

Getting to Know Yourself

The more you know about what makes you tick, the better you are at making decisions that are right for you. Self-awareness helps you understand why you do the things you do and that makes it easier for you to make changes and create a more fulfilling life. Having a clear picture of your personality, beliefs, motivations and emotions also allows you to understand other people and how they perceive you.

By a certain age, we should know who we are right? Not necessarily. Very often we simply do what we're expected to do by our families or communities. Or we base our choices on past experiences. Or we're just too busy to take the time to examine why we're acting the way we are and why certain aspects of our lives are not working.

Knowing who we are, or self-awareness, is not something we're born with – it's a learned skill. But once learned, it can help us resolve problems, forge stronger relationships and reach our potential. It can increase our confidence so that we can take the right road towards a physically, emotionally and socially healthy life.

What is self-awareness?

Being self-aware is knowing:

- what you want in your life
- your strengths and weaknesses
- what motivates you and makes you happy
- your achievements so far
- your behaviors – how and why you react in different situations
- what you need to improve or change
- your most essential beliefs and values
- how you see yourself as a person

Why is self-awareness important?

According to Dr. Travis Bradberry, author of Emotional Intelligence 2.0, "a lack of self-awareness will actually hold you back from developing self-management, social awareness, and relationship management skills," which are necessary in building the life you want. Without self-awareness, it can be difficult to steer your thoughts, emotions and actions in a healthy direction and you may find it hard to make good decisions.

How can you be self-aware?

Because self-awareness is a skill, it must be constantly worked on if it is to flourish. That's because your life is constantly changing and new chapters constantly being written. Self-awareness is knowing who you are at this specific time in your life.



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There are many great techniques to help you become more self-aware. They include:

- **A self-inventory.** How well do you really know what your strengths and weaknesses are? Can you identify your habits, likes and dislikes? What motivates you? What makes you happy and what doesn't? Be honest and objective.

Then write down your core values. These are what make us, us. Our need for faith, family, creativity, public service, tradition, love and other values cannot be underestimated. If our lives don't reflect these values, we can feel unfulfilled and unhappy. Once you've written the values that guide your life, rank them in order of importance. This will help you see clearly if and where changes need to be made.

- **Asking for honest feedback.** How do others perceive you? This can be really tough to hear, but it's extremely effective. Try to keep an open mind and don't get defensive. What you hear may be hurtful, but it's also empowering.
- **Keeping a journal or diary.** Journaling helps you explore what makes you special and unique. Writing down how you felt about each day's experiences helps increase your insight into why you react and respond in certain ways to certain situations. Make it a point to focus on your emotions. Looking back on previous entries allows you to identify patterns of behavior.

- **Set aside time everyday for introspection.** Take a warm bath, enjoy a cup of tea, go for a walk or run, or garden. Solitude is needed for this kind of self-reflection so make time for yourself on a regular basis.

When we have a better understanding of ourselves, we are able to experience ourselves as unique individuals. We are empowered to make changes, build on our strengths and make smart decisions. We're able to create more satisfying lives.



We want your questions, comments, and suggestions. Lifelines@homewoodhealth.com

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