

# STOP WISHING FOR FRIDAY: The road to self-awareness: find the key to better understanding yourself

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Are you self-aware?

Self-awareness is becoming aware of your emotions and what effects they have on you, as well as the people around you. The classic 1972 self-awareness study proposed “when we focus our attention on ourselves, we evaluate and compare our current behaviour to our internal standards and values. We become self-conscious as objective evaluators of ourselves.”

There is that word again: values. One of the foundational components of staying resilient is knowing and living your values. Could you say right now what your top three values are? Could you give one example from the last week of how you are living them? So, having the capability to be self-aware is to first know what your values are.

Many see self-awareness and emotional intelligence as one and the same. The famous psychologist Daniel Goleman, in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, proposed this skill as knowing one’s internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions. Do you recognize and acknowledge the emotions you are experiencing in the moment? This may be the first step to

changing how you respond in difficult or stressful situations. Can you feel it bubbling up in the moment? It is not wrong to express your emotions, but it is important to keep them in check, especially in certain circumstances, like a work environment.

This skill of self-awareness is a key to better understanding ourselves, creating inner peace and proactively managing our emotions, thoughts and actions. You can start to see where these thoughts and emotions are guiding you which usually leads to the outcomes you desire.

Here are some statements for you to think about. Consider how you would answer these with the following responses: all the time, often, sometimes, rarely or never?

- **I pay attention to my emotions.**
- **I am motivated to improve my emotional responses. (emotional intelligence).**
- **I notice how my actions impact my emotions.**

With the next set of statements, consider how you would respond by saying: never, seldom, sometimes, often, almost always.

- **I “observe” myself.**
- **I have insight into my self.**
- **I focus on ways of amending my behaviour that would be useful.**
- **I am consistent in different situations or with different people.**
- **I look at why people act the way they do.**

Going through an assessment can start the change process. It is part of becoming aware. These statements are from different assessments to help people understand what self-awareness and emotional intelligence are. People who are more self-aware start to use third-level communication. They not only focus on the person they are talking to, they start to read the room and how people are reacting to what is being said. Humans have a lot of “tells” physically that can help you understand how your communication is going with that person or group. You can start to gauge their emotional response, and if it’s what you expected or desired.

Trying to see yourself as you really are can be difficult but also very rewarding. When you start to see yourself in an objective manner, it allows for greater acceptance of yourself and helps identify ways to improve in the future. Humans want to belong. We are social creatures. One way to be part of a group or lead a high functioning group like a sports team or a work team is to have greater emotional intelligence.

Here are just a few tips on how to improve your self-awareness.

**Journaling:** You can write about your thoughts and feelings in your journal. Recording your thoughts on paper helps you relieve your mind of those ideas and also allows you to reflect on your emotional responses – if you feel they were right or if you want to change how you respond in those situations.

**Daily self-reflection:** Have a time that you stop and look at yourself as the person you want to be. Did that transpire today? Why or why not? This might be the time to pull out your journal or just simply jog your memory.

**Talk to a trusted friend:** Ask your friend to “give your honest opinion of me. Do you think I am emotionally intelligent? Do you find me caring?” Ask anything you want. You must be prepared to be vulnerable, which is part of trust and honesty. Perception is reality. Talk to a few friends. If there is a common theme you didn’t see, that might be a blind spot.

**Practise mindfulness:** Finding a style you like can help you be more present. Being more present is going to allow you to focus on the “read” in the room, the understanding of the person you are with and how you are “going over.”

Have a good rest of the week and stay resilient.

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