

Study Material
Course Title – Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Unit-1
Topic - Personality Development

Subjects to be covered:

- Self-awareness – Conducting self-assessment exercises, personality tests.
 - Emotional Intelligence – Practical emotional regulation and social skills
 - Motivation – Setting personal and academic goals and developing strategies to achieve them
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Self-Awareness

Do you want to be happier, have more influence, be a better decision-maker, and be a more effective leader? Self-awareness, then, is the most important muscle you need to develop. It's what will keep you on target to be the best version of yourself and the best leader you can be.

The benefits of self-awareness are as varied as each individual, and examples include increased influence, greater perspective, and stronger relationships. Let's dig into what self-awareness is, definitions, and ways to develop it.

What is self-awareness?

Self-awareness is defined as "conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires," according to Oxford Language. Psychologists Shelley Duval and Robert Wicklund proposed this definition: "Self-awareness is the ability to focus on yourself and how your actions, thoughts, or emotions do or don't align with your internal standards. If you're highly self-aware, you can objectively evaluate yourself, manage your emotions, align your behavior with your values, and understand correctly how others perceive you."

While self-awareness is central to who you are, it is not something you are acutely focused on at every moment of every day. Instead, self-awareness

becomes woven into the fabric of who you are and emerges at different points depending on the situation and your personality.

Put simply, those who are highly self-aware can interpret their actions, feelings, and thoughts objectively. It's a rare skill, as many of us spiral into emotion-driven interpretations of our circumstances. Developing self-awareness is important because it allows leaders to assess their growth and effectiveness and change course when necessary.

Types of self-awareness

There are two distinct kinds of self-awareness, **public and private**.

Public self-awareness: Being aware of how we can appear to others. Because of this consciousness, we are more likely to adhere to social norms and behave in ways that are socially acceptable. While there are benefits to this type of awareness, there is also the danger of tipping into self-consciousness. Those who are especially high in this trait may spend too much time worrying about what others think of them.

Private self-awareness: Being able to notice and reflect on one's internal state. Those who have private self-awareness are introspective, approaching their feelings and reactions with curiosity. For example, you may notice yourself tensing up as you are preparing for an important meeting. Noticing the physical sensations and correctly attributing them to your anxiety about the meeting would be an example of private self-awareness.

When self-awareness tips into self-consciousness, we are reluctant to share certain aspects of ourselves. We develop a persona that lacks authenticity.

Why is self-awareness important?

The Eurich group has researched the nature of self-awareness. Their research indicates that when we look inward, we can clarify our values, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, strengths, and weaknesses. We are able to recognize the effect that we have on others. Eurich's research finds that people with self-awareness are happier and have better relationships. They also experience a sense of personal and social control as well as higher job satisfaction.

When we look outward, we understand how people view us. People who are aware of how people see them are more likely to be empathetic to people with different perspectives. Leaders whose self-perception matches others' perceptions are more likely to empower, include, and recognize others.

Benefits of self-awareness

As we mentioned earlier, strengthening self-awareness has a variety of benefits. The specifics of each one depends on the individual.

Here are some examples of common benefits of self-awareness:

- It gives us the power to influence outcomes
- It helps us to become better decision-makers It gives us more self-confidence — so, as a result, we communicate with clarity and intention
- It allows us to understand things from multiple perspectives
- It frees us from our assumptions and biases
- It helps us build better relationships
- It gives us a greater ability to regulate our emotions
- It decreases stress
- It makes us happier

How to become a more self-aware person

Envision yourself

Visualize the best version of yourself. "Ideal selves reflect our hopes, dreams, aspirations, and speak to our skills, abilities, achievements, and accomplishments that we wish to attain." (Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986.) As you lean into your strengths to become the better version of yourself, you can use this idealized self to keep moving in the right direction and not be distracted by setbacks and other obstacles.

Ask the “what” questions

At the core of self-awareness is the ability to self-reflect. However, the Eurich group contends that most people are going about reflection in the wrong way. The trouble is, we ask ourselves the wrong questions. In our attempt to resolve internal conflict, we ask, "Why?" Yet there's no way to answer that question since we don't have access to our unconscious. Instead, we make up answers that may not be accurate.

The danger of the "why" question is that it sends us down the rabbit hole of our negative thoughts. We focus on our weaknesses and insecurities. Consider Amy, a new junior executive who has difficulty speaking up at meetings. She

may explain her experience to herself by thinking, "I don't speak up at meetings because I fall too low in the corporate food chain. No one's going to listen to me."

Asking the "what question" puts us into the objective and open space of considering all the factors influencing a particular outcome. For example, instead of "Why don't I speak up at meetings?" we could ask:

- "What were the interpersonal dynamics in the room?"
- "What was I experiencing in my body at the time?"
- "What happened that caused me to go into my old story of not being good enough?"
- "What can I do to overcome my fear of speaking up?"

This kind of introspection allows us to look at behaviours and beliefs for what they are. With self-awareness, we can examine old patterns and stories that do not serve us, and then we can move on. Asking the right questions empowers us to make different choices that bring different results.

Amy decides to make a plan because now she understands that she has a chance at overcoming her problem.

- She's going to find out more about the content and goals of an upcoming meeting to become more confident in how she can contribute.
- Rather than being consumed by imagining what others are thinking about her, she'll actively listen for cues to ask meaningful questions that move the conversation forward.
- With a heightened awareness of the cues her body is giving her signalling fear and anxiety, she'll name the emotion at the moment and choose not to be overwhelmed by it — one giant step to self-awareness.

Strengthen your brain

The amygdala, also called the primitive brain, was the first part of the brain to develop in humans. It functioned as a kind of radar signalling the need to run away or fight back. That part of the brain is skilled at anticipating danger and reacts before we can even name a negative emotion. Our heart races, our stomach tightens, and our neck muscles tense up.

Your body's reaction is a tripwire signalling the pre-frontal cortex to register or name a negative emotion. If you bring awareness to your physical state, you can, at the moment, recognize the emotion as it is happening. Becoming skilful at this rewires your brain.

Naming your feelings is critical in decision-making. When we let our feelings overwhelm us, we can make bad decisions with unintended consequences. Naming your emotions allows us to take a "third-person" perspective to stand back and more objectively evaluate what's going on.

Let's bring this home with an example. You, a self-aware person, are having a conversation with someone and receiving some negative feedback. Your heart starts to race, and you're feeling threatened. You say to yourself, "I feel like this person is attacking me." But, before you cry or go ballistic, you stop yourself and hear the person out. You discover that this person had at least one good point and start up a different conversation, one that is mutually satisfying and productive.

Ask others about their perception of you

Now that you've discovered that feedback doesn't have to be scary, ask other people how they perceive you in certain situations. Getting specific will help to give you the most concrete feedback. Get brave and ask them how they would like to see you behave.

Exercise: Pick out a scenario(s) you would like to receive feedback on and list them.

Make two columns.

Column A: How I see myself

Column B: How others see me

In Column A make a list of words to describe your attitude and behaviors at the time.

Then, ask your feedback partner to do the same and record those responses in Column B.

Look out for discrepancies. You may have some blind spots that need attending.

Keep a journal

Journalling is a great way to pay attention to what's going on in your private and public self. It will also help you to recognize patterns that either serve you or not. You may use these prompts:

1. What did I do well today?
2. What challenges did I face?
3. What was I feeling?
4. How did I respond? In retrospect, would I have responded differently?
5. What strengths did I use to keep me focused on the best version of myself?
6. What is my intention for tomorrow?

Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness is a practice. It helps you be aware of what's going on in your mind, body, and environment. Meditation is one of a few practices that you can insert into your daily life, and practicing mindfulness is a wonderful tool for developing greater self-control.

Here are some ideas of mindfulness activities to get you started:

- Practice deep breathing
- Name your surroundings
- Organize your space
- Draw or paint

The road to self-awareness is a journey. The most self-aware people see themselves on a quest to mastery rather than at a particular destination. As you move forward in developing your self-awareness, ask yourself regularly, “How will you move toward the best version of yourself today?”

What are Self-Awareness Activities and Exercises?

Self-awareness activities and exercises are tools that can help you to not only reach your goals but also to discover who you are at core level and what you want out of life.

The more you ‘peel the onion’ per se, the more you will discover what lies underneath. Self-awareness and self-improvement go hand in hand.

Becoming more self-aware can help you understand your wants, needs, and desires as well as your strengths and weaknesses.

Self-awareness questions on values and life goals

1. What does your ideal “you” look like?

2. What kinds of dreams and goals do you have?
3. Why are these dreams or goals important?
4. What is keeping you from these dreams or goals?
5. Rank 5-10 of the most important things in your life in your career, family, relationships and love, money, etc.
6. Now think about the proportion of time you dedicate to each of these things.
7. What would you recommend to your children to do or not to do?

Self-awareness questions on personality

8. Describe yourself in three words.
9. Ask yourself if your personality has changed since childhood.
10. Is your personality like either of your parents?
11. What qualities do you most admire in yourself?
12. What is your biggest weakness?
13. What is your biggest strength?
14. What things scare you?
15. Do you make decisions logically or intuitively?
16. How would you complete the question: "What if?"

What is a personality test?

Stemming from the field of psychology, personality tests have been used to better understand character traits in a variety of settings—including, if not especially, the workplace. Otherwise, they can be useful for psychological diagnoses by mental health professionals.

A personality test is a tool used to assess human personality. Personality testing and assessment refer to techniques designed to measure the characteristic patterns of traits that people exhibit across various situations. Personality tests can be used to help clarify a clinical diagnosis, guide therapeutic interventions, and help predict how people may respond in different situations.

Personality is something that we informally assess and describe every day. When we talk about ourselves and others, we frequently refer to different characteristics of an individual's personality. For example, we might refer to someone as adventurous, kind, or moody. Psychologists do much the same thing when they assess personality but on a more systematic and scientific level.

Personal SWOT Analysis

"Chance favours the prepared mind." – Louis Pasteur

You are most likely to succeed in life if you use your talents to their fullest extent. Similarly, you'll suffer fewer problems if you know what your weaknesses are and if you manage these weaknesses so that they don't matter in the work you do.

So how do you go about identifying these strengths and weaknesses, and analyzing the opportunities and threats that flow from them? SWOT Analysis is a useful technique that helps you do this.

How to Perform Your Personal SWOT Analysis

First print out our free [worksheet](#), and write down answers to the following questions.

Strengths

- What advantages do you have that others don't have (for example, skills, certifications, education, or connections)?
- What do you do better than anyone else?
- What personal resources can you access?
- What do other people (and your boss, in particular) see as your strengths?
- Which of your achievements are you most proud of?
- What values do you believe in that others fail to exhibit?
- Are you part of a network that no one else is involved in? If so, what connections do you have with influential people?

Consider this from your own perspective, and from the point of view of the people around you. And don't be modest or shy – be as objective as you can. Knowing and using your strengths can make you happier and more fulfilled at work.

And if you still have any difficulty identifying your strengths, write down a list of your personal characteristics. Some of these will hopefully be strengths!

Tip:

Think about your strengths in relation to the people around you. For example, if you're a great mathematician and the people around you are also great at math, then this is not likely to be a strength in your current role – it may be a necessity.

Weaknesses

- What tasks do you usually avoid because you don't feel confident doing them?
- What will the people around you see as your weaknesses?
- Are you completely confident in your education and skills training? If not, where are you weakest?
- What are your negative work habits (for example, are you often late, are you disorganized, do you have a short temper, or are you poor at handling stress)?
- Do you have personality traits that hold you back in your field? For instance, if you have to conduct meetings on a regular basis, a fear of public speaking would be a major weakness.

Again, consider this from a personal/internal perspective and an external perspective. Do other people see weaknesses that you don't see? Do co-workers consistently outperform you in key areas? Be realistic – it's best to face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

Opportunities

- What new technology can help you? Or can you get help from others or from people via the internet?
- Is your industry growing? If so, how can you take advantage of the current market?
- Do you have a network of strategic contacts to help you, or offer good advice?
- What trends (management or otherwise) do you see in your company, and how can you take advantage of them?
- Are any of your competitors failing to do something important? If so, can you take advantage of their mistakes?
- Is there a need in your company or industry that no one is filling?
- Do your customers or vendors complain about something in your company? If so, could you create an opportunity by offering a solution?

You might find useful opportunities in the following:

- Networking events, educational classes, or conferences.
- A colleague going on an extended leave. Could you take on some of this person's projects to gain experience?
- A new role or project that forces you to learn new skills, like public speaking or international relations.

- A company expansion or acquisition. Do you have specific skills (like a second language) that could help with the process?

Also, importantly, look at your strengths, and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities – and look at your weaknesses, and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating those weaknesses.

Threats

- What obstacles do you currently face at work?
- Are any of your colleagues competing with you for projects or roles?
- Is your job (or the demand for the things you do) changing?
- Does changing technology threaten your position?
- Could any of your weaknesses lead to threats?

Performing this analysis will often provide key information – it can point out what needs to be done and put problems into perspective.

A Personal SWOT Example

What would a personal SWOT assessment look like? Review this SWOT analysis for Carol, an advertising manager.

Strengths

- I'm very creative. I often impress clients with a new perspective on their brands.
- I communicate well with my clients and team.
- I have the ability to ask key questions to find just the right marketing angle.
- I'm completely committed to the success of a client's brand.

Weaknesses

- I have a strong, compulsive need to do things quickly and remove them from my "to do" list, and sometimes the quality of my work suffers as a result.
- This same need to get things done also causes me stress when I have too many tasks.
- I get nervous when presenting ideas to clients, and this fear of public speaking often takes the passion out of my presentations.

Opportunities

- One of our major competitors has developed a reputation for treating their smaller clients poorly.
- I'm attending a major marketing conference next month. This will allow for strategic networking, and also offer some great training seminars.
- Our art director will go on maternity leave soon. Covering her duties while she's away would be a great career development opportunity for me.

Threats

- Simon, one of my colleagues, is a much stronger speaker than I am, and he's competing with me for the art director position.
- Due to recent staff shortages, I'm often overworked, and this negatively impacts my creativity.
- The current economic climate has resulted in slow growth for the marketing industry. Many firms have laid off staff members, and our company is considering further cutbacks.

Emotional Intelligence

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence or EI is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, and those of the people around you. People with a high degree of emotional intelligence know what they're feeling, what their emotions mean, and how these emotions can affect other people.

For leaders, having emotional intelligence is essential for success. After all, who is more likely to succeed – a leader who shouts at his team when he's under stress, or a leader who stays in control, and calmly assesses the situation?

According to Daniel Goleman, an American psychologist who helped to popularize emotional intelligence, there are five key elements to it:

1. Self-awareness.

2. Self-regulation.
3. Motivation.
4. Empathy.
5. Social skills.

The more that you, as a leader, manage each of these areas, the higher your emotional intelligence. So, let's look at each element in more detail and examine how you can grow as a leader.

Emotional Intelligence in Leadership

1. Self-awareness

If you're self-aware, you always know how you feel, and you know how your emotions and your actions can affect the people around you. Being self-aware when you're in a leadership position also means having a clear picture of your strengths and weaknesses, and it means behaving with [humility](#).

So, what can you do to improve your self-awareness?

- **Keep a journal.** Journals help you improve your self-awareness. If you spend just a few minutes each day writing down your thoughts, this can move you to a higher degree of self-awareness.
- **Slow down.** When you experience anger or other strong emotions, slow down to examine why. Remember, no matter what the situation, you can always choose how you react to it. (Our article on [Managing Your Emotions at Work](#) will help you understand what your emotions are telling you.)

2. Self-regulation

Leaders who regulate themselves effectively rarely verbally attack others, make rushed or emotional decisions, stereotype people, or compromise their values. Self-regulation is all about staying in control.

This element of emotional intelligence, according to Goleman, also covers a leader's flexibility and commitment to [personal accountability](#).

So, how can you improve your ability to self-regulate?

- **Know your values.** Do you have a clear idea of where you absolutely will not compromise? Do you know what [values](#) are most important to you? Spend some time examining your "code of ethics." If you know what's most important to you, then you probably won't have to think twice when you face a moral or ethical decision – you'll make the right choice.
- **Hold yourself accountable.** If you tend to blame others when something goes wrong, stop. Make a commitment to admit to your mistakes and to face the consequences, whatever they are. You'll probably sleep better at night, and you'll quickly earn the respect of those around you.
- **Practice being calm.** The next time you're in a challenging situation, be very aware of how you act. Do you relieve your stress by shouting at someone else? Practice deep-breathing exercises to calm yourself. Also, try to write down all of the negative things you want to say, and then rip it up and throw it away. Expressing these emotions on paper (and not showing them to anyone!) is better than speaking them aloud to your team. What's more, this helps you challenge your reactions to ensure that they're fair!

3. Motivation

Self-motivated leaders work consistently toward their goals, and they have extremely high standards for the quality of their work.

How can you improve your motivation?

- **Re-examine why you're doing your job.** It's easy to forget what you really love about your career. So, take some time to remember why you wanted this job. If you're unhappy in your role and you're struggling to remember why you wanted it, try

the [Five Whys](#) technique to find the root of the problem. Starting at the root often helps you look at your situation in a new way. And make sure that your goal statements are fresh and energizing. For more on this, see our article on [Goal Setting](#).

- **Know where you stand** – Determine how motivated you are to lead. Our [Leadership Motivation Assessment](#) can help you see clearly how motivated you are in your leadership role. If you need to increase your motivation to lead, it directs you to resources that can help.
- **Be hopeful and find something good** – Motivated leaders are usually [optimistic](#), no matter what problems they face. Adopting this mindset might take practice, but it's well worth the effort. Every time you face a challenge, or even a failure, try to find at least one good thing about the situation. It might be something small, like a new contact, or something with long-term effects, like an important lesson learned. But there's almost always something positive if you look for it.

4. Empathy

For leaders, having empathy is critical to managing a successful team or organization. Leaders with empathy have the ability to put themselves in someone else's situation. They help develop the people on their team, challenge others who are acting unfairly, give constructive feedback, and listen to those who need it.

If you want to earn the respect and loyalty of your team, then show them you care by being empathic.

How can you improve your empathy?

- **Put yourself in someone else's position.** It's easy to support your own point of view. After all, it's yours! But take the time to look at situations from other people's perspectives. See our article on [Perceptual Positions](#) for a useful technique for doing this.
- **Pay attention to body language.** Perhaps when you listen to someone, you cross your arms, move your feet back and forth,

or bite your lip. This [body language](#) tells others how you really feel about a situation, and the message you're giving isn't positive! Learning to read body language can be a real asset in a leadership role, because you'll be better able to determine how someone truly feels. This gives you the opportunity to respond appropriately.

- **Respond to feelings.** You ask your assistant to work late – again. And although he agrees, you can hear the disappointment in his voice. So, respond by addressing his feelings. Tell him you appreciate how willing he is to work extra hours, and that you're just as frustrated about working late. If possible, figure out a way for future late nights to be less of an issue (for example, give him Monday mornings off).

5. Social Skills

Leaders who do well in the social skills element of emotional intelligence are great communicators. They're just as open to hearing bad news as good news, and they're experts at getting their team to support them and be excited about a new mission or project.

Leaders who have good social skills are also good at managing change and resolving conflicts diplomatically. They're rarely satisfied with leaving things as they are, but they don't sit back and make everyone else do the work: they set an example with their own behavior.

So, how can you build social skills?

- **Learn conflict resolution.** Leaders must know how to resolve conflicts between their team members, customers, or vendors. Learning [conflict resolution](#) skills is vital if you want to succeed.
- **Improve your communication skills.** How well do you communicate? Our [communication quiz](#) will help you answer this question, and it will give useful feedback on what you can do to improve.
- **Learn how to praise others.** As a leader, you can inspire the loyalty of your team simply by [giving praise](#) when it's earned.

Learning how to praise others is a fine art, but well worth the effort.

Key Points

To be effective, leaders must have a solid understanding of how their emotions and actions affect the people around them. The better a leader relates to and works with others, the more successful he or she will be.

Take the time to work on self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Working on these areas will help you excel in the future!

Motivation

Motivation is a crucial element for your career growth. It can either come from within you (intrinsic motivation) or from external factors (extrinsic motivation). Understanding different motivation types can help you use motivation more effectively to improve your productivity and dedication levels. In this article, we explain the meaning and types of motivation, along with some examples to facilitate a better understanding of the concept.

What Is Motivation?

Motivation is the driving force that guides your behaviour or makes you take certain actions. You need motivation to stay committed to your goals and objectives. For example, you may want to earn a promotion to a higher position in your company. This may act as a motivation to perform your tasks well and achieve your sales targets consistently. You may also consider acquiring specific skills to enhance your performance.

Motivation is intangible and can be difficult to measure. However, it is easy to motivate someone if you use the right factors and strategy. Motivation can come from conscious or subconscious factors. Employers like to have motivated employees because they contribute to the organisation's success.

Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Motivation

We can broadly categorise motivation as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is one that comes from within you, while extrinsic motivation comes from an outside source.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation drives you to accomplish a task because of an internal reward. You may be conscious or unaware of such reward, which is often intangible. For example, if you perform something because you find it interesting or it gives you personal satisfaction, it is an example of intrinsic motivation. Even though it does not involve any external reward, you find the efforts worthwhile.

Intrinsic motivation is perhaps the best type of motivation because you do not need anyone else to drive you to action. When you are volunteering for community service without expecting anything in return, it is the intrinsic motivation that is guiding you.

Intrinsic motivation is the reason for choosing a career that aligns with your personal interests. When you do something that interests you, you are likely to do it more sincerely and dedicatedly, increasing your chances of success at it.

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation has an external factor that drives you to take action. The motivation can be in the form of a reward or a punishment. For example, if your company offers you a performance bonus for achieving a certain sales target, it is extrinsic motivation in the form of a reward. However, if the company deducts a certain percentage of your salary for not achieving your sales target, it is an example of extrinsic motivation in the form of punishment.

Positive extrinsic rewards can take the form of money, praise, status or some other non-monetary compensation. Similarly, negative extrinsic rewards can be in the form of a monetary loss, disciplinary action or a missed opportunity, among others.

Unlike in the case of intrinsic motivation, the reward earned in extrinsic motivation may not fulfil your personal needs. Instead, you may have to sacrifice your time and interests to achieve an extrinsic goal. However, sometimes you may get an extrinsic reward in addition to intrinsic motivation. For example, if you get a job offer that gives you an opportunity to work in your area of interest and also offers higher pay, you would be getting an external reward (higher pay) in addition to intrinsic motivation (doing what interests you).