

Self awareness essay



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DIAGNOSTIC SURVEYS FOR SELF-AWARENESS SELF-AWARENESS ASSESSMENT

Step 1: Before you read the material in this chapter, respond to the following statements by writing a number from the rating scale that follows in the left-hand column (Pre-assessment). Your answers should reflect your attitudes and behavior as they are now, not as you would like them to be. Be honest. This instrument is designed to help you discover how self-aware you are so you can tailor your learning to your specific needs. When you have completed the survey, use the scoring key in Appendix 1 to identify the skill areas discussed in this chapter that are most important for you to master.

Step 2: After you have completed the reading and the exercises in this chapter and, ideally, as many of the Skill Application assignments at the end of this chapter as you can, cover up your first set of answers. Then respond to the same statements again, this time in the right-hand column (Post-assessment). When you have completed the survey, use the scoring key in the Appendix to measure your progress. If your score remains low in specific skill areas, use the behavioral guidelines at the end of the Skill Learning section to guide your further practice.

Rating Scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Slightly agree Agree Strongly agree Assessment PrePost _____ _____

1. I seek information about my strengths and weaknesses from others as a basis for self-improvement. _____ _____

2. When I receive negative feedback about myself from others, I do not get angry or defensive. _____ _____

3. In order to improve, I am willing to be self-disclosing to others (to share my beliefs

and feelings). _____ 4. I am aware of my preferred style of gathering information and making decisions. _____ 5. I am very aware of my own interpersonal needs when it comes to forming relationships with other people. _____ 6. I understand how I cope with ambiguous and uncertain situations. _____ 7. I have a well-developed set of personal standards and principles that guide my behavior. _____ 8. I feel in charge of what happens to me, good and bad. 42 CHAPTER 1 DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 43 Pre _____ Post _____ 9. When I feel angry, depressed, or anxious, I understand why. _____ 10.

I am conscious of the areas in which conflict and friction most frequently arise in my interactions with others. _____ 11. I have a close relationship with at least one other person with whom I can share personal information and personal feelings. THE DEFINING ISSUES TEST This instrument assesses your opinions about controversial social issues. Different people make decisions about these issues in different ways. You should answer the questions without discussing them with others. You are presented with three stories. Following each story are 12 statements or questions.

Your task after reading the story is to rate each statement in terms of its importance in making a decision. After rating each statement, select the four most important statements and rank them from one to four in the spaces provided. Each statement should be ranked in terms of its relative importance in making a decision. Some statements will raise important issues, but you should ask yourself whether the decision should rest on that issue. Some statements sound high and lofty but are largely gibberish. If you

cannot make sense of a statement, or if you don't understand its meaning, mark it 5—" Of no importance. For information about interpreting and scoring the Defining Issues Test, refer to Appendix 1. Use the following rating scale for your response. Rating Scale 1 Of great importance 2 Of much importance This statement or question makes a crucial difference in making a decision about the problem. This statement or question is something that would be a major factor (though not always a crucial one) in making a decision. This statement or question involves something you care about, but it is not of great importance in reaching a decision. This statement or question is not very important to consider in this case.

This statement or question is completely unimportant in making a decision. You would waste your time thinking about it. 3 Of some importance 4 Of little importance 5 Of no importance The Escaped Prisoner A man had been sentenced to prison for 10 years. After one year, however, he escaped from prison, moved to a new area of the country, and took on the name of Thompson. For eight years he worked hard, and gradually he saved enough money to buy his own business. He was fair to his customers, gave his employees top wages, and gave most of his own profits to charity. Then one day, Ms.

Jones, an old neighbor, recognized him as the man who had escaped from prison eight years before and for whom the police had been looking. Should Ms. Jones report Mr. Thompson to the police and have him sent back to prison? Write a number from the rating scale on the previous page in the blank beside each statement. _____ Should report him _____ Can't decide _____ Should not report him

DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS CHAPTER 1

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_____ 1.

Hasn't Mr. Thompson been good enough for such a long time to prove he isn't a bad person? 2. Every time someone escapes punishment for a crime, doesn't that just encourage more crime? 3. Wouldn't we be better off without prisons and the oppression of our legal systems? 4. Has Mr. Thompson really paid his debt to society? 5. Would society be failing what Mr. Thompson should fairly expect? 6. What benefit would prison be apart from society, especially for a charitable man? 7. How could anyone be so cruel and heartless as to send Mr. Thompson to prison? 8.

Would it be fair to prisoners who have to serve out their full sentences if Mr. Thompson is let off? 9. Was Ms. Jones a good friend of Mr. Thompson? 10. Wouldn't it be a citizen's duty to report an escaped criminal, regardless of the circumstances? 11. How would the will of the people and the public good best be served? 12. Would going to prison do any good for Mr. Thompson or protect anybody? List the four most important questions: _____

_____ Most important Second most important Third most important Fourth most important The Doctor's Dilemma

A woman was dying of incurable cancer and had only about six months to live. She was in terrible pain, but she was so weak that a large dose of a pain killer such as morphine would probably kill her. She was delirious with pain, and in her calm periods, she would ask her doctor to give her enough morphine to kill her. She said she couldn't stand the pain and that she was going to die in a few months anyway. What should the doctor do? (Check

one.) _____ Give the woman an overdose that will make her die _____ Can't
decide _____ Should not give the overdose Importance _____
_____ 44 1.

Is the woman's family in favor of giving her the overdose? 2. Is the doctor
obligated by the same laws as everybody else? 3. Would people be better off
without society regimenting their lives and even their deaths? 4. Should the
doctor make the woman's death from a drug overdose appear to be an
accident? 5. Does the state have the right to force continued existence on
those who don't want to live? 6. What is the value of death prior to society's
perspective on personal values? CHAPTER 1 DEVELOPING SELF-

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_____ 7. Should the doctor have sympathy for the
woman's suffering, or should he care more about what society might think?
8. Is helping to end another's life ever a responsible act of cooperation? 9.
Can only God decide when a person's life should end? 10. What values has
the doctor set for himself in his own personal code of behavior? 11. Can
society afford to let people end their lives whenever they desire? 12. Can
society allow suicide or mercy killing and still protect the lives of individuals
who want to live?

List the four most important questions: _____ Most
important Second most important Third most important Fourth most
important The Newspaper Rami, a senior in high school, wanted to publish a
mimeographed newspaper for students so that he could express his
opinions. He wanted to speak out against military buildup and some of the
school's rules, such as the rule forbidding boys to have long hair. When Rami
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started his newspaper, he asked his principal for permission. The principal said it would be all right if before every publication Rami would turn in all his articles for the principal's approval.

Rami agreed and turned in several articles for approval. The principal approved all of them and Rami published two issues of the paper in the next two weeks. But the principal had not expected that Rami's newspaper would receive so much attention. Students were so excited by the paper that they began to organize protests against the hair regulation and other school rules. Angry parents objected to Rami's opinions. They phoned the principal telling him that the newspaper was unpatriotic and should not be published.

As a result of the rising excitement, the principal wondered if he should order Rami to stop publishing on the grounds that the controversial newspaper articles were disrupting the operation of the school. What should the principal do? (Check one.) _____ Should stop it _____ Can't decide _____ Should not stop it Importance _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

1. Is the principal more responsible to the students or to the parents?
2. Did the principal give his word that the newspaper could be published for a long time, or did he just promise to approve the newspaper one issue at a time?
- 3.

Would the students start protesting even more if the principal stopped the newspaper? 4. When the welfare of the school is threatened, does the principal have the right to give orders to students? 5. Does the principal have the freedom of speech to say no in this case? 6. If the principal stopped the newspaper, would he be preventing full discussion of important problems? 7.

Would the principal's stop order make Rami lose faith in him? DEVELOPING

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Page 46 _____ 8. Is Rami really loyal to his school and patriotic to his country? . What effect would stopping the paper have on the students' education in critical thinking and judgment? 10. Is Rami in any way violating the rights of others in publishing his own opinions? 11. Should the principal be influenced by some angry parents when it is the principal who knows best what is going on in the school? 12. Is Rami using the newspaper to stir up hatred and discontent? List the four most important questions: _____ Most important Second most important Third most important Fourth most important Source: Adapted from Rest, J. R. (1979).

Revised manual for the defining issues test: An objective test of moral judgment development. Minneapolis, MN: Moral Research Projects. THE LEARNING STYLE INVENTORY This inventory will be more helpful to you if you think about situations in which you are presently learning. These may be situations at home, at work, at school, or in some other context. Take a few minutes to think about these situations and make note of your answers to the following questions: Where are you learning? What are some important things that you have learned in the past year? How do you approach new learning opportunities?

In the following assessment instrument, you are asked to complete 12 sentences that describe learning. Each has four endings. To respond to these sentences, consider some of the recent learning situations you have just written about. Then rank the endings for each sentence according to how

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well you think the ending describes the way you learned. Write 4 next to the sentence ending that describes how you learn best, and so on down to 1 for the sentence ending that seems least like the way you learned. Be sure to rank all the endings for each sentence unit. Do not make ties. EXAMPLE:

When I learn: 2 a.

I am happy 4 b. I am careful 1 c. I am fast 3 d. I am logical 1. When I learn: a.

I like to deal with my feelings b. I like to think about ideas c. I like to be doing

things d. I like to watch and listen I learn best when: a. I listen and watch

carefully b. I rely on logical thinking c. I trust my hunches and feelings d. I

work hard to get things done 2. 46 CHAPTER 1 DEVELOPING SELF-

AWARENESS ... 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 47 3. When I am

learning: a. b. c. d. I tend to reason things out I am responsible about things I

am quiet and reserved I have strong feelings and reactions 4. I learn by: a. .

c. d. feeling doing watching thinking 5. When I learn: a. I am open to new

experiences b. I look at all sides of issues c. I like to analyze things, break

them down into their parts d. I like to try things out 6. When I am learning: a.

I am an observing person b. I am an active person c. I am an intuitive person

d. I am a logical person 7. I learn best from: a. observation b. personal

relationships c. rational theories d. a chance to try out and practice When I

learn: a. b. c. d. I like to see results from my work I like ideas and theories I

take my time before acting I feel personally involved in things . 9. I learn

best when: a. b. c. d. I rely on my observations I rely on my feelings I can try

things out for myself I rely on my ideas 10. When I am learning: a. I am a

reserved person b. I am an accepting person c. I am a responsible person d. I

am a rational person DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS CHAPTER 1 47 ... 04-

014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 48 11. When I learn: a. I get involved b. I like to observe c. I evaluate things d. I like to be active 12. I learn best when: a. I analyze ideas b. I am receptive and open-minded c. I am careful d. I am practical Source: Copyright © 1999 by David A.

Kolb, Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc. All rights reserved. LOCUS OF CONTROL SCALE This questionnaire assesses your opinions about certain issues. Each item consists of a pair of alternatives marked with a or b. Select the alternative with which you most agree. If you believe both alternatives to some extent, select the one with which you most strongly agree. If you do not believe either alternative, mark the one with which you least strongly disagree. Since this is an assessment of opinions, there are obviously no right or wrong answers.

When you have finished each item, turn to the Scoring Key in Appendix 1 for instructions on how to tabulate the results and for comparison data. This questionnaire is similar, but not identical, to the original locus of control scale developed by Julian Rotter. The comparison data provided in Appendix 1 come from research using Rotter's scale instead of this one. However, the two instruments assess the same concept, are the same length, and their mean scores are similar. 1. a. Leaders are born, not made. b. Leaders are made, not born. 2. a. People often succeed because they are in the right place at the right time. . Success is mostly dependent on hard work and ability. 3. a. When things go wrong in my life, it's generally because I have made mistakes. b. Misfortunes occur in my life regardless of what I do. 4. a. Whether there is war or not depends on the actions of certain world leaders. b. It is inevitable that the world will continue to experience wars. 5. a. Good

children are mainly products of good parents. b. Some children turn out bad no matter how their parents behave. 6. a. My future success depends mainly on circumstances I can't control. b. I am the master of my fate. 7. a.

History judges certain people to have been effective leaders mainly because circumstances made them visible and successful. b. Effective leaders are those who have made decisions or taken actions that resulted in significant contributions. 8. a. Avoiding punishment for children guarantees that they will grow up irresponsible. 48 CHAPTER 1 DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS

04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 49 b. Spanking children is never appropriate. 9. a. I often feel that I have little influence over the direction my life is taking. b. It is unreasonable to believe that fate or luck plays a crucial part in how my life turns out. 10. a. Some customers will never be satisfied no matter what you do. b. You can satisfy customers by giving them what they want when they want it. 11. a. Anyone can get good grades in school if he or she works hard enough. b. Some people are never going to excel in school no matter how hard they try. 12. a. Good marriages result when both partners continually work on the relationship. b. Some marriages are going to fail because the partners are just incompatible. 13. a. I am confident that I can improve my basic management skills through learning and practice. b.

It is a waste of time to try to improve management skills in a classroom. 14. a. More management skills courses should be taught in business schools. b. Less emphasis should be put on skills in business schools. 15. a. When I think back on the good things that happened to me, I believe they happened mainly because of something I did. b. The bad things that have happened in my life have mainly resulted from circumstances outside my control. 16. a.

Many exams I took in school were unconnected to the material I had studied, so studying hard didn't help at all. 6. a. When I prepared well for exams in school, I generally did quite well. 7. a. I am sometimes influenced by what my astrological chart says. b. No matter how the stars are lined up, I can determine my own destiny. 18. a. Government is so big and bureaucratic that it is very difficult for any one person to have any impact on what happens. b. Single individuals can have a real influence on politics if they will speak up and let their wishes be known. 19. a. People seek responsibility in work. b. People try to get away with doing as little as they can. 20. a. The most popular people seem to have a special, inherent charisma that attracts people to them. b.

People become popular because of how they behave. 21. a. Things over which I have little control just seem to occur in my life. b. Most of the time I feel responsible for the outcomes I produce. 22. a. Managers who improve their personal competence will succeed more than those who do not improve. b. Management success has very little to do with the competence possessed by the individual manager. 49 DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS CHAPTER 1 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 50 23. a. Teams that win championships in most sports are usually the teams that, in the end, have the most luck. b.

More often than not, teams that win championships are those with the most talented players and the best preparation. 24. a. Teamwork in business is a prerequisite to success. b. Individual effort is the best hope for success. 25. a. Some workers are just lazy and can't be motivated to work hard no matter what you do. b. If you are a skillful manager, you can motivate almost any

worker to put forth more effort. 26. a. In the long run, people can improve this country's economic strength through responsible action. b. The economic health of this country is largely beyond the control of individuals.

27. a.

I am persuasive when I know I'm right. b. I can persuade most people even when I'm not sure I'm right. 28. a. I tend to plan ahead and generate steps to accomplish the goals that I have set. b. I seldom plan ahead because things generally turn out okay anyway. 29. a. Some things are just meant to be. b. We can change anything in our lives by hard work, persistence, and ability.

TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY SCALE Respond to the following statements by indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with them. Fill in the blanks with the number from the rating scale that best represents your evaluation of the item.

The scoring key is in the Appendix. Rating Scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree Moderately disagree Slightly disagree Neither agree nor disagree Slightly agree Moderately agree Strongly agree _____

_____ 1. An expert who doesn't come up with a definite answer probably doesn't know too much. 2. I would like to live in a foreign country for a while. 3. There is really no such thing as a problem that can't be solved. 4. People who fit their lives to a schedule probably miss most of the joy of living. 5. A good job is one in which what is to be done and how it is to be done are always clear. . It is more fun to tackle a complicated problem than to solve a simple one. 7. In the long run it is possible to get more done by tackling small, simple problems rather than large and complicated ones. 8. Often, the most interesting and stimulating people are

those who don't mind being different and original. 50 CHAPTER 1

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51 _____ 9. What we are used

to is always preferable to what is unfamiliar. 10. People who insist on a yes or no answer just don't know how complicated things really are. 11.

A person who leads an even, regular life in which few surprises or unexpected happenings arise really has a lot to be grateful for. 12. Many of our most important decisions are based on insufficient information. 13. I like parties where I know most of the people more than ones where all or most of the people are complete strangers. 14. Teachers or supervisors who hand out vague assignments give one a chance to show initiative and originality. 15. The sooner we all acquire similar values and ideals, the better. 16. A good teacher is one who makes you wonder about your way of looking at things. Source: Budner, S. (1982).

Intolerance of ambiguity as a personality variable. Journal of Personality, 30: 29-50. FUNDAMENTAL INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS ORIENTATION-BEHAVIOR (FIRO-B) For each statement that follows, decide which of the following answers best applies to you. Place the number of the answer at the left of the statement. When you have finished, turn to the scoring key in the Appendix. Rating Scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 Usually Often Sometimes Occasionally Rarely Never _____

_____ 1. I try to be with people. 2. I let other people decide what to do. . I join social groups. 4. I try to have close relationships with people. 5. I tend to join social organizations when I have an opportunity. 6. I let other people strongly influence my actions. 7. I try to

be included in informal social activities. 8. I try to have close, personal relationships with people. 9. I try to include other people in my plans. 10. I let other people control my actions. 11. I try to have people around me. 12. I try to get close and personal with people. 13. When people are doing things together, I tend to join them. 14. I am easily led by people. 15. I try to avoid being alone. 16.

I try to participate in group activities. DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS

CHAPTER 1 51 . . . 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 52 For each of the next group of statements, choose one of the following answers: Rating Scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 Most people Many people Some people A few people One or two people Nobody _____

_____ 17. I try to be friendly to people. 18. I let other people decide what to do. 19. My personal relations with people are cool and distant. 20.

I let other people take charge of things. 21. I try to have close relationships with people. 22. I let other people strongly influence my actions. 23. I try to get close and personal with people. 24. I let other people control my actions. 25. I act cool and distant with people. 26. I am easily led by people. 27. I try to have close, personal relationships with people. 28. I like people to invite me to things. 29. I like people to act close and personal with me. 30. I try to strongly influence other people's actions. 31. I like people to invite me to join in their activities. 32. I like people to act close toward me. 3. I try to take charge of things when I am with people. 34. I like people to include me in their activities. 35. I like people to act cool and distant toward me. 36. I try to

have other people do things the way I want them done. 37. I like people to ask me to participate in their discussions. 38. I like people to act friendly toward me. 39. I like people to invite me to participate in their activities. 40. I like people to act distant toward me. For each of the next group of statements, choose one of the following answers: Rating Scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 Usually Often Sometimes Occasionally Rarely Never _____ 52 41. I try to be the dominant person when I am with people. 42. I like people to invite me to things. CHAPTER 1 DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS . . . 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 53 _____ 43. I like people to act close toward me. 44. I try to have other people do things I want done. 45. I like people to invite me to join their activities. 46. I like people to act cool and distant toward me. 47. I try to strongly influence other people's actions. 48. I like people to include me in their activities. 9. I like people to act close and personal with me. 50. I try to take charge of things when I'm with people. 51. I like people to invite me to participate in their activities. 52. I like people to act distant toward me. 53. I try to have other people do things the way I want them done. 54. I take charge of things when I'm with people. Source: Schutz, W. C. (1958). FIRO: A three-dimensional theory of interpersonal behavior. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston. DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS CHAPTER 1 53 . . . 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 54 SKILL LEARNING ners.

Superior performers—who had significantly higher emotional intelligence and self-awareness scores—contributed more than twice the revenues to the firm and were four times more likely to be promoted than those with low self-awareness and emotional intelligence (Boyatzis, 1999). Messinger reminded

us: “ He that would govern others must first master himself. ” Self-awareness lies at the heart of the ability to master oneself, but it is not sufficient. While self-management depends first and foremost on self-awareness, as illustrated in Figure 1, other self-management skills are closely linked to and build on self-awareness.

Developing self-control, for example, and clarifying priorities and goals, help individuals create direction in their own lives. Effectively managing time and stress makes it possible for individuals to adapt to and organize their surroundings. This chapter centers on the core aspects of selfmanagement and serves as the foundation for the following chapter on stress and time management. Moreover, as Figure 1 illustrates, when problems arise in personal management, the easily recognized symptoms are often time pressures or experienced stress.

However, those symptoms are often linked to more fundamental problems with self-awareness and out-of-balance priorities, so we begin with a focus on enhancing knowledge of oneself. Despite the research cited above, students of human behavior have long known that knowledge of oneself—self-awareness, self-insight, self-understanding—is essential to one’s productive personal and interpersonal functioning and in understanding and empathizing with other people. A host of techniques and methods for achieving self-knowledge have long been available, including group methods, meditation

Key Dimensions of Self-Awareness For more than 300 years, knowledge of the self has been considered the very core of human behavior. The ancient

dictum “ Know thyself” has been variously attributed to Plato, Pythagoras, Thales, and Socrates. Plutarch noted that this inscription was carved on the Delphic Oracle, that mystical sanctuary where kings and generals sought advice on matters of greatest importance to them. As early as 42 B. C. , Publilius Syrus proposed: “ It matters not what you are thought to be, but what you are. ” Alfred Lord Tennyson said: Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, these three alone lead to sovereign power. ” Probably the most oft-quoted passage on the self is Polonius’s advice in Hamlet : “ To thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man. ” More recently, research on the concept of emotional intelligence—the ability to manage oneself and to manage relationships with others—has been identified as one of the most important factors in accounting for success in leaders and managers (Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 1999; Goleman, 1998a).

In particular, self-awareness has been identified as a crucial aspect of emotional intelligence, and it is more powerful in predicting success in life than intelligence quotient (IQ) (Goleman, 1997). One study, for example, tried to identify differences between star performers and average managers in 40 companies. Emotional intelligence competencies, including self-awareness, were twice as important in contributing to excellence as cognitive intelligence (IQ) and expertise (Goleman, 1998b). In a study of a multinational consulting firm, superior performing partners were compared to average performing partFigure 1

A Hierarchy of Personal Life-Management Skills Tactical Managing Stress
Managing Time Setting Priorities and Goals Self-Awareness Symptom

Problem Strategic 54 CHAPTER 1 DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS . . . 04-014
Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 55 techniques, altered consciousness
procedures, aromatherapy, assorted massages, physical exercise regimens,
and biofeedback. A 1993 New England Journal of Medicine article estimated
that Americans alone spent approximately \$12 billion on such therapies in
1990, and Forbes magazine estimated the figure at more than \$15 billion in
1995.

In this chapter, we do not summarize those various approaches to enhanced self-awareness, nor do we espouse any one procedure in particular. Instead, our objective is to help you understand the importance of self-awareness if you are to be a successful manager—or a successful individual—and to provide you with some powerful selfassessment instruments that are related to managerial success. Our emphasis is on scientifically validated information linking self-awareness to the behavior of managers, and we try to avoid generalizations that have not been tested in research. Healthier, perform better in managerial and leadership roles, and are more productive at work (Boyatzis, 1982; Cervone, 1997; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). On the other hand, self-knowledge may inhibit personal improvement rather than facilitate it. The reason is that individuals frequently avoid personal growth and new self-knowledge. They resist acquiring additional information in order to protect their self-esteem or self-respect. If they acquire new knowledge about themselves, there is always the possibility that it will be negative or that it will lead to feelings of inferiority, weakness, iniquity, or shame.

So they avoid new self-knowledge. As Maslow (1999: 71) notes: We tend to be afraid of any knowledge that would cause us to despise ourselves or to

make us feel inferior, weak, worthless, evil, shameful. We protect ourselves and our ideal image of ourselves by repression and similar defenses, which are essentially techniques by which we avoid becoming conscious of unpleasantness or dangerous truths. We avoid personal growth, then, because we fear finding out that we are not all that we would like to be. If there is a better way to be, our current state must be inadequate or inferior.

The realization that one is not totally adequate or knowledgeable is difficult for many people to accept. This resistance is the “denying of our best side, of our talents, of our finest impulses, of our highest potentialities, of our creativeness. In brief, this is the struggle against our own greatness” (Maslow, 1999: 71). Freud (1956) asserted that to be completely honest with oneself is the best effort an individual can make, because complete honesty requires a continual search for more information about the self and a desire for self-improvement. Seeking knowledge of the self, therefore, seems to be an enigma.

It is a prerequisite for and motivator of growth and improvement, but it may also inhibit growth and improvement. It may lead to stagnation because of the fear of knowing more. How can improvement be accomplished? How can management skills be developed if the self-knowledge necessary for the development of these skills is resisted? The Enigma of Self-Awareness Erich Fromm (1939) was one of the first behavioral scientists to observe the close connection between one’s self-concept and one’s feelings about others: “Hatred against oneself is inseparable from hatred against others. Carl Rogers (1995) later proposed that self-awareness and self-acceptance are prerequisites for psychological health, personal growth, and the ability to

know and accept others. In fact, Rogers suggested that the basic human need is for self-regard, which he found to be more powerful in his clinical cases than physiological needs. Brouwer (1964: 156) asserted: The function of self-examination is to lay the groundwork for insight, without which no growth can occur. Insight is the “ Oh, I see now” feeling that must consciously or unconsciously precede change in behavior.

Insights— real, genuine glimpses of ourselves as we really are—are reached only with difficulty and sometimes with real psychic pain. But they are the building blocks of growth. Thus, self-examination is a preparation for insight, a groundbreaking for the seeds of self-understanding that gradually bloom into changed behavior. There is little question that the knowledge we possess about ourselves, which makes up our self-concept, is central to improving our management skills. We cannot improve ourselves or develop new capabilities unless and until we know what level of capability we currently possess.

Considerable empirical evidence exists that individuals who are more self-aware are THE SENSITIVE LINE One answer relies in the concept of the sensitive line. This concept refers to the point at which individuals become defensive or protective when encountering information about themselves that is inconsistent with their self-concept or when encountering pressure DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS CHAPTER 1 55 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page 56 to alter their behavior. Most people regularly experience information about themselves that is marginally inconsistent.

A friend might say, “ You look tired today. Are you feeling okay? ” If you are feeling fine, the information is inconsistent with your self-awareness. But because the discrepancy is relatively minor, it would not be likely to offend you or evoke a strong defensive reaction. It would probably not require that you reexamine and change your self-concept. On the other hand, the more discrepant the information or the more serious its implications for your self-concept, the more closely it would approach your sensitive line, and you would feel a need to defend yourself against it.

For example, having a co-worker judge you incompetent as a manager may cross your sensitive line if you think you have done a good job as a manager. This would be especially true if the coworker was an influential person. Your response would probably be to defend yourself against the information to protect the image you hold of yourself. This response is known as the threat-rigidity response (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981; Weick, 1993). When individuals are threatened, when they encounter uncomfortable information, or when uncertainty is created, they tend to become rigid.

They hunker down, protect themselves, and become risk averse. Consider what happens when you are startled or suddenly shocked by something. Physically, your body tends to become rigid in order to protect itself. It tightens up to safeguard stability. Similarly, individuals also become psychologically and emotionally rigid when they encounter information that is a threat to their selfconcept. They tend to redouble their efforts to protect what is comfortable and familiar (Cameron, 1994; Cameron, Kim, & Whetten, 1987; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2000). They rely on first-learned or most reinforced behavior patterns and emotions.

When discrepancies in the self-image are encountered, the validity of the information or its source is denied, or other kinds of defense mechanisms are used to ensure that the selfconcept remains stable. Crossing the sensitive line creates rigidity and self-preservation. In light of this defensiveness, how can increased self-knowledge and personal change ever occur? There are at least two answers. One is that information that is verifiable, predictable, and controllable is less likely to cross the sensitive line than information without those characteristics.

If an individual can test the validity of the discrepant information (e. g. , if some objective standard exists for evaluating the accuracy of the information), if the information is not unexpected or “ out of the blue” (e. g. , if it is received at regular intervals), and if there is some control over what, when, and how much information is received (e. g. , if it is requested), the feedback is more likely to be heard and accepted. The information you receive about yourself in this chapter possesses those three characteristics.

You have already completed several self-assessment instruments that have been used extensively in research. Their reliability and validity have been established. Moreover, they have been found to be associated with managerial success. Therefore, as you analyze your scores and seek honestly to understand more about your underlying attributes, you can gain important insight about yourself. A second answer to the problem of overcoming resistance to self-examination lies in the role other people can play in helping insight to occur.

It is almost impossible to increase skill in self-awareness unless we interact with and disclose ourselves to others. Unless one is willing to open up to others, to discuss aspects of the self that seem ambiguous or unknown, little growth can ever occur. Self-disclosure is a key to improvement in self-awareness. Harris (1981) points out: In order to know oneself, no amount of introspection or self-examination will suffice. You can analyze yourself for weeks, or meditate for months, and you will not get an inch further— any more than you can smell your own breath or laugh when you tickle yourself.

You must first be open to the other person before you catch a glimmering of yourself. Our self-reflection in a mirror does not tell us what we are like; only our reflection in other people. We are essentially social creatures, and our personality resides in association, not in isolation. As you engage in the practice exercises in this chapter, therefore, you are encouraged to discuss your insights with someone else. A lack of self-disclosure not only inhibits self-awareness but also may adversely affect other aspects of managerial skill development.

Several studies have shown that low self-disclosers are less healthy and more self-alienated than high self-disclosers. College students give the highest ratings for interpersonal competence to high self-disclosers.

Individuals who are high self-disclosers are liked best, and excessive or insufficient self-disclosure results in less liking and acceptance by others (see, for example, Covey, 1990; Goleman, 1998b; Kelley, 1999). Some of the exercises in this chapter will require you to discuss your experiences with others. This is done because involving others in the process of self- 04-014 Ch01 pp5 /10/04 4: 53 PM Page 57 understanding will be a critical

aspect of your personal growth. These interactions should be sincere, honest, and motivated by self-understanding and self-improvement. Never should the information you share or receive be used to judge or wound another person. Maintaining a trusting relationship with someone with whom you can share is a critical prerequisite to selfunderstanding. The enigma of self-awareness can be managed by exercising some control over when and what kind of information you receive about yourself, and by involving others in your pursuit of self-understanding.

The support and feedback individuals receive from others during the process of self-disclosure, besides helping to increase feedback and self-awareness, helps information contribute to greater self-awareness without crossing the sensitive line. Understanding and Appreciating Individual Differences Another important reason for focusing on self-awareness is to help you develop the ability to diagnose important differences among others with whom you interact.

There is considerable evidence that an individual's effectiveness as a manager is closely related to his or her ability to recognize, appreciate, and ultimately utilize key, fundamental differences among others. This topic is commonly discussed in the management literature under the subject of "managing diversity." The diversity literature has progressed through a series of stages, beginning with a plethora of statistics demonstrating the extent to which, and the specific ways in which, the workforce is becoming more diverse. This was followed by evidence-based arguments touting the merits of a diverse group of workers contributing to the performance of a work group (Cox, 1994). The primary sources of diversity discussed in this

literature are gender, age, culture, and ethnicity. In this chapter, and throughout the book, we use broader, more inclusive, and less ambiguous terminology that is more conducive to skill development. Whereas it is difficult, for example, to understand all the ramifications of “managing diversity,” it is not difficult to be sensitive to certain important differences that affect the way you manage others.

In other words, this chapter has two objectives: (1) to help you better understand your own uniqueness as an individual—to become better equipped to manage yourself—and (2) to help you diagnose, value, and utilize the differences you find in other people. Self-knowledge will help you understand your own taken-for-granted assumptions, trigger points, sensitive line, comfort zone, strengths and weaknesses, and so forth. This knowledge is useful for all of us, not because we can or should change fundamental dimensions of ourselves, but because it helps make our interactions with others more effective and insightful.

It also helps us gain a more complete understanding of our potential for contributing value in our future career roles and our special strengths relative to others. It is not unusual for many of us to feel intimidated at some time, for example, by heroic or luminary figures whose success is attributed to charisma, intelligence, or style. We feel we are somehow diminished and less able because of what we see in others. Self-knowledge allows us to recognize our own special gifts and strengths and to capitalize on our talents. Diagnosing fundamental differences in others is, similarly, an important part of being an effective manager.

Being aware of, and empathetic toward, the different perspectives, needs, and inclinations of other people is a key part of emotional intelligence and interpersonal maturity. Most people, however, have a tendency to interact with individuals who are like themselves, to choose similar people to work with them, and to exclude others who seem to be different (Berscheid, 1985; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). The history of human warfare and conflict testifies to the fact that differences are usually interpreted as frightening or threatening. Although fostering similarity seemingly makes it easier to interact with other people, specially in a work setting, it also reduces creativity, complex problem solving, and the likelihood that working colleagues will challenge the perspective of the authority figure. Research on organizational failure has repeatedly demonstrated that a lack of diversity in the composition of key decision-making bodies makes it difficult for them to recognize changes in their environment and to respond in appropriately new and novel ways (Cameron, Kim, & Whetten, 1987). One key to helping individuals feel comfortable discussing ways in which they are different is by sharing a commitment to focusing on differences, not distinctions.

We observe differences; we create distinctions. Differences help us understand potential sources of misunderstanding between people and give us clues for how we can work together more effectively. Distinctions create social barriers between people for the express purpose of creating (or reinforcing) advantages and disadvantages. When someone discounts the opinion of a co-worker on the grounds that the person is “ a member of the old boys’ club,” “ from marketing,” “ a woman,” or “ doesn’t have a college

degree,” he or she is creating a distinction that is not only potentially hurtful on a personal basis but ineffective for the organization.

DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS CHAPTER 1 57 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04
4: 53 PM Page 58 The creation of such distinctions destroys trust among people, even if the distinctions refer to individuals who are not present. If you were to apply distinctions that belittled someone in another group, for example, that action plants a seed of mistrust in the minds of people who are present regarding what distinctions you may be privately using to discount them.

Recognizing differences is not the same as evaluating distinctions. One is helpful; the other is hurtful. When others feel that self-disclosing information could be used against them—that is, they could be placed on the disadvantaged side of a distinction—they will be reluctant to participate in any self-discovery process, especially one that requires them to share information about their personal characteristics.

Self-awareness and understanding differences cannot occur without self-disclosure, sharing, and trusting conversations. Self-knowledge requires an understanding and valuing of differences, not the creation of distinctions. We encourage you to use the information you discover about yourself and others to build, grow, and value both of you in your interactions. Important Areas of Self-Awareness An innumerable quantity of personal dimensions are available to explore if one is to develop in-depth selfawareness.

Many aspects of cognitive style have been measured; authors have identified more than a dozen “ intelligences” (ranging from social and emotional to
<https://assignbuster.com/self-awaerness-essay/>

cognitive and creative); the mapping of the human chromosome has raised the possibility that hundreds of physiological differences may be crucial in understanding behavior; differences in gender, age, culture, ethnicity, and experience all develop individually over time. We focus here on four of the most critical areas of selfawareness that are key in developing successful management: personal values, learning style, orientation toward change, and interpersonal orientation.

These areas represent a limited set of factors, but they have been found to be important predictors of various aspects of effective managerial performance—such as achieving life success, performing effectively in teams, competent decision making, life-long learning and development, creativity, communication competency, and self-empowerment (Allan & Waclawski, 1999; Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Goleman, 1998a; Parker & Kram, 1993; Sosik & Megerian, 1999). Personal values are discussed first because they are “ the core of the dynamics of behavior, and lay so large a part in unifying personality” (Allport, Gordon, 58 CHAPTER 1 DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS & Vernon, 1931: 2). That is, all other attitudes, orientations, and behaviors arise out of an individual’s values. Two major types of values are considered: instrumental and terminal (Johnston, 1995; Rokeach, 1973). We present research findings that relate personal development in these two types of values to successful managerial performance. The assessment instrument that assesses your values development is discussed, along with information concerning the scores of other groups of people.

You will want to compare your scores with individuals who are close to you as well as with successful managers. Some comparison data are provided for that purpose. Because this discussion of values development is connected to ethical decision making, the implications of managerial ethics are also discussed in this section. The second area of self-awareness is learning style, which refers to the manner in which individuals gather and process information. A discussion of the critical dimensions of learning style is presented, based on the assessment instrument that you completed to assess your own style.

Empirical research linking learning style to managerial behavior is discussed, and your scores are compared to other successful managers in a variety of organizations. Third, a discussion of orientation toward change focuses on the methods people use to cope with change in their environment. In the future, all of us will be faced with increasingly fragmented, rapidly changing, tumultuous conditions (Peters, 1987). It is important that you become aware of your orientation toward adapting to these conditions. Two important dimensions—locus of control and intolerance of ambiguity—have been measured by two assessment instruments.

Research connecting these two dimensions to effective management is discussed in the sections that follow. Finally, interpersonal orientation, or the tendency to interact in certain ways with other people, is explained. We provided an assessment instrument for measuring certain aspects of interpersonal orientation, and in this section we discuss its relevance to managerial behavior. By analyzing your scores, you can obtain useful insights not only into yourself but also into the quality of your relationships

with others. These four areas of self-awareness—personal values, cognitive style, orientation toward change, and interpersonal orientation—constitute the very core of the self-concept. Values define an individual's basic standards about what is good and bad, worthwhile and worthless, desirable and undesirable, true and false, moral and immoral. Learning style determines not only what kind of information is received by an individual, but how that information is interpreted, judged, and responded to. Orientation toward change identifies the adaptability of individuals.

It includes the extent to which individuals are tolerant of ambiguous conditions and the extent to which they are inclined to accept personal responsibility for their actions under changing conditions. Interpersonal orientation determines the behavior patterns that are most likely to emerge in interactions with others. The extent to which an individual is open or closed, assertive or retiring, controlling or dependent, affectionate or aloof depends to a large degree on interpersonal orientation. Figure 2 summarizes these four aspects of self-awareness, along with their functions in defining the self-concept.

Again, many other aspects of self-awareness could be considered in this chapter—emotions, attitudes, temperament, personality, and interests—but all these aspects of the self are related fundamentally to the four core concepts discussed here. What we value, how we feel about things, how we behave toward others, what we want to achieve, and what we are attracted to all are strongly influenced by our values, learning style, orientation toward

change, and interpersonal orientation. These are among the most important building blocks on which other aspects of the self emerge.

If you want to do a more in-depth analysis of multiple aspects of self-awareness, instruments such as the Figure 2 Four Core Aspects of Self-Concept Values Strong-Campbell Vocational Inventory, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Sanford-Binet Intelligence Test, and a host of other instruments are available in most college counseling centers or testing centers. No one, it should be emphasized, can get too much self-knowledge. VALUES Values are among the most stable and enduring characteristics of individuals.

They are the foundation on which attitudes and personal preferences are formed. They are the basis for crucial decisions, life directions, and personal tastes. They help define our morality and our conceptions of what is “ good. ” Much of what we are is a product of the basic values we have developed throughout our lives. The trouble with values is that they are taken for granted, and people are often unaware of them. Unless a person’s values are challenged, the values being held remain largely undetected. People are not aware that they hold some values as being more important than others.

This unawareness leads to actions or behaviors that are sometimes contrary to values, or even leads to confusion about values. Until people encounter a contradiction or a threat to their basic values, they seldom articulate their values or seek to clarify them. The values held by each of us are affected by a variety of factors, and a number of methods have been used to measure and describe values. We point out several methods in this chapter—each of

which has been widely used in research and in management circles.

Determine personal standards and moral judgment

Attitudes (Toward Change) Determine adaptability and responsibility

Learning Style Determines information acquisition and evaluation

Interpersonal Needs Determine preferences and interaction patterns

DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS CHAPTER 1 59 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04

4: 53 PM Page 60 The first is a framework for describing the broad, general value orientations that characterize large groups, such as nationalities, ethnic groups, industries, or organizations. Much research has been done, for example, in identifying the differences in values that arise across cultural groups.

The point of this research is to identify ways in which nationalities differ from one another since almost all managers now face the need to manage across national boundaries. In your own life, it is likely that you will interact increasingly with individuals who do not share your birth country, and knowing something about their value orientations will help your interactions be more effective. It has been discovered that values differ systematically across national cultures, and these differences are a strong influence in predicting the values each of us hold ourselves.

At least some of our values are affected significantly by the country and culture in which we are raised. Cultural Values Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1998, 2000) identified seven value dimensions on which significant differences exist among national cultures. His data are based on 30, 000 managers in 55 countries, and he found that certain cultures

emphasize some values more than others do. Table 1 identifies HampdenTurner and Trompenaars' seven dimensions, and we provide examples of countries that represent each of the value dimensions.

No national culture emphasizes Table 1 Cultural Values Dimensions

EXPLANATION Societal rules and norms are valued. Individual relationships are valued. Individual contributions are valued. Team contributions are valued. Showing emotions is valued. Unemotional responses are valued. Segregating life's roles is valued. Integrating life's role is valued. Personal accomplishment is valued. Inherent attributes are valued. Past is tightly connected to future. Future is disconnected but valued. Individual control is valued. Control comes from outside forces.

EXAMPLE OF COUNTRIES WITH DOMINANCE United States, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden Korea, Venezuela, China, Indonesia United States, Nigeria, Denmark, Austria Mexico, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines Iran, Spain, France, Switzerland Korea, Ethiopia, China, Japan Holland, Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom China, Nigeria, Singapore, Korea United States, Norway, Canada, Austria Egypt, Indonesia, Korea, Czech Republic France, Japan, United Kingdom United States, Holland United States, Canada, Austria, United Kingdom Czech Republic, Japan, Egypt, China

VALUE DIMENSIONS Universalism Particularism Individualism Collectivism Affective Neutral Specific Diffuse Achievement Ascription Past and Present Future Internal External Source: Hampden-Turner, C. , and Trompenaars, F. (1998). Riding the waves of culture. New York: McGraw-Hill. 60 CHAPTER 1 DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS 04-014 Ch01 pp5 3/10/04 4: 53 PM Page

61 one of these dimensions to the exclusion of another, but there are clear differences in the amount of emphasis placed on each dimension.

The first five dimensions of the model refer to how individuals relate to other people. Some countries (e. g. , the United States, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland) emphasize a value of universalism, in which other people's behavior is governed by universal standards and rules (e. g. , do not lie, do not cheat, do not run a red light even if no one is coming the other way). General societal rules govern behavior. Other countries (e. g. , Korea, China, Indonesia, Singapore) hold a value of particularism, in which the relationship with an individual governs behavior (e. . , is the other person a friend, a family member, a relative?). To illustrate the differences, consider your answer to this question: You are driving in a car with a close friend who hits a pedestrian while going 40 miles an hour in a 25-mile-an-hour zone. There are no witnesses, and your friend's lawyer says that if you'll testify that he was traveling only 25 miles an hour, he'll get off. Will you lie for him? People in universalistic cultures are more likely to refuse than people in particularistic cultures.

For example, 97 percent of the Swiss and 93 percent of North Americans (Canada and the United States) would refuse to testify, whereas 32 percent of Venezuelans and 37 percent of South Koreans would refuse. A second value dimension differentiates cultures that value individualism—an emphasis on the self, on independence, and on uniqueness—versus collectivism—an emphasis on the group, the combined unit, and on joining with others. Individualistic values hold the contributions of individuals to be most valued whereas collectivism values team contributions.

In general, individual responsibility dominates much more in Western cultures than in Eastern cultures. Consider your answer to this question: What kind of job is found most frequently in your organization, one in which everyone works together and you do not get individual credit, or one in which everyone is allowed to work individually and you receive individual recognition? Eastern Europeans (e. g. , Russia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland) average above 80 percent in agreeing that individual credit is received, whereas Asians (e. . , Japan, India, Nepal) average below 45 percent (United States score is 72 percent). A third value dimension refers to the display of feelings in public. It identifies an affective versus neutral orientation. Cultures with high affective values show emotions openly and deal in emotional ways with problems. Loud laughter, anger, and intense passion may all be displayed in the course of a business negotiation. Cultures with neutral values are more rational and stoic in their approach to problem solving.

Instrumental, goal-directed behaviors rather than emotions dominate interactions. If you became very upset at work or in class—say you feel slighted, offended, or angry—how likely would you be to display your feelings openly in public? Managers in Japan, Ethiopia, and Hong Kong, for example, average 64 percent, 74 percent, and 81 percent, respectively, in refusing to show emotions publicly. On the other hand, 15 percent of Kuwait managers, 18 percent of Egyptian managers, and 19 percent of Spanish managers would refuse (United States score is 43 percent).

A fourth dimension—specific versus diffuse— describes the difference between cultures that segregate the different roles in life so as to maintain

privacy and personal autonomy compared to cultures that integrate and merge their roles. Cultures with specific values separate work relationships from family relationships, whereas diffuse cultures entangle work and home relationships. People with specific values may seem difficult to get to know because they keep a boundary between their personal lives and their work lives. People with diffuse values may seem too forward and too superficial because they seem to share personal information freely. Diffuse cultures have lower turnover rates among employees and higher degrees of loyalty to an employer because work and personal relationships are more intertwined. To illustrate the difference, how would you respond to this question: Your boss asks you to come to her home to help her paint her house. You don't want to do it because you hate painting. Would you refuse?

More than 90 percent of the Dutch and Swedes would refuse, whereas only 32 percent of the Chinese and 46 percent of Nigerians would refuse (in the United States, 82 percent would refuse). A fifth value dimension differentiates cultures that emphasize an achievement orientation versus an ascription culture. People tend to acquire high status based on their personal accomplishments in some cultures, whereas in other cultures status and prestige are based more on ascribed characteristics such as age, gender, family heritage, or ethnic background.

Who you know (ascription) versus what you can do (achievement) helps identify the difference on this value dimension. For example, the following statement helps highlight achievement versus ascription value differences: It is important to act the way you are, to be consistent with your true self, even if you do not accomplish the