

EDITORS' PICK

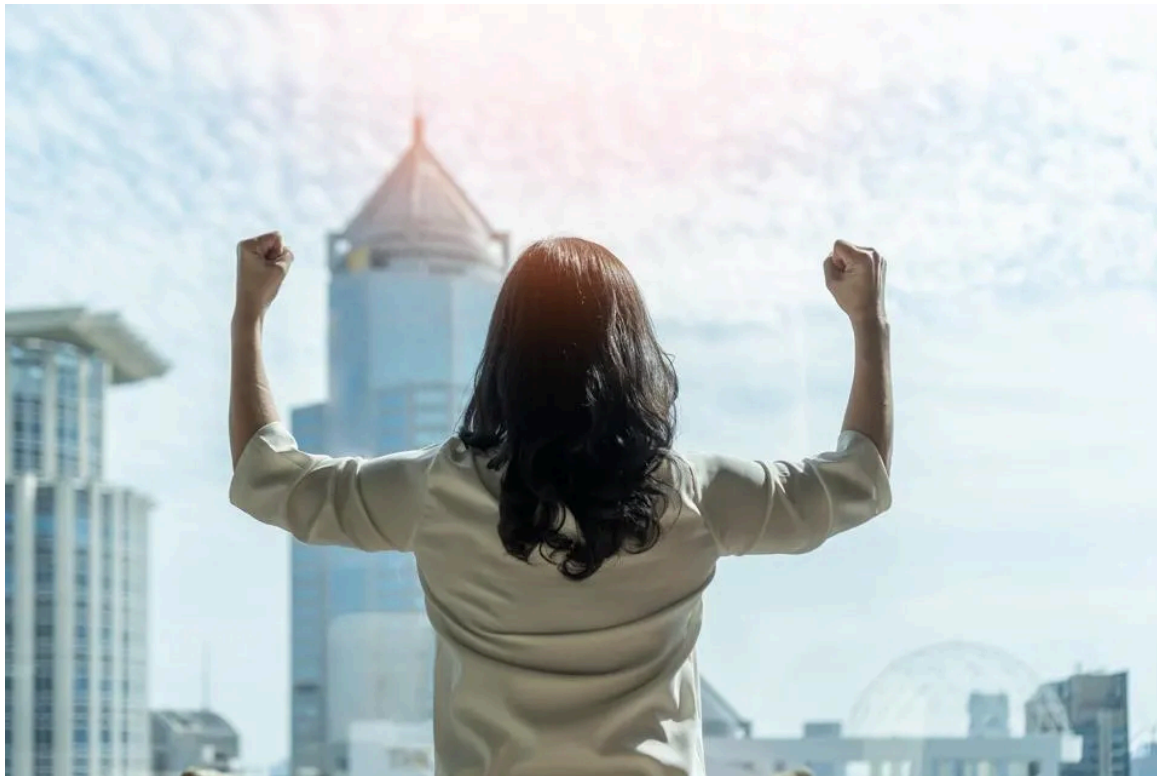
Why Self-Awareness Is Essential For Career Success

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Self-awareness is essential for career success. GETTY

Self-awareness is like good taste or a sense of humor. Everyone thinks they have it, but that's not always the case. Yet, it's the number one skill that Claire Hughes Johnson, [a former Google VP](#) and current advisor for Stripe, would look for when interviewing job candidates. But, in the end, self-awareness is a rare quality. [According to research](#) published in *Harvard Business Review*, even though most people think they are self-aware, only 10%-15% of the people studied fit the criteria.

[In a TED Talk](#), organizational psychologist Tasha Eurich defines self-awareness as "the ability to see ourselves clearly, to understand who we are, how others see us and how we fit into the world." But to understand self-awareness, we must consider its internal and external components. Internal self-awareness refers to how clearly we view our values, reactions and impact on others. On the other hand, external self-awareness is concerned with understanding how *others* see us.

Self-awareness has many benefits that contribute to career success. Let's look at some of the advantages of self-exploration and how it can promote professional growth.

Contributes to empathy

Self-awareness is one of the foundations of empathy, [according to research](#) published in the *Journal of Cognitive Enhancement*. That's because we need to understand ourselves before we can understand others. The study results showed that participants who improved the most at identifying the different parts of their personality also strengthened their ability to interpret the mental states of others. As a result, self-awareness allows us to see things from the perspective of colleagues, which helps us become better communicators in the workplace.

Improves communication skills

When you are aware of your communication style, it is easier to tailor it to specific audiences. This skill is essential when working with diverse teams. A heightened self-awareness also allows for better active listening skills. By becoming more engaged, you can build trust and loyalty with your team more easily.

Assists with stress management

By practicing self-awareness, you start to notice emotions and behavior clues to your overall health. That way, if you find yourself feeling irritated, you can take action to remedy the situation. For example, you may notice that drinking too much coffee makes you anxious and interferes with your sleep. If you are aware of it, you can make different lifestyle choices that will benefit your physical well-being.



Leads to better time management

One of the [keys to time management](#) is self-awareness. For example, do you know when your peak performance hours are? These are the times of day when you are most productive. If you are most energized in the early morning, you can schedule analytical work for that time. On the other hand, if you tend to experience a slump in the late afternoon, it's a good chance to focus on less demanding administrative tasks.

Facilitates decision making

The most successful leaders know themselves and can [tap into their intuition](#) to give them an edge. They are also aware of their emotions so they can avoid letting their feelings cloud their judgment. By being mindful of potential biases and understanding how they can lead to poor choices, self-aware individuals make smarter decisions.

Increases self-control

Focusing on self-awareness also helps people practice patience. That's because it requires thinking about your reactions and acting in the most appropriate way possible. For example, when a team member makes a mistake, you may want to express anger and resentment. But by exerting self-control, you will think before you react.

Boosts productivity

When you're a self-aware leader, you know your superpowers and shortcomings. That way, you can focus on your assets and delegate tasks that aren't within your area of expertise. It also makes you a better manager because you will be more aware of others' strengths and weaknesses. By using resources more efficiently, you can work smarter and increase productivity.

Without self-awareness, you won't be able to realize your full potential or even know what will make you happy. Fortunately, it's never too late to learn more about yourself or change course. Yes, it takes work, but so does anything worth having.