



Emotional Style Assessment

4. SELF AWARENESS

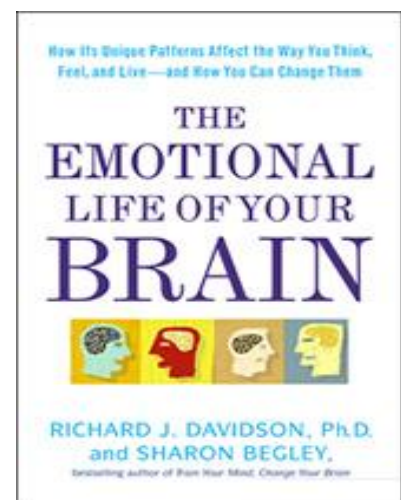
Self Awareness reflects the differences we have in the ability to recognize and interpret our own emotional and physical signals, as well as sensitivity to them (that is, how strong the signals must be in order for you to perceive them). Some people have a very hard time "feeling" their feelings: it may take them days to recognize that they're angry, sad, jealous, or afraid. These people could be said to be "self-opaque." At the other end of the scale are those people who are acutely conscious of their thoughts and feelings and who are attuned to the messages their body sends them. These people are said to be "self-aware."

The following ten questions are designed to help you better understand your Emotional Style of 'Self Awareness'. If you are tempted to think long and hard about a question, or if you feel that there are too many nuances or exceptions, resist. The most accurate results come from making a snap judgment about whether a question is True or False about you. There are no right answers here - take it from the profile's creator, CIHM Founder Richard Davidson. This is not a pop quiz - it's about better understanding who you are, how you perceive the world, and how you navigate the obstacles of life.

The profile consists of 10 simple 'True/False' statements and should take only a couple minutes to complete. You can even ask someone close to you to answer these questions about you for an additional perspective. That serve as a reality check.

Following the assessment are some exercises that can help you adjust your Self Awareness. Nothing is guaranteed, of course, and what you get out of it depends a great deal on what you put in.

Remember, this is simply a starting point to learning more about Emotional Style. To learn more about how Dr. Davidson describes the neural underpinnings of Emotional Style, the remaining five dimensions and strategies and tips to shift within the continuum of each, we encourage you to read the book!

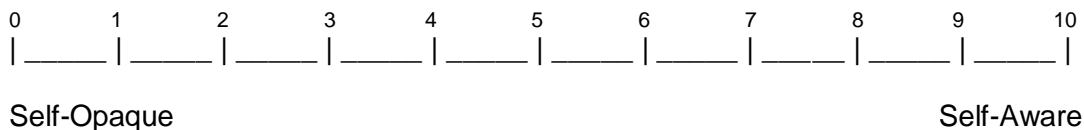


SELF AWARENESS ASSESSMENT

Question	T or F?	Score
1. Often, when someone asks me why I'm so angry or sad, I respond (or think to myself), "But I'm not!"		
2. When those closest to me ask why I treated someone brusquely or meanly, I often disagree that I did any such thing.		
3. I frequently – more than a couple times a month – find that my heart is racing or my pulse is pounding, and I have no idea why.		
4. When I observe someone in pain, I feel the pain myself both emotionally and physically.		
5. I am usually sure enough about how I am feeling that I can put my emotions into words.		
6. I sometimes notice aches and pains and have no idea where they come from.		
7. I like to spend time being quiet and relaxed, just feeling what is going on inside me.		
8. I believe I very much inhabit my body and feel at home and comfortable with my body.		
9. I am strongly oriented to the external world and rarely take note of what's happening in my body.		
10. When I exercise, I am very sensitive to the changes it produces in my body.		
TOTAL =		

Scoring: Give yourself one point for each True answer to questions 4, 5, 7, 8 and 10, and one point for each False answer to questions 1, 2, 3, 6 and 9. All other answers score zero.

Plot your score on this scale:



Heightened sensitivity can be beneficial in several ways. It appears to play a crucial role in empathy and compassion, the ability to feel what others are feeling. And, by allowing you to understand your own emotional state, it can help you to avoid misunderstandings during arguments with a significant other: if you grasp that you are upset about something else, you will recognize not to transfer that feeling to the current discussion.

High self-awareness can also extract a cost, however. Too vivid a feeling of another's pain and suffering can cause a surge of the stress hormone cortisol, for instance, as well as elevated heart rate and blood pressure. Such extreme sensitivity is likely a factor in the burnout that nurses, counselors, therapists, and social workers suffer. Also, if you are constantly besieged with messages about your state of mind and heart, it can be tough to get on in life.

Key Tools to adjust your Self Awareness include:

Paradoxically, these exercises can help both become more self aware, but also help to have less of an impact on your ability to function by becoming so. These skills can help you to realize more of what's happening inside you, but at the same time understand what they mean and how to deal with them.

1. Mindfulness Meditation. It involves observing your thought and feelings from the perspective of a nonjudgmental third party. One attends just to the bare facts of a perception received through the senses or the mind, without reacting to them in any way.

By learning to observe nonjudgmentally, you can break the chain of associations that typically arise from every thought. If you find that you are beginning to judge the thoughts, return to a state of nonjudgmental awareness. Practicing breathing awareness is a good place to start to learn mindfulness meditation:

- a. Choose a time of day when you are the most awake and alert. Sit upright on the floor or a chair, keeping the spine straight, and maintaining a relaxed but erect posture so that you do not get drowsy.
- b. Now focus on your breathing, on the sensations it triggers throughout your body. Notice how your abdomen moves with each inhalation and exhalation.
- c. Focus on the tip of your nose, noticing the different sensations that arise with each breath.
- d. When you notice that you have been distracted by unrelated thoughts or feelings, simply return your focus to your breathing.

Try this for 5 to 10 minutes, twice a day, gradually increasing the time each day to maybe 20 minutes.

2. Body Scan. To increase Self Awareness, pay attention to what is happening inside you. To detect internal cues, particularly subtle ones, you need to focus on your current bodily feelings. The body often manifests physically what we are really feeling emotionally.

- a. Sit as you would for the breathing exercise.
- b. Move your attention systematically around your body, from one location to the next – toe, foot ankle, leg, knee. Notice the specific sensation at each, such as tingling or pressure or temperature. Don't think about those parts of the body, but experience the sensations from them. In this way you cultivate awareness of your body in the context of nonjudgmental awareness.
- c. As you learn this skill, begin to do it when you are in various situations throughout the day. What is your body wisdom telling you at the moment? How does that inform you of your true feelings?

Gradually, you should find that your relationship to your inner thoughts, feelings, and sensations has changed: You should now be able to experience them with less judgment, panic or obsession. You can be aware of them without getting sucked into the vortex that they often create.

Generally, to boost self-awareness, decrease distractions and choose quiet environments, which make it easier to perceive internal feelings and sensations. To decrease self-awareness, do the opposite: arrange things so you have more external stimuli to focus on.

The exercises in this segment and the other five segments all work through the mind to actually change your brain. They have the power to alter your neural systems that underlie each of the six dimensions of Emotional Style:

- Resilience
- Outlook
- Social Intuition
- Self-Awareness
- Sensitivity to Context
- Attention

Any decision to shift your set point on any of these dimensions should be based on thoughtful introspection about whether it is keeping you from being the person you wish to be and living the life you aspire to.

Emotions help us appreciate others and the world around us; they make life meaningful and fulfilling.