

Two major roadblocks obstruct the path to external self-awareness, but there are ways to circumvent them.

If you want to know how other people think of you, and gain external self-awareness, you might think it's as easy as asking friends and family directly. But that's where the trouble begins – the people closest to you won't be honest about how they see you.

The author calls this the MUM Effect. It means we keep Mum about Undesirable Messages. We tend to remain silent rather than giving others information that will make them feel uncomfortable. Sometimes, we even tell white lies rather than the truth, and this is the first roadblock to self-awareness.

The second roadblock is our reluctance to ask for feedback. We tend to make excuses, which fall into three categories. First, we convince ourselves we don't need feedback. That's plain incorrect. In fact, how other people see us is just as important when it comes to achieving self-awareness as how we view ourselves.

The second excuse we make is that we shouldn't ask for feedback because surely it's a sign of weakness. But just think; if somebody asked you for feedback, would you see it as a sign of incompetence in that person, or would you respect their efforts to better themselves? Leaders who ask for critical feedback are seen as more effective.

And the final excuse is that we don't want feedback. We're afraid of feeling hurt by others' comments, and for that we need to have courage.

It's easier said than done, but once you're aware of these barriers and you're ready to overcome them, there are several ways to do so. One way is to ask for 360-degree feedback. As the name suggests, that means feedback from all angles. In business, this would involve asking everyone from colleagues and managers to clients and board members to fill out a

feedback form. One benefit of this technique is anonymity, which allows people to be honest. On the flip side, people who are jealous or resentful may take it as an opportunity to let off steam. To get around this, ask only those who you trust to be fair and truthful.
