatable—even trustworthy;
- clearer vision of your career path, because you know what you can, cannot, and must do to advance your career; and
- stronger commitment to lifelong learning and growth, because you acknowledge you're a work in progress and need to continually improve.

All of these benefits may position you for faster career advancement. Note, though, that self-awareness alone is not enough to catapult you into the C-suite. Undoubtedly, you still need the education, knowledge, skills, and abilities to fill those roles and the years of experience and expertise to be truly effective. Self-awareness, however, is an essential foundation—no matter what your short-term and long-term goals are. Why? Put simply, the more you know yourself, the better you can fix what is not working and boost what is working.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The sooner in your career you recognize your strengths, the sooner you can enhance, share, and capitalize on them. And the sooner you acknowledge your weaknesses, the sooner you can improve them; work around them; or minimize their effects on others, your performance, or your reputation. Weaknesses aren't all bad, and they're not all major. But they always have the potential to trip you up or to diminish the value of your strengths.

Suppose a hospital's hiring manager is picking the new director of a patient advocacy office and is considering either Applicant A (master's degree, intern for an award-winning medical center, team player, comes off as cold and a know-it-all) or Applicant B (pursuing a master's degree, fellow in a national association for patient

advocates, organized and innovative, painfully shy). The manager will hire the applicant most likely to fulfill the job description and fit the organization's or department's culture. The manager is not going to explain to the one not picked why he or she didn't get the job, leaving the applicant bewildered about what went wrong during the interview, how the resume could be revised, which qualification doesn't match, or what skill set or training is missing. But if the applicant is self-aware (i.e., knows his or her strengths and weaknesses), the result may not be as mysterious. A self-aware applicant may have worked around the weaknesses before this point to ensure they do not upstage the strengths. (Back to the example: Who do you think got the job—Applicant A or Applicant B—and why?)

Although we are proponents of authenticity, or letting your true self shine despite your flaws, we don't condone weaknesses that are or that lead to criminal, unethical, hostile, and harmful acts. Such a mind-set, feelings, and behaviors (e.g., racism, bigotry of any kind, extreme views, verbal and physical abusiveness, harassment of any kind, violent tendencies) have no place anywhere—especially not in healthcare, where people come to help and be helped. These negative traits must not be overlooked or viewed as personality quirks, and they must be addressed immediately.

The goal of identifying your strengths and weaknesses is *not* to transform you into a perfect specimen. (News flash: Nobody is perfect—regardless of how impressive and amazing an individual is; plus, self-aware individuals seek constant learning and improvement, not perfection.) The goal is to know and then to *act* on that information; it's like managing what can be measured, which is a quintessential leadership principle. After all, simply knowing something is useless if nothing comes of it. Take us, for example; we both continue to take stock or self-evaluate, and we do something about our respective discoveries.

Natalie's strengths (or the sweet spots, as we like to refer to them) are innovative thinking, big-picture and detail-oriented focus, persistence or tenacity, inclusive interaction with all the

stakeholders in her organization, strategic planning, and crafting and implementing an organizational vision. Her weaknesses include her cheerful personality, which those around her may find off-putting, especially when she's leading staff through tough challenges. In fact, a former board member once asked her, "How are you going to be a leader? You're so small and so happy." Aware that this bubbly disposition could be viewed as an unbecoming trait for a leader, Natalie has worked on moderating the way she comes across. (See chapter 2 to learn how she does it.) And she continues to work on this every day.

On the other hand, Laurie's sweet spot is catalyzing and communicating new businesses, strategies, and change initiatives. She is effective at teaching, coaching, and engaging stakeholders to enable successful execution. She is a strong visionary, just like Natalie. Her weakness is impatience. Because she is task oriented, she focuses on completing one step after another and occasionally forgets (unintentionally) to pause to first align resources and gain support for a new project. Now that she recognizes this tendency, she has made deliberate adjustments.

If you mitigate your weaknesses and leverage your strengths, you are in essence self-managing (the topic of chapter 2). That is, you are taking action based on information you've gathered. More specifically, you are taking charge of your own circumstances and thus the opportunities that come your way. As a result, you can move your career forward—in whatever industry and in whatever direction. And you can do all this efficiently and productively. Score!

Self-Management Example

For many people, the need for self-assessment or self-evaluation does not become obvious until they experience an event or a series of events (the aha moment, the light bulb turning on, the catalyst) that makes them wonder if they should make a change. Such

events include a termination, a demotion, a bad performance review, dissatisfaction on the job, or a threat of being downsized. The following example illustrates this scenario and the beginning of self-management.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in computer science, Jill landed a job with a healthcare software company. She was hired for a position in the customer support department, helping clients customize their software and troubleshooting their problems. She loved math and science in school and assumed that the logical thinking and problem solving required by the job fit her interests and degree well. (Plus, in a tight job market, she considered herself lucky for finding full-time employment—let alone a job that had something to do with her major.) For two years, she struggled to enjoy or find satisfaction with work. She didn't like the repetitive nature of the job or the rigid standards her department had to follow. She craved more, but she didn't know exactly what that meant.

When a position opened in the development side of the company, Jill followed her gut and applied for it. She got the job! She was now responsible for designing software features and enhancements, and she was part of a team that developed programs from the ground up. For the first time, she felt like she was a contributor to the organization's vision and strategic goals, not just a cog in the wheel. Her performance reviews reflected her newfound happiness, and her clients and coworkers constantly complimented her ideas and work.

That's when Jill started thinking about her career—specifically, moving up the organizational ladder; going back to school to obtain certifications, get more training, and update her skills; and joining a national association for healthcare information technology professionals to learn more about the industry. She also began to acknowledge that although she was good at logical thinking and problem solving, she was great at strategic and creative thinking (though she uses both sets of skills in her designs). Soon, she began winning awards and boosting her positive reputation.

Today, Jill looks back at those early years and is thankful for the experience. But she is convinced that if she had taken the time to do more self-reflection earlier (even before she graduated) and then begun self-management—rather than just hanging in there and hoping for things to improve—she could have advanced in the company much sooner.

HOW CAN YOU GAIN SELF-AWARENESS?

There's more than one way to become self-aware. For example, Anthony K. Tjan (2012), founder of a venture capital firm and a contributor to the *Harvard Business Review*, proposes a three-pronged approach: (1) testing and knowing yourself, (2) watching yourself and learning in the process, and (3) understanding others' self-awareness. Plus, many hospitals, health systems, health administration programs at colleges and universities, medical schools, healthcare professional associations, healthcare consultants, physician and executive coaches, and other groups offer seminars and webinars, academic courses, continuing education training, publications (e.g., books, articles, white papers, studies), and other resources on recognizing, honing, and applying self-awareness. Also available are a plethora of personality tests and 360-degree assessments (e.g., Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Kiersey Temperament Sorter, StrengthsFinder, DiSC, Predictive Index) you can self-administer or pay someone to administer to you.

Our recommendations for gaining self-awareness—or embarking on that journey, because you could spend a lifetime discovering yourself or new things about you—are rooted in the same principles discussed in the existing literature or taught in educational programs. But ours are less formal and start at the ground level—where you are now, instead of where you want to be in the future. The following sections detail steps you can take today.

Embrace Humility

A trademark of self-aware people is humility. Modest people—those who don't brag about their talents and accomplishments but are quick to congratulate or compliment others on theirs—are inspirational. They do everything with integrity and are focused on serving others. They understand, and acknowledge, their weaknesses and constantly invite others to help them improve and grow. They consider their strengths as gifts of luck and opportunity and as products of other people's hard work and generosity. They have a lot to teach (and they do so often), but they insist they are merely students. They are confident in their abilities, but they admit they don't know everything. They treat everyone with respect and recognize their value—regardless of what those people can do, contribute, or help with; they don't use people to advance their own agenda.

Being humble draws people in and thus expands one's sphere of influence. But we admit true humility (not false modesty) takes a lot of discipline and years to cultivate. It may not be easy for young careerists to balance the professional need to make their mark (e.g., showing what you can do, proving your proficiency or expertise, expecting and wanting credit for your contributions, getting seen and heard to land opportunities) with the personal desire to be modest—at least not when they just begin a job. However, it is possible to be a humble young professional. The first step is to get real with yourself.

Commit to Getting Real with Yourself

Just as you need to take basic math before you can take advanced math, you need to adopt basic honesty before you can move on to self-awareness. Without basic honesty, you may find it not only

difficult but impossible to admit that you have flaws and limitations, that you need to step outside yourself to gain perspective, that you need help, that you don't know nearly as much as you believe, and that you need to make adjustments.

You can't be honest if you're too proud or not humble. Your pride—which may stem from your achievements, high self-esteem or sense of worth, or upbringing—can block you from seeing the truth. For example, if at a young age you won a prestigious, merit-based award (a scholarship, publication, first place in a competition, or any coveted selection by a distinguished jury), you may view it as proof that you have reached the level of the best and as unwritten permission to feel self-satisfied. By all means, be proud of what you've achieved, but have some perspective, too. An award gives its recipients a start—a chance to do more with their skills, talents, and potential. It shouldn't be used as a pass to boast endlessly, which alienates people. Don't ever think you can learn little else going forward.

Moderate your pride by seeking feedback from those who know you and can be completely honest with you. Feedback is the surest way to gauge the attitudes, perspectives, traits, and behaviors you display to others but don't observe yourself. When you receive feedback, try not to be defensive, because that will only hinder the process. Instead, take notes and ask for clarification if needed. Carefully think about the comments, especially the negative ones, because they are usually the toughest to deliver but the most enlightening. Then, decide how you will act on the information you have.

Doing nothing in response to feedback is a waste of everyone's time and effort. But half-heartedly reacting to feedback is worse, because you may give up the first time you encounter a slight difficulty and then go back to your old behaviors. Taming your pride requires you to go all in, to “lean in” and take the pain and discomfort associated with honest self-reflection.

Develop a Habit of Self-Evaluation

Your behavior, attitude, perspective, motivation, wants, needs, priorities, and preferences evolve as you experience life and career changes. For example, as an unmarried, childless, just-graduated individual, your focus is likely on landing a decent-paying, full-time job in your field of interest. As you learn more skills and gain greater proficiency, your focus may shift to career advancement—a promotion, a lateral move, a job transfer, more training, or a return to school. As your life and career progress to include more obligations and responsibilities (a growing family, a mortgage, or a demanding position that requires community leadership), your focus will shift again. Through all these seasons or stages of life, your strengths and weaknesses and your general mind-set change, too. So you should perform a self-evaluation regularly (e.g., quarterly, annually, after a big project) to ensure that what you know about yourself (self-awareness) is keeping pace with how you've evolved as a person and as a professional.

Regular self-assessment doesn't have to be complicated; the old-school system of jotting down a list of your strengths and weaknesses works well. Review the list immediately; don't procrastinate. Add notes on how you plan to improve, address, or discuss the items that need the most attention. You may set a date of completion for the specific items or leave them open-ended. Whatever you do, make sure you keep this list in mind as you go about your days. Revisit it often, tape it to your desk, enter it into your smartphone, write about it in a private blog or diary, and update it if needed. Again, whatever you do, don't forget it—especially when you get busy.

Here are some questions to guide you while you do a self-assessment:

- Whom do you communicate best with—in your personal life and at work? Why?
- What parts of the job come easiest to you? Hardest?

- What pitfalls seem to sink you every time? What barriers do you have to leap over? Why? How can you avoid them?
- How do you feel when you complete a task or project, especially a challenging one?
- How do your family members, friends, work colleagues, superiors, and others (e.g., CEO, other senior leaders, volunteers, support staff, clinicians, vendors) perceive or describe you? What do you think they say about you behind your back?
- What parts of your job are most gratifying or rewarding?
- What tasks or projects do you tend to dread, avoid, or procrastinate on?
- Do you ask others for feedback after you complete a project or in general?
- Do you think you are making a difference? For whom? For what? How?
- Where in the organization or your personal life are you making the greatest impact?
- Are you growing in your position? If not, why?
- Have you made a mistake or failed at a task? Dissect the circumstances to examine how you can learn from that event.

Regular self-reflection is important, not just for early careerists but also for every professional regardless of industry or job title. People who don't reflect are less self-aware and thus tend to have an interpersonal style that alienates, belittles, and lowers the morale of others. Unchecked, this behavior can negatively affect your performance and efficacy as a leader.

Nurture Your Curiosity

Albert Einstein said, "The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing." For our purposes,

the reason may be that the US healthcare system needs curious leaders because curious people are fundamentally brave. They are not afraid to pose 101 questions—even the stupid and already answered ones. They are not intimidated to try new things, meet new people, or even retry old things with old people. They don't blink or break a sweat in the face of progress, changes, and challenges. Plus, curious people have a scientific mind; they approach everything with the scientific method—they consider a question or problem, research that question fully, form a hypothesis, test that hypothesis several times, analyze the results of those tests, build a conclusion, and tell everyone about it so that actions can be taken.

Curiosity is a natural impetus for self-awareness. That is, if you are curious, you are eager to find out what and who make you tick—and then you can leverage that discovery to grow personally and professionally and improve performance. And you do all this in a rigorous manner, as a scientist does. If curiosity is one of your strengths, you can perpetuate the learning that brings about and accelerates growth. Plus, the more you learn, the more curious you get.

So how can you nurture that curiosity, that insatiable spirit in you? Ask questions and contemplate the answers. Communicate (either verbally or in writing) with people who interest you and who have unique experiences and opinions. Ask for advice and follow it. It doesn't matter if the advice works; what matters is that you were open to trying it. Read as much as possible, attend lectures or seminars, keep a journal, do a web search and follow relevant links (often you'll end up in a much different place than where you started), and join discussions—but listen much more than talk.

We are all curious in varying degrees and typically about something or someone outside of ourselves. If you turn that curiosity inward, just imagine the kinds of conclusions you could draw about yourself.

WHAT CAN SELF-AWARENESS DO FOR YOU?

As we mentioned, self-awareness offers numerous advantages. The following sections discuss just a few of the many.

Authenticity and Trust

One of the most important benefits of self-awareness is finding the authentic, multidimensional you—the good, the bad, and the ugly of your character. Your authenticity lowers people’s defense mechanisms because it tells them, “I’m a work in progress, and I’m trying my best.” Authenticity encourages people to level with you, to be kinder, and to accept both the qualities that make you different from them and those that you share.

When you are authentic,

- you don’t have a split personality—you speak and act the same way in public (in front of mixed company) as you do in private (in front of only those you trust);
- you make mistakes and poor decisions, but you acknowledge and apologize when you are wrong and you don’t blame everyone else;
- you are honest with yourself and those around you, even if your honesty could put you in an unflattering light;
- you can admit “I don’t know” and “I need help” without shame;
- you are not afraid to show emotions that may be perceived as weakness, such as sadness, anger (i.e., irritation and exasperation, *not* temper tantrums, abusive conduct, or blind rage), disappointment, fear, confusion, or doubt;
- you express genuine concern for and desire to help with people’s predicaments; and

- you practice what you preach and do so according to your own belief system—not according to popular opinion or trendy practice.

This kind of behavior enables you to connect with others and earn their trust.

Stephen M. R. Covey (2008)—son of the late management expert Stephen R. Covey, author of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*—wrote about instant trust in his book, *The Speed of Trust*. (Instant trust is a relatively new idea that contrasts with the old—but still valid—model of earning trust only after a long time of proving yourself.) The book’s subtitle summarizes Covey’s thesis about trust: *The One Thing That Changes Everything*. Trust is a currency, and if you have it you can do just about anything. If you are self-aware, you will likely use that currency for good and be transparent about what you do with it.

Influence and Style

Healthcare administration is a stressful 24-7 job, so you need to surround yourself with people whose support you can count on. In addition to the strength of your character (integrity, accountability, credibility), your interpersonal style—whether you’re introverted, charismatic, strategic, creative, compassionate, driven, laid back, or something in between—plays a big role in expanding or diminishing your influence over others.

Influence isn’t about being liked or being popular; a leader does not worry about who likes him or her. (Generally, when you’re kind, you don’t have to wonder if people like you. The reverse is also true.) Influence is about understanding your interpersonal style’s effect on others and adjusting your approach to forge connections and relationships with those you can help and who will, in turn, help you get things done.

Every interaction you have is both an opportunity for others to judge your personality and character and an opportunity for you to evaluate whether you're conveying your strengths or highlighting your weaknesses. If the former, your influence may grow; if the latter, your influence may suffer.

Ask yourself the following questions when evaluating your style and thus your influence. (Always elaborate on your answers to better explore your thinking or rationale.)

- Am I able to connect with leaders, both the formal and the informal? How?
- Am I able to engage colleagues, staff, bosses, executives, patients, clinicians, and other stakeholders? How?
- Am I drawn to people or processes? Why?
- Am I more comfortable with one-on-one or group interaction? Why?
- Do I tend to say, "let's do it," "you do it," or "I'll do it"?
- How would I and others characterize my style? Am I comfortable with that?
- Do I prefer to deal with the big picture or the details?
- Is planning or implementation my sweet spot?

Confidence

As you become more self-aware, your confidence grows and your anxiety diminishes. The confidence comes from knowing your strengths and weaknesses. When you reach this level of self-awareness, you will no longer be content to sit (and doodle—yep, we know what you're doing) in meetings, half-heartedly listening to the bigwigs discuss the issues and nervously waiting for your turn to report on your project. You will speak up when appropriate, politely but decisively. Beyond meetings, you will get involved

in the daily life of the department, unit, or office. You will contribute according to your knowledge and capabilities. You will start acting like a self-aware leader, building relationships, giving compliments and credit to deserving individuals and groups, learning about everything, gaining trust, and managing your career.

One last note: Do not confuse confidence with boastfulness. Boastful people are typically insecure. They have a constant desire to be noticed and praised, and they get validation from people's reactions (especially envy) to their accomplishments. Confident people, on the other hand, are typically secure. They are fully aware of who they are, what they have, what they know, and what they can do. Although they are proud of their accomplishments (and will boast about them only to thank the people who have helped them), they don't gloat or show off. They understand that the true reward comes not from fleeting or even insincere praise but from the tangible outcomes.

Rookie Mistakes

Getting Caught in the Comparison Trap

When was the last time you chided yourself for not having someone else's body or brains or talent or relationship or family? How about that person's car or house or income? How about his or her job title, education, social status, or accomplishments?

It's natural to compare yourself to others. We all do it in one way or another. For example, when Laurie first joined the entrepreneurial (read: independent contracting) world of healthcare consulting, she occasionally thought those with traditional jobs had it better. They received a predictable paycheck every month or every other week, and they didn't



have to worry about where their next project would come from. Likewise, other career rookies may long for the salary and benefits their contemporaries earn, may disparage others' professional wins because of jealousy or rivalry, or may become downright depressed and resentful about the opportunities that stubbornly evade them but seem to flow straight to others. Comparisons may be common, but they can trap you in an unproductive, exhausting cycle of coveting, envy, and self-loathing.

To break this cycle, focus on what you have contributed and what you have achieved using your own wit, skills, and courage. Then, figure out what you need to do to be happy with the choices you made. That's exactly what Laurie did. She accepted that it's not greener on the other side and took an inventory of her life and career. She realized her job allowed her the time, space, and flexibility that traditional jobs lacked. She could build lasting and rewarding relationships, engage in a variety of challenging work, pursue leadership opportunities in professional associations, and entertain limitless opportunities—both in and out of work.

Pretending to Be Someone You're Not

An extreme consequence of comparing yourself to others is subconsciously or consciously absorbing their desirable qualities into your own persona. For example, if you admire your Facebook friend's volunteer activities, you might add that information to your resume or mention it during a job interview even if you haven't volunteered anywhere before. The same goes for work experiences, schools attended, hobbies, social and political affiliations, honors received, papers published, and even personal philosophies. You might think that doing so is harmless, the detail will impress other



people, and your little white lie will not get discovered. But you are wrong.

First, you are committing a form of identity theft (at worst) and an unequivocal, untenable lie (at the least). Second, the good impression you might leave on a job screener is fleeting when compared with the long-lasting bad impression you will leave on everyone else. Third, hiring managers and human resources staff often verify resume details and the claims you make during an interview; at the very least, they will check your online profiles. Fourth, even if you get away with this unseemly tactic, the job (or the people you lied to) will eventually force you to apply what you claimed to know or have done. If you can't back up your words with action, you can't expect to remain in that position.

To avoid that drama, just be authentic. Own who you are, and don't dare apologize for it. Remember that the online and offline personae most people display in public are the edited versions and not the rough drafts. In reality, their lives are less impressive. Fibbing only causes you stress and confusion about your career direction.

Being a Watcher, Not a Doer

When you're just starting your career, it's sometimes easiest to adopt the herd mentality and go along with the crowd. For example, in a meeting everyone agrees with the boss that option A is the best resolution for problem B. You nod your head and smile along with the group, even if your instinct tells you there's a better solution.

That's understandable. The healthcare workplace is very intimidating. Decisions made there are often either



life-or-death or affect a large cluster of people. Everything is a process with multiple steps. People walk and talk fast, and you're expected to keep up. Early in your career, almost everyone is older and more experienced than you. Thus, your natural response is to anxiously listen and observe, not participate.

However, you were hired for a reason, so show everyone what you can do. Listen intently but join the conversation as well. State your opinions and back them up with evidence, which means you have to do your homework and prepare as much as possible. Volunteer for projects that will showcase your skills, but also be willing to take risks and challenges. Take advantage of as many opportunities as you can to learn and contribute with gusto. Your enthusiasm, eagerness, and confidence will be duly noted.

Investing Too Much in Your Weaknesses, Not Enough in Your Strengths

Don't get us wrong; we recommend improvement in all areas, and minimizing or eliminating weaknesses is a beneficial exercise. However, you should not pour all of your precious resources—time, money, physical and mental energy, and patience—into correcting a personality or professional deficiency while ignoring your promising qualities and innate talents. Strengths need as much (or even more) attention as weaknesses, depending on the position you hold.

Suppose you are terrible at small talk but excellent at public or group speaking. Determine which skill is more useful to the job you have today and the job you want in the near future. Then, devote an appropriate amount of resources to developing each skill. Ask yourself what you'll get out of



each investment. For example, would learning how to chat improve your interactions, make your daily duties easier, or increase the chances of landing your dream job? Likewise, would refining your public speaking make you more persuasive and informative, boost your department's/organization's reputation both internally and in the community, help get you a raise or promotion, or give you a competitive edge?

Visualize weighing on a scale the resources you put in against the results you get out. If the resources are much heavier than the results, then you can lighten the resources load significantly. This scale should not balance; the results should be heavier than the resources. More bang for your buck!

Unfortunately, many new careerists (including us when we were starting out) favor fixing weaknesses over enhancing strengths. Many human resources departments and supervisors do as well. But we all need to change that mind-set so that we're not wasting our resources on things that may not pay off in the long run.

Remember These

- Self-awareness refers to a person's understanding of his or her personal and professional traits, tendencies, abilities, and limitations.
- A person who is self-aware strives to be authentic, confident but humble, curious and open-minded, and eager to learn and improve.
- If you mitigate weaknesses and leverage strengths, you are self-managing or taking charge of your own circumstances and thus the opportunities that come your way.



- Do a regular self-assessment to ensure your self-awareness is keeping pace with your personal and professional evolution.
- Regular self-reflection is important not just for early careerists but also for every professional regardless of industry or job title. People who don't reflect are less self-aware and thus tend to have an interpersonal style that alienates, belittles, and lowers the morale of others.
- The trademark of self-aware people is humility.
- You can't be honest if you're not humble or if you're too proud. Your pride can block you from seeing the truth.
- Curiosity is a natural impetus for self-awareness. If you are curious, you are eager to find out what makes you tick—and then you can leverage that discovery to grow personally and professionally and improve performance.
- One of the most important benefits of self-awareness is finding the authentic, multidimensional you—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Your authenticity lowers people's defense mechanisms, which leads them to connect with and trust you.
- As you become more self-aware, your confidence grows and your anxiety diminishes.
- Do not confuse confidence with boastfulness. Boastful people are typically insecure, while confident people are typically secure.

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