

SELF IMPROVEMENT

12 Self-Awareness Exercises That Fuel Success



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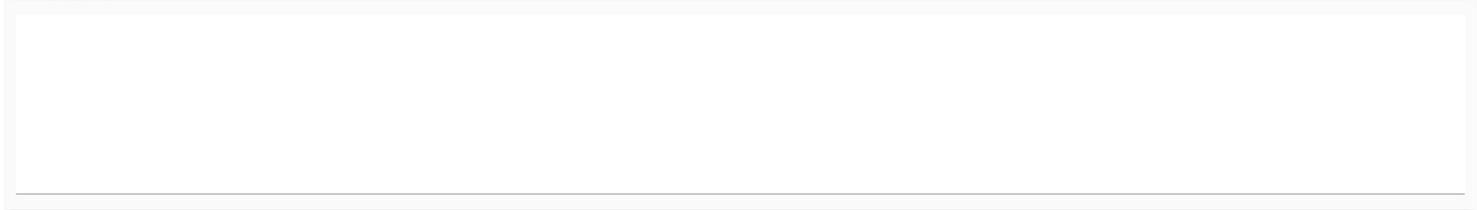
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January 11, 2016 6 min read

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An African proverb says, “When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside can do you no harm.”



any destructive thought-patterns and unhealthy habits. This leads to better decision-making and behavioral responses.

Here are 12 exercises for greater self-awareness:

1. The three why's.

Before acting on a decision, ask yourself “Why?” Follow up your response with another “Why?” And then a third. If you can find three good reasons to pursue something, you’ll have clarity and be more confident in your actions.

Being self-aware means [knowing your motives](#) and determining whether they’re reasonable.

2. Expand your emotional vocabulary.

The philosopher [Wittgenstein](#) said, “The limits of my language means the limits of my world.”

Emotions create powerful physical and behavioral responses that are more complex than “happy” or “sad.” Putting your feelings into words has a [therapeutic effect](#) on your brain; if you’re unable to articulate how you feel, that can create stress. Here’s a [great list](#) of “feeling words” to help with [labeling](#) your emotions. Increase your emotional vocabulary with one new word each day.

Related: [Are You Emotionally Intelligent? Here's How to Know for Sure.](#)

3. Practice saying 'no' to yourself.

The ability to say “no” to yourself to put off short-term gratification for the long-term gain is an important [life-skill](#). Like a muscle, it is strengthened with exercise. The more you practice saying “no” to small daily challenges, the better you can withstand major temptations.

There are plenty of daily temptations -- social media, junk food, gossiping, Youtube. Make a goal of saying “no” to five different temptations each day.

4. Break visceral reactions.

A person without self-awareness runs on auto-pilot, and responds with knee-jerk reactions. Self-awareness allows you to assess situations objectively and rationally, without acting on [biases](#) and

[stereotypes](#)

5. Be accountable to your flaws.

Nobody is perfect. Being aware of your flaws, but failing to accept accountability, is leaving the job half-done. We're often critical of others, while [ignorant](#) of our own flaws. Self-awareness helps turn the mirror on ourselves and prevents hypocritical behavior.

Iteration and self-improvement only happens once you recognize a flaw. Create a habit of acknowledging your [mistakes](#), rather than making excuses.

6. Monitor your self-talk.

There is non-stop commentary in [our heads](#) that is not always helpful. A little bit of [negative self-talk](#) can spiral into stress and depression.

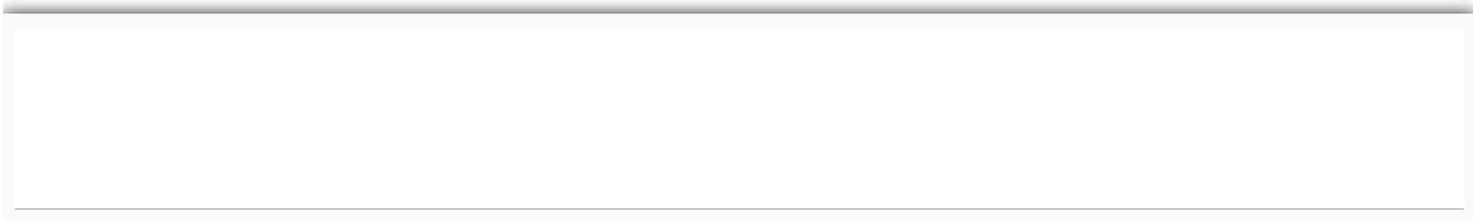
Pay attention to the way you respond to your successes and failures — do you pass off your achievements as luck? And crucify yourself after failures? Positive and negative feedback-loops will form in your mind based off [how you respond](#) to successes and failures. Being tough on yourself needs to be balanced with [self-compassion](#). Celebrate your wins, forgive your losses.

Related: [How Talking to Yourself Can Help You Be More Successful](#)

7. Improve your body language awareness.

Watching yourself on video can be a cringeworthy experience, but awareness of your body language, posture, and mannerisms improves [your confidence](#).

Slouching, or taking a “low-power-pose” increases [cortisol](#) and feeds low [self-esteem](#), while standing tall or taking a “high-power-pose” stimulates testosterone and improves your performance. Using hand gestures helps with [articulating](#) your thoughts and affects how people respond to you.



Record a speech or presentation and evaluate your posture and [hand gestures](#). Watch videos of skilled speakers and adopt their mannerisms to improve your own.

8. Play “Devil’s Advocate.”

Taking an opposing view forces you to question your [assumptions](#). Your "default" beliefs and worldview are not always reasonable; it's healthy to “argue against yourself” and see how your views hold up.

And you'll give your brain a good workout. Processing challenging information stimulates

Knowing your personality type allows you to maximize your strengths and manage your weaknesses. Understanding your “strengths” and “talents” can be the difference between a good choice, and a *great* choice. (Strengths are skills and knowledge that can be acquired, while [talents](#) are innate).

Start with understanding where you fall on the [introvert/extrovert spectrum](#); know your [Myers-Briggs](#) type; and then conduct a personal [SWOT](#) analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).

10. Practice self-evaluation and reflection.

Keep a [journal](#) and track your progress. How would you rate your current level of self-awareness out of ten? Think about how often you say regretful things; repeat bad habits; make absent-minded decisions; and have erratic thoughts.

Set regular goals, break big goals down into smaller milestones. Ask yourself at the end of each day, “What did I do well today?” And, “How can I improve on this tomorrow?”

11. Ask for constructive feedback, regularly.

We all have blind spots in our thinking patterns and behaviors. Asking for regular [constructive feedback](#) cuts through any self-deceit or one-dimensional views you might hold. But only ask people you’d consider mentors — those who understand you; whom you respect; and will tell you what you need to hear, not what you *want* to hear.

12. Meditation.

[Meditation](#) is a foundational practice for improving self-awareness. To focus solely on [your breathing](#) is to focus on a key internal process. You’ll become aware of how your mind wanders, and get better at snapping out of distractions.

For beginners, start with ten minute sessions. Find a quiet place to sit, breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. Count your breaths silently, pulling your mind back when it wanders. See how many breaths you can string together.

Related: [Meditation Isn't Just For Hippies: Here is How it Can Help Entrepreneurs](#)

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