

Self-awareness Strategies

1. Quit treating your feelings as good or bad. Judging your emotions prevents you from understanding them, adds more emotions to the pile, and keeps you from being able to see the cause of the original feeling. Understand, don't judge.

2. Observe the ripple effect from your emotions. Recognize that when you act out of your emotions, the effects can be long-term, and on more than the person at whom you directed the emotion.

3. Lean into your discomfort. We tend to try to ignore or minimize unpleasant emotions, but this prevents us from understanding those emotions.

4. Feel your emotions physically. Learn to spot the physical changes that come with your different emotions, and you'll be able to better understand what you're feeling.

5. Know who and what pushes your buttons. This needs to be specific – identify the exact people, situations, and environments that trigger your emotions by rubbing you the wrong way, and make a list. This will then allow you to determine the source of your reaction to these things.

6. Watch yourself like a hawk. Develop a more objective understanding of your behavior by taking notice of your emotions and behaviors as a situation unfolds.

7. Keep a journal about your emotions. Because emotions are such an intangible subject, you'll need to write things down in order to understand them better, identify patterns, and track progress. It will also later help you to remember your tendencies in the moment.

8. Don't be fooled by a bad mood. A bad mood can overshadow all your emotions, so you need to recognize when it's the emotional state that's affecting you rather than an individual emotion, and go through the same process to identify what caused the mood.

9. Don't be fooled by a good mood, either. You should also seek to understand why your good moods happen, both for the sake of understanding your emotions better, and to avoid harm that can come from a good mood (irrational exuberance, for example).

10. Stop and ask yourself why you do the things you do. Your emotions will alert you to things you never would know otherwise.

11. Visit your values. Contrasting your values with the way your emotions compel you to act is a helpful exercise to increase your self-awareness. Take a piece of paper and write down your values in one column, and anything you've done recently that you're not proud of in a second column. The authors suggest doing this

somewhere between daily and monthly in order to keep it in your mind before you react in a way you'd regret.

12. Check yourself. Your physical appearance always gives good clues about how you feel. Observe your facial expressions, body language, clothes, etc.

13. Spot your emotions in books, movies, and music. Art that you identify with can offer further clues about your emotions. Consider which of these things grabs your attention, and ask yourself why.

14. Seek feedback. Because your understanding of your emotions is limited by your one perspective, getting feedback from others is invaluable. Ask others for specific examples and look for similarities in different people's answers.

15. Get to know yourself under stress. Learn to recognize your personal physiological and emotional first signs of stress, and take the time to rest or recharge before that stress piles up.

Self-management Strategies

1. Breathe right. Oxygen goes first to your body's vital functions, then to complex functions that help you stay calm. Learning correct breathing technique and consciously focusing on it when you're stressed is simple and often-repeated advice, but it is crucial.

2. Create an emotion vs. reason list. Make a habit of creating a list whenever your emotions and reasoning are in conflict, with your emotions on one side and rational reasons on the other. Use the list to identify which emotions aren't valid considerations, and which ones offer important cues that your reason may have missed.

3. Make your goals public. Because most of self-management is a matter of motivation, by making your goals public you can harness the motivation of the expectations of others. Share the right goals with the right people who will keep you accountable for each one.

4. Count to ten. Use this basic self-management trick to re-engage your rational mind when necessary. You can do something else like take a drink to get the same effect and give yourself those few moments.

5. Sleep on it. When you don't know what to do, time will often give you clarity by allowing emotions to run their course and settle down before you make a decision.

6. Talk to a skilled self-manager. Ask a skilled self-manager about his or her self-management processes in order to gain insights to modify your own behavior.

7. Smile and laugh more. Because changing your external expression can influence your internal mood, forcing yourself to smile can counteract a negative mood.

8. Set aside some time in your day for problem solving. Simply put 15 minutes on your schedule to stop the flurry of activity and emotion, and take time to think without the disturbance of your phone or computer.

9. Take control of your self-talk. The average person has about 50,000 thoughts per day, each of which trigger chemical reactions in your brain that influence your emotions and behavior. You usually don't notice this, but you can improve your self-management by identifying negative self-talk (I always, I never, I'm an idiot, it's their fault, etc.) and replacing it with healthier thoughts (sometimes I make that mistake, I accept responsibility, etc.).

10. Visualize yourself succeeding. Because your brain reacts the same way to visualizing something as it does to you actually experiencing it, visualization is a simple but powerful tool to prime yourself for success. Take the time each night before you go to bed and visualize yourself acting the way you'd like in situations that you've had difficulty with in the past, or might have difficulty with the next day.

11. Clean up your sleep hygiene. You need 20 minutes of natural morning sunlight each day to reset your biological clock. Avoid caffeine after breakfast (caffeine stays in your system for 12 hours), screens for two hours before bed (the blue light prevents production of hormones needed for sleep), and activities such as working or watching TV in bed (which prevent your brain from cuing your body to sleep when you're in bed).

12. Focus your attention on your freedoms, rather than your limitations. Take accountability for what you can influence in any situation (such as your own attitudes and reactions), instead of worrying about things beyond your control.

13. Stay synchronized. If your body language doesn't match the situation, it's a sign that your emotions are out of whack. Be aware of your body language and use it as a cue to address your emotions when necessary.

14. Speak to someone who is not emotionally invested in your problem. A second opinion can be invaluable, but only if the other person doesn't have their own emotions about the particular situation. Find the right people to be sounding boards for the right situations.

15. Learn a valuable lesson from everyone you encounter. The key here is in the mindset; if you are looking to learn a valuable lesson from everyone you interact with, you will be in a mindset that makes you more flexible, open-minded, and relaxed. Always be

asking yourself what you can learn about yourself or others from others' behavior, and you'll experience negative emotional reaction much less frequently.

16. Put a mental recharge into your schedule. Physical activity gives your brain an important rest, in addition to the physical benefits. Put physical exercise on your schedule rather than trying to fit it in if you have time.

17. Accept that change is just around the corner. Because people tend to be upset by change, acceptance that change is inevitable will save you a great deal of stress. The authors suggest taking time every week or two to write down some changes that could potentially happen in important areas of your life, as well as actions you would want to take if those changes happen.

Social Awareness Strategies

1. Greet people by name. Using and remembering someone's name is a basic way to engage them. Picture the individual's name spelled out, and use it at least twice in your first conversation with them.

2. Watch body language. By becoming an expert reader of body language, you'll be better able to recognize emotional cues and adapt accordingly.

3. Make timing everything. Focus on the other person's emotional state and frame of mind, instead of your own, to ascertain the right timing for what you need to communicate. One simple example is not asking for a favor when the other person is in an upset or angry emotional state.

4. Develop a back-pocket question. Having a prepared open-ended question in reserve is useful in cases when the conversation is dead, the other person is closing up, or you just don't know what to say. This should be used when you need to inject some life into the interaction, not for conversations that are already emotionally charged.

5. Don't take notes at meetings. If you're focused on taking notes, you will likely miss important cues in the conversation. Most communication happens nonverbally, so whenever possible you should focus on the individuals, not your notes. If note-taking is

necessary, make sure to take breaks at regular intervals to observe the people in the meeting and pick up emotional cues.

6. Plan ahead for social gatherings. It seems a bit stilted, but the reality is that planning ahead will allow you to be more emotionally present at the event. Write down anything you want to be sure to accomplish, and you'll forget less and notice more.

7. Clear away the clutter. This involves bettering your listening skills by focusing on the other person's words and expressions instead of thinking about what you want to say next. The difference is your mental purpose: are you in the conversation to impress the other person with your knowledge, or to learn something?

8. Live in the moment. Being present wherever you are instead of wasting your time regretting the past and worrying about the future will allow you to be more perceptive of the people around you.

9. Go on a 15-minute tour. The authors suggest taking 15 minutes out of each workday to walk around and observe emotional cues: the look of people's workspaces, the timing of people's movements, the overall mood, etc.

10. Watch EQ at the movies. Take the time to watch two movies specifically for the purpose of observing the character's emotions, body language, relationships, interactions, etc.

11. Practice the art of listening. This means practicing a conscious focus on the speaker, and the tone, speed, and volume of their voice.

12. Go people watching. In order to improve your social awareness abilities, go to a coffee shop, grocery store, or other public place with the express purpose of observing people's emotional states.

13. Understand the rules of the culture game. In today's world, being socially aware requires that you develop emotional intelligence across the spectrum of the world's cultures. This is a complex endeavor, as every culture has its own norms for personal, family, and business interactions. It will require patience as you watch and observe, taking extra time to understand the cultural expectations of people outside your own culture.

14. Test for accuracy. If you're not sure what a cue is telling you about someone, you can always ask. State what you see ("You seem sad...") and ask a direct question ("Did something happen?")

15. Step into their shoes. Remember that people have different backgrounds and motivations. Put yourself in their situation, and from the perspective of how they would see things, try to understand why they are acting the way they are. When possible, check with them to see if your guesses are correct.

16. Seek the whole picture. Ask people about their perceptions of you, or send out a 360-degree survey to get feedback that will help you understand how you appear to others.

17. Catch the mood of the room. Moving from perception of individuals to being able to read the room is a big leap in abilities. You'll probably have a gut feeling, but you can also observe groups of people to see how they are talking, how they are moving, how they are grouped, etc. It can be helpful to do this with someone who is experienced in reading a room.

Relationship Management Strategies

1. Be open and be curious. Sharing things about yourself will leave less room for people to misinterpret you, and the more you know about someone else, the more clearly you can interpret their emotional signals.

2. Enhance your natural communication style. We can all benefit from understanding and adjusting our natural communication style. The authors suggest another writing exercise, with the positives of your style on one side and the negatives on the other. Ask friends or family to help you define the ups and downs, and pick a few of each to emphasize or to work on.

3. Avoid giving mixed signals. It's possible to be saying something that's on your mind while simultaneously exhibiting body language that shows a different emotion that is still lingering from a completely separate situation or conversation. Stay aware of your emotions to make sure that your body and voice match your words. If they don't, explain why so people don't get mixed signals.

4. Remember the little things that pack a punch. Add back some old-fashioned good manners into the way you talk if you're not already in the habit of saying the little things like "please," "thank you," and "I'm sorry."

5. Take feedback well. Appreciate the feedback you get, and be mindful of your response. Ask for examples in order to really

understand what is being said, and thank the person for the feedback. It's hard to give feedback as well as get it. Many of the previous points apply; consider sleeping on the feedback, or making an emotion vs. reason list.

6. Build trust. Start the trust-building process by being the first person to “be open” and share something about yourself. I'll directly quote the authors for the steps to continue building trust: “Open communication; willingness to share; consistency in words, actions, and behavior over time; and reliability in following through on the agreements of the relationship.”

7. Have an “open-door” policy. The point here is to find specific ways increase your accessibility to others, not to make your time available to anyone at any time.

8. Only get mad on purpose. It is healthy to express anger in a way that communicates you have strong feelings, or that a situation is serious. Use anger sparingly and purposefully, instead of letting it control you. Again, the authors suggest putting pen to paper; write down things that make you angry, from the minor annoyances to the things that make you explode. Specifically define the degree of anger in each situation that would improve the relationship. If it's not possible, anger isn't appropriate for the situation.

9. Don't avoid the inevitable. When you're faced with a situation you don't like, don't withdraw; it will only make things worse.

Apply your EQ skills to find something that helps you through the situation or improves it.

10. Acknowledge the other person's feelings. Accept others' right to experience their emotions without either pushing those feelings aside or making them a big deal. Respect the right to those feelings, even if you don't agree with the feelings themselves. Listen and repeat back what you've heard to show your understanding and concern.

11. Complement the person's emotions or situation. We often have a tendency to reflect the other person's emotions, but responding to anger with anger, for example, will only make things worse. Take the time to consider some past situations you've experienced, and think about when someone else acted in a way that complemented your emotions, making the interaction a pleasant one.

12. When you care, show it. Small acts of appreciation can create powerful relationships.

13. Explain your decisions, don't just make them. People need to understand why a decision was made in order to support it. Take the time to verbalize your decision process, including what the alternatives were and why you made the decision you did. Seek input before the decision if possible, and always acknowledge the effects of your decision. The authors suggest looking through your

calendar to identify your next three upcoming decisions, consider who will be affected, prepare explanations, etc.

14. Make your feedback direct and constructive. The key to giving good feedback is to consider the person who is receiving the feedback, and to adapt your approach accordingly. Take the time to consider the person beforehand.

15. Align your intention with your impact. Times when your impact didn't align with your intention will give you clues about the areas of your EQ you can improve. Think about times when you unintentionally caused hard feelings, or relationships that seem illogically strained.

16. Offer a “fix-it” statement during a broken conversation. Learn to recognize when a conversation is deteriorating, and say something like, “This is hard,” or “How are you feeling?” Offer a reset button to restore open lines of communication.

17. Tackle a tough conversation. Tough conversations will come up no matter how high your EQ is. The authors offer a six-part approach to managing them better:

1. Start the discussion with common ground.
2. Ask the other person to help you understand how he or she feels.

3. Don't defend your point of view until you've heard the other person's perspective.
4. Then help the other person understand your side – your reasoning, your feelings, etc. Apologize, if appropriate, for the difficulty of the situation.
5. Move the conversation forward once what can be said has been said. Obtain agreement on next steps.
6. Follow up concerning what you've discussed at a later time as a means of genuinely addressing the issues.

Special Note: This summary was provided by, “Deconstructing Excellence” (deconstructingexcellence.com)