

Interpersonal Skills in Organizations

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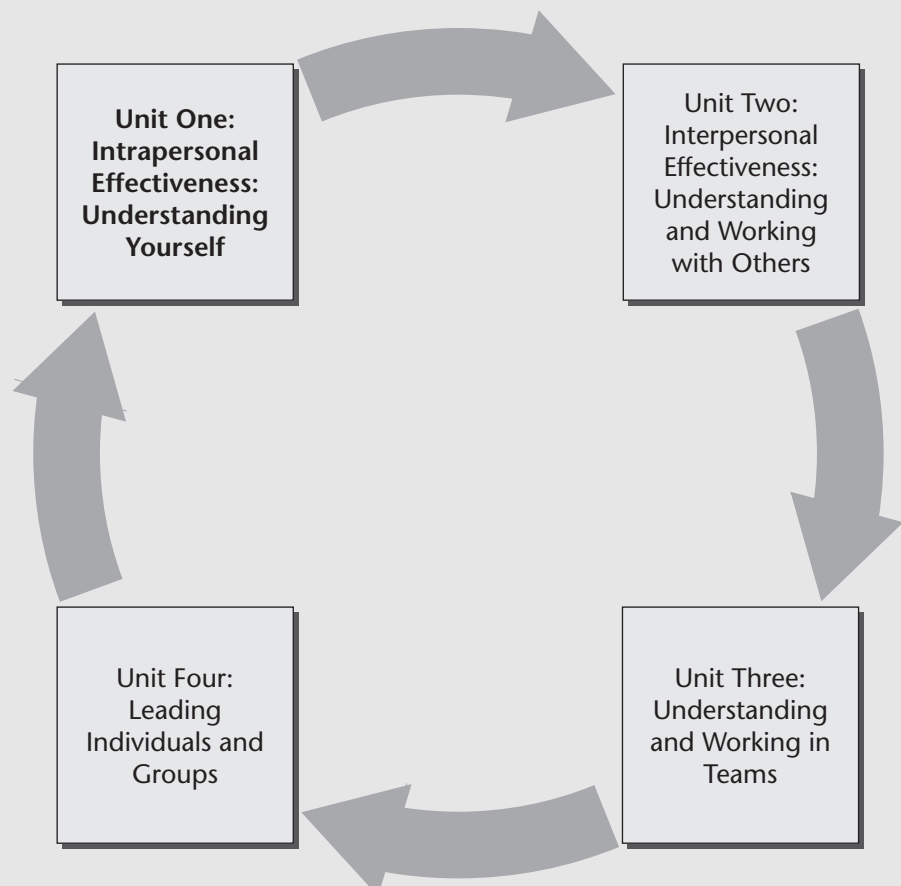
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Unit

1

The first leg of your journey toward self-development begins with an opportunity to take inventory of what you have and what you still need. This first unit is devoted to intrapersonal effectiveness—**understanding yourself** (and your goals, strengths, weaknesses, style, biases), and **improving self-management** skills, such as time management and stress management. As you’ll discover, “knowing yourself” may not be as easy as it sounds. However, we give you the tools to facilitate this process. Each of the four chapters in this unit helps you increase the odds of achieving intrapersonal effectiveness, and ultimately, personal and professional success and satisfaction. This first leg provides a solid start to your journey, as well as a strong foundation on which to build interpersonal, team-based, and leadership skills in the units that follow.





Journey into Self-awareness

Learning Points

How do I:

- Determine my strengths and understand how they might guide me in personal and professional choices?
- Figure out what motivates me in order to find personal and professional success?
- Assess my limitations and develop a plan for improving in these areas?
- Gain understanding and insight into my personality, attitudes, and behaviors?
- Identify the biases I have that preclude my understanding and appreciating others?

Marjorie Morgan, age 22, was excited about her first job out of college. She had worked summer jobs and one internship, but never in an environment as professional as the bank for which she'd work upon graduation. After taking some time off in the summer, she began work in August. Eager to show she was worthy of having been hired, she worked hard the first six months on the job. She enjoyed her co-workers, got along well with her manager, and was even involved in a technology project through which she was able to meet people from other departments of the bank.

The project objective was to develop a new system through which customer complaints could be handled. The present system barely met the needs of the bank's customers and was inefficient and costly to run. Over a period of several weeks, Marjorie and her project team members worked diligently to study the problem and develop a solution.

The team consisted of Marjorie plus five co-workers: two were about her age and the other three were considerably older. Four of the five were college educated and all but one team member had greater tenure than she had. Of the six-person team, four were Caucasian and two were African American. The team did not have an official leader. Things ran smoothly for several weeks, until the time came for decisions to be made. As soon as a deadline was imposed on the group Marjorie became aware of some significant personality differences within the project team. Two members, who had always arrived late to meetings, were procrastinating on their assignments for the

project. Two others who had attended the meetings began to spend more time socializing than working. One person who had been reluctant to state his opinion about the data that had been collected now said he thought the group needed more time before it would be ready to make a decision. Marjorie had been very task oriented all along and was eager to finish the project and move on to other projects within the bank. She was very frustrated with the lack of progress being made by the group and was concerned about being part of a team that wasn't going to meet its assigned deadline. Yet she was reluctant to speak up. She felt she was too young and hadn't been at the bank long enough to be credible with her teammates and take charge of the project. She didn't think she could approach her boss about the situation. She was perplexed about why the group was experiencing so many problems. Marjorie thought to herself, "Why can't they get along? Why can't everyone on the team be more like me? I work hard and have pride in how this project is going to turn out. Why don't the others?" She began to wonder if this was the right place for her.

1. Why is Marjorie upset?
2. In what ways are the work styles of Marjorie's teammates different from hers? What causes those differences?
3. Can these differences be resolved? Why or why not?
4. How would you handle the situation if you were Marjorie?

"Know thyself."

Socrates

As early as the time of Socrates, we have known about the importance of self-awareness. Understanding oneself is key not only to our ability to succeed, but also to our ability to work effectively with others. Studies show that the best managers are those who are keenly aware of their own strengths—and their weaknesses.¹

They are able to capitalize on their strengths and either improve their weaknesses or work with others whose qualities complement theirs. They are able to understand others—their motivation, needs, style, capabilities, and limitations—and use this information to motivate and get results from them. They also understand the importance of keeping current with self-knowledge and regularly engage in self-assessment exercises and experiences that allow them to continually learn about and improve themselves. This chapter describes self-awareness: what it is, why it's important, and how to improve your level of self-awareness. It also addresses how strong self-knowledge can enhance your ability to manage and work with others and provides a number of exercises that enable you to assess yourself and develop improvement plans.

What Is Self-awareness?

Self-awareness is knowing your motivations, preferences, and personality and understanding how these factors influence your judgment, decisions, and interactions with other people.² As Howard Book explains, through self-awareness one "develops the ability to know how you're feeling and why, and the impact your feelings have on your behavior. But it also involves a capacity to monitor and control those strong but subliminal biases that all of us harbor and that skew our decision making."³ Internal feelings and thoughts, interests, strengths and limitations, values, skills, goals, abilities, leadership orientation, and preferred communication style are just a few of the elements that self-awareness comprises.

Benefits of Self-awareness

Self-awareness or self-knowledge is the starting point for effectiveness at work. As Machiavelli, the astute author and statesman, wrote, "To lead or attempt to lead without

first having a knowledge of self is foolhardy and sure to bring disaster and defeat.” Self-awareness has many benefits, among them:

- Understanding yourself in relation to others.
- Developing and implementing a sound self-improvement program.
- Setting appropriate life and career goals.
- Developing relationships with others.
- Understanding the value of diversity.
- Managing others effectively.
- Increasing productivity.
- Increasing your ability to contribute to organizations, your community, and family.

For example, knowing what you are good at and what you enjoy doing may help in selecting a career or job that is professionally satisfying and therefore financially and personally satisfying. Relying solely on others’ thoughts or beliefs about what is best for you can lead to personal and professional unhappiness. It makes no sense to spend one-third (or more) of your precious time doing what you abhor! By knowing yourself—your strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes—you’ll know where you belong.⁴

Self-awareness is also important for managers and organizations. Managers who have attained heightened states of self-awareness tend to be superior performers. Awareness of self often leads to a greater understanding of others. Managers who can relate to or empathize with co-workers tend to be more trusted and are perceived as being more competent. Because self-aware managers are in tune with the concerns of others, they are also able to reduce the potential for conflict and are more likely to be open to feedback. Self-aware managers who listen to feedback and make positive modifications to personal behavior are able to create trusting and productive work environments. Working effectively with others will therefore increase managerial and organizational effectiveness.⁵

Self-awareness is also a crucial component in understanding the organization in which you are operating. In “Using One’s Self as an Instrument for Organizational Diagnosis” by McCormick and White,⁶ the authors detail their belief that each of us can be thought of as an instrument for assessment and change. By asking ourselves a series of questions, we can diagnose our situation and develop some solutions to problems we or our organizations are experiencing. Doing this requires strong self-awareness of our emotional reactions, initial perceptions, biases, and judgments. All of these will be considered in this chapter.

Lack of Self-awareness

“The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none.”

Thomas Carlyle—Scottish author, essayist, and historian (1795–1881)

As important as self-assessment is in being effective and enjoying what you’re doing, it is important to assess the negative effects of a lack of, or faulty, self-awareness. Lack of self-awareness can lead to poor decisions, to an unrealistic notion of one’s competencies, and even to career derailment. Self-awareness enables people to make good decisions: a realistic appraisal of one’s and others’ needs, objectives, resources and capabilities can lead to more accurate judgments and more positive outcomes. Conversely, lack of self-awareness can result in decisions that lead to negative consequences.⁷ Self-awareness allows people to understand their strengths and core competencies—those core elements that contribute to one’s success. Lack of self-awareness can result in the opposite— incompetence, because the individual does not realize what the gaps are between their perception of their strengths and the degree to which they actually possess the strengths in question.⁸ Lack of self-awareness has also proven to be correlated with career derailment. In a study by the Center for Creative Leadership, a common factor in derailed careers was “lack of accurate portrait of self.” Those who lack self-awareness are less

able to see themselves accurately and are therefore less able to “midcourse correct” and make improvements necessary for change and improvement.⁹

“There are three things extremely hard: steel, a diamond, and to know one’s self.”

Benjamin Franklin

How to Gain Self-awareness

The first step to becoming aware of ourselves is to recognize our weaknesses, strengths, biases, attitudes, values, and perceptions. There are many ways to enhance our self-awareness. Some of these include analyzing our own experiences, looking at ourselves through the eyes of others, self-disclosure, acquiring diverse experiences, and increasing our emotional intelligence.

Self-analysis

Self-analysis requires people to examine themselves as an object in an experience or event. It requires a person to step back and observe (as objectively as possible) the positive or negative impact that may have influenced behaviors, attitudes, thoughts, or interactions. Self-analysis is not always an easy process, yet it is a necessary skill for synthesizing information relevant to professional and personal effectiveness.

The self-analysis process should begin with reflection on and exploration of thoughts and feelings associated with affective events. By reflecting on these feelings and thoughts, individuals can obtain new perspectives relevant to their lives based on these learning experiences. From obtaining new knowledge and perspectives, individuals can become more effective by implementing new behavioral and cognitive changes in future situations. For instance, Marjorie, from the chapter’s opening scenario, has an opportunity to gain self-awareness from her dysfunctional team experience. Through reflection, she would be able to see that her current behavior of remaining silent has not aided the team in its process. Gaining awareness of the impact of her action, or lack of action, should lead to a new perspective regarding teaming and her part in the process and to positive behaviors and attitudes in her current and future team projects. This learning will not only help Marjorie in her professional life, but will enhance overall team and organizational effectiveness.

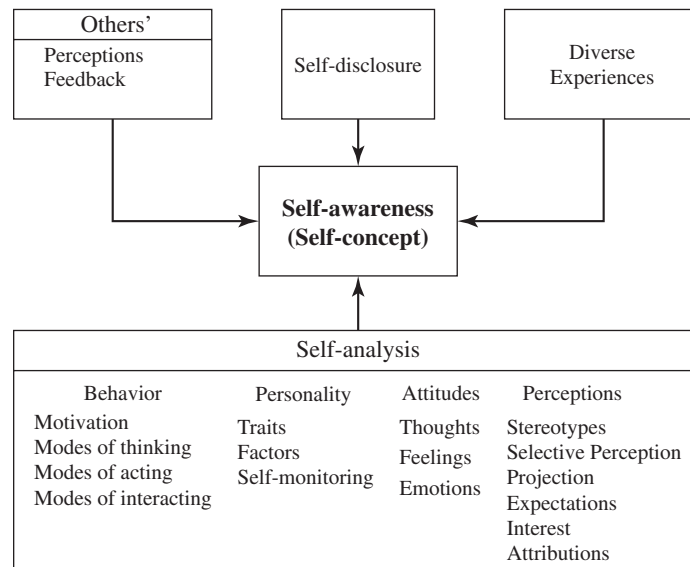
One means to gain insight into ourselves is through reflecting on, examining, and analyzing our behavior, personality, attitudes, and perceptions. (See Exercise 1-A.)

Behavior

Behavior is the way in which we conduct ourselves—the way in which we act. Our behavior is influenced by our feelings, judgments, beliefs, motivations, needs, experience, and the opinions of others. Patterns of behavior develop through our reactions to events and actions over a period of time. Behavior consists of four components:¹⁰

1. **Motivation**—the drive to pursue one action over another. What underlying factors move you to make a particular decision or choice? For example, what drives you to do a good job? The answer might be a competitive nature, strong achievement orientation, or a difficult childhood experience. Being aware of your core drivers, those things that motivate you—positively and negatively—can help you understand the roots of your behavior and make adjustments as necessary to modify your behavior.
2. **Modes of thinking**—the way you process the various inputs your brain receives. How do you analyze information and make judgments about how to use and apply that information? For example, do you process information quietly by reflecting on your own, or do you process information out loud by talking with others? Being aware of how you take in and make sense of information can help you understand how you make judgments and decisions that lead to choosing one behavior or course of action over another.
3. **Modes of acting**—the course of action you apply in a given situation. What approach do you choose to apply in response to stimuli, events, people, thoughts, and feelings? For example, when someone does something that offends you, do you react in anger?

Figure 1–1
Means for Obtaining
Self-awareness



Or do you react quietly, assessing your options before acting? Being aware of how you express your reaction to the things that happen to and around you can help you understand the alternatives available to you when certain events arise.

- 4. Modes of interacting**—the way in which you communicate and share ideas, opinions, and feelings with others. Whom do you feel comfortable relating to? How do you typically share your thoughts, feelings, and ideas with others? For example, are you comfortable in large groups of people? In team situations? Or do you prefer to work on your own? Being aware of how you talk to and work with others can help you understand how your preferred style meshes with those with whom you work and live.

Personality

Personality describes the relatively stable set of characteristics, tendencies, and temperaments that have been formed by heredity and by social, cultural, and environmental factors.¹¹ These traits determine how we interact with and react to various people and situations. Some aspects of our personality are believed to be a result of nature—those traits with which we are born and that we possess through heredity. Other characteristics of our personality are thought to be a result of our environment—those factors that we acquire through exposure to people and events in our lives.

Personality traits are enduring characteristics that describe an individual's attitude and behavior. Examples are agreeableness, aggression, dominance, and shyness. Most of these traits have been found to be quite stable over time.¹² This means a person who is cold and uncaring in one situation is likely to behave similarly in other situations. The “Big Five” Model¹³ is a powerful instrument because it organizes numerous concepts into a “short list” of just five factors that are representative of the characteristics that can be linked with satisfaction and success. The “Big Five” has five primary components: extroversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Studies show these factors can be linked to job satisfaction, employee attitudes and behavior, stress, and job performance.¹⁴ The “Big Five” also relates to overall life satisfaction. “Similar to job satisfaction, life satisfaction appears to be dispositionally based. Moreover, it appears the same traits that predict job satisfaction also predict life satisfaction.”¹⁵ While some personality characteristics are inherited, some factors can be modified through training, experience, and a conscious attempt to change.

1. Extroversion represents the degree to which an individual is social or antisocial, outgoing or shy, assertive or passive, active or inactive, and talkative or quiet. A person who rates high for the first traits in these pairs is extroverted, while someone who rates high for the second traits is introverted. Extroversion or introversion, in itself, is not

necessarily bad, but extremes at both ends of the spectrum can be equally dysfunctional. A person who is too outgoing could be perceived as overbearing and a person who is too reserved would lack the skills to relate to others.

2. Agreeableness measures the degree to which a person is friendly or reserved, cooperative or guarded, flexible or inflexible, trusting or cautious, good-natured or moody, soft-hearted or tough, and tolerant or judgmental. Those scoring high on the first element of these paired traits are viewed as agreeable and easy to work with, while those rating low are viewed as more disagreeable and difficult to work with. Being too agreeable could cause a person to be too accommodating, however, and others may take advantage of this weakness.

3. Emotional stability characterizes the degree to which a person is consistent or inconsistent in how they react to certain events, reacts impulsively or weighs options before acting, and takes things personally or looks at a situation objectively. Those who rate high on emotional stability are viewed as generally calm, stable, having a positive attitude, able to manage their anger, secure, happy, and objective. Those who rate low are more likely to be anxious, depressed, angry, insecure, worried, and emotional.

4. Conscientiousness represents the degree to which an individual is dependable or inconsistent, can be counted on or is unreliable, follows through on commitments or reneges, and keeps promises or breaks them. Those who rate high on conscientiousness are generally perceived to be careful, thorough, organized, persistent, achievement oriented, hardworking, and persevering. Those who score lower on this dimension are more likely to be viewed as inattentive to detail, uncaring, disrespectful, not interested or motivated, unorganized, apt to give up easily, and lazy.

5. Openness to experience characterizes the degree to which people are interested in broadening their horizons or limiting them, learning new things or sticking with what they already know, meeting new people or associating with current friends and co-workers, going to new places or restricting themselves to known places. Individuals who score high on this factor tend to be highly intellectual, broad-minded, curious, imaginative, and cultured. Those who rate lower tend to be more narrow-minded, less interested in the outside world, and uncomfortable in unfamiliar surroundings and situations. Professionals who are open to experience are more willing to reflect on feedback for personal development.

What are the characteristics of your personality? How do you know this? (See Exercise 1–B.) Which aspects of your personality do you like, and which would you like to modify? While it's true that some of these factors are very ingrained, few of these factors are fixed in stone. It's up to you to identify those qualities that are working well for you and worth keeping, as well as those qualities that aren't working well for you that you should change or abandon.

Self-monitoring is the tendency to adjust our behavior relative to the changing demands of social situations.¹⁶ It is many times studied in conjunction with the five broad factors of personality to examine how varying situations will affect a person's desire or ability to control aspects of their personality. The concept of monitoring our own personality can help us come to grips with both those qualities we view as positive and those we would like to change. By being aware of the role of self-monitoring, we can assess our own behaviors and attitudes, diagnose which elements we are satisfied with, and identify and develop plans for addressing those aspects we want to change. When self-monitoring, it is important to want to set personal standards in accordance with certain accepted norms. High self-monitors are very sensitive to external cues and constantly adapt (and often hide) their true selves to conform to a situation or set of expectations. Low self-monitors are more consistent, displaying their feelings, attitudes, and behaviors in every situation. In an organizational setting, it is probably best to avoid the extremes. You don't want to be a high self-monitor (solely concerned with what others think) or a low self-monitor (not at all interested in what others think). Always trying to please everyone or conforming to gain everyone's approval—while it might facilitate getting what you want in the short-term—can be harmful to you in the long-term. Conversely, never adjusting your behavior relative to the audience or situation can be disastrous. (See Exercise 1–C.)

All of the personality dimensions can have a significant impact on job performance and interpersonal relationships.¹⁷ By understanding the meaning of these factors, you can

pinpoint areas for personal and professional development and growth. Knowledge of our ratings on each of these dimensions can also help us in selecting a career. Much research in the area of person/job fit demonstrates that individuals who select professions that suit their personality are more likely to be satisfied and productive.¹⁸ Finding work that matches our personal preferences may require a fair amount of investigation; this investment in time and resources pays big dividends—success and happiness. For example, a person who is low on the extroversion and agreeableness factors would probably not be happy (or successful) as a traveling sales representative. The basic nature of the job requires an outgoing, friendly individual in order to contact and build a rapport with clients. A poor fit between one’s personality and job can be a recipe for disaster.

Attitudes

Attitudes are evaluative statements or “learned predispositions to respond to an object, person or idea in a favorable or unfavorable way.”¹⁹ As human beings, we can choose how we think and feel about a situation or event. Imagine you are on an airplane that has been diverted to another airport due to bad weather. You can choose to become irritated and show your anger to the flight attendant, or you can be patient, acknowledge that nothing can be done to change the situation, and take out a good book to read while waiting for your flight to land. The emotions we choose to act on determine our attitude. This in turn is reflected in our behavior.

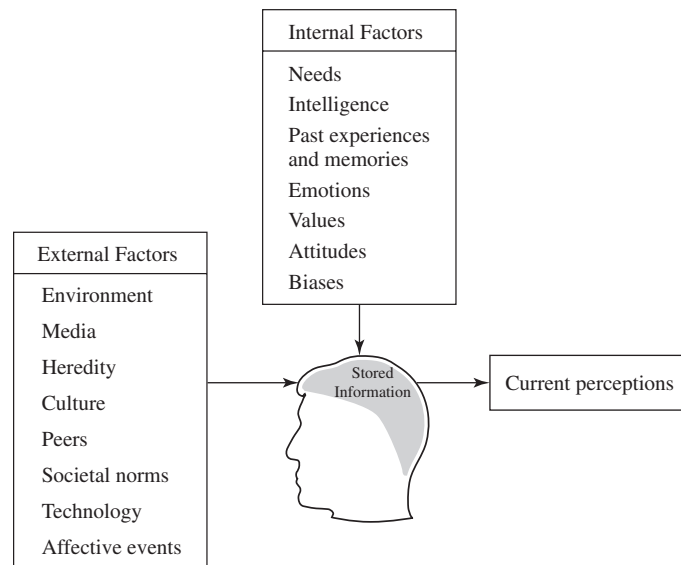
Attitudes are narrow in scope. They can vary from situation to situation. For example, we might have a positive outlook when we are with our friends, feel negatively about our work, and have a neutral attitude toward our academic experience. Attitudes are derived from parents, teachers, peers, society, and our own experiences. Attitudes are one of the less stable facets of our personality, which means they are easier to influence and change than our behaviors or values.²⁰ Some can change at will depending on the situation, the people involved, other events that occurred to us in a particular day, how we’re feeling as a situation unfolds, and how we respond as events evolve over time.

Strong attitudes can have an impact on our professional and personal relationships. As students and managers, it is helpful to remember how much of a role our attitude can play in our success. Our demeanor, whether we’re with others or grappling with an issue on our own, can make a significant difference in what behaviors we choose to exercise and in the outcomes of our efforts. Have you heard the saying “she takes lemons and turns them into lemonade”? This is an example of the power of one’s attitude. Our attitude can determine whether we think positively and take control of a situation or think negatively and feel helpless about our ability to change or respond to a situation. Our attitude is an important component of our ability to be productive at work or in school. Our attitude can influence those around us. Being aware of our own attitudes, and making choices about which attitude to display to others, is very important for us as individuals and as managers. Our attitude can affect our job behavior as well as our interactions with others. Our friends, significant others, family members, co-workers, and others are definitely influenced by our thoughts and feelings toward situations. As managers, it is also important to recognize that our employees are affected by the attitude we display toward them and toward the work that needs to get done. A manager’s attitude is a large factor in how people feel about their jobs. If a manager is upbeat most of the time and supportive of his or her colleagues, employees will generally respond well and work hard to produce the desired results. On the other hand if a manager is pessimistic and belittling toward his or her employees, staff morale will suffer and, ultimately, so will the expected outcomes.

Perceptions

Perception describes the process by which individuals gather sensory information and assign meaning to it.²¹ When we encounter a person or situation, we use our senses to absorb various inputs. Next, our brains select aspects from stored information in order to process and organize these inputs. Finally, our brains interpret and evaluate the person or situation. Perception is person-specific—no two people will take in, organize, and evaluate inputs the same way. Your perspective on a situation can be entirely different from the way another looks at the exact same situation. Two friends walking by the window of a crowded restaurant spot a couple engaged in conversation. One friend, taking notice of

Figure 1–2
Factors that Affect
Perceptions



their mannerisms and gestures, concludes that it “looks like they’re breaking off their relationship.” The other friend vehemently disagrees. “No, they’re probably discussing a plan to spend more time together.” Which friend is right?

Individual perception may not always be consistent with reality; it is only the perceiver’s interpretation of reality. For example, when you go to a movie with a group, your opinion and those of your friends might differ. You each perceived the same event through a different set of lenses. One might have seen the movie as an action film, another as a romance. There’s probably some element of truth in both perspectives. What’s reality for you is based on your interpretation of the event. Your reality can be shaped and impacted by learning about others’ perceptions of the same incident. For example, checking your perception with others, and sharing yours with them, might change your opinion of the movie or increase your understanding of it. At work, the best managers are those who augment their own perspective with the views of others. Our perceptions can—and should—change based on new inputs.

It is important to be in touch with our perceptions—what they are and how they’re being formed. Equally important is being aware of the perceptions of others. Others’ behavior toward you is heavily influenced by their understanding of the situation, and your behavior toward others is equally dependent on your assumptions about them and the situation. It is crucial to understand and disclose your own perspective as well as to solicit information from others about their understanding of the same situation.

Our perceptions are influenced by many factors, such as our culture, environment, heredity, the media, peers, past experiences, intelligence, needs, emotions, attitudes, and values. Perception can be a result of multiple causality: Many factors from a variety of sources may simultaneously impact individual perception. This makes it even more important to be fully aware of the factors that influence our perception. This way we can check ourselves to ensure that our own experience and perspective are not distorting our perceptions of reality.

As human beings, we tend to form perceptions based on our biases. If we are not aware of our biases and don’t check our understanding with others, we may miss out on important information and situations by relying on distorted perceptions. Some of the more common filters that influence our perceptions are stereotyping, selective perception, projection, expectations, and interest.

■ **Stereotyping:** making assumptions about an individual or a group based on generalized judgments rather than on facts, or a means to make assumptions when there is little or no information. Many who stereotype others do so on the basis of observable demographic characteristics, such as race or ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion, and sexual orientation. For example, some companies are reluctant to hire older workers for

certain job roles for fear that they lack the energy and stamina to perform at a desired level. Stereotyping is a convenient but faulty way to make assumptions about a person's behavior and abilities. Rather than relying on a stereotype that is probably largely false, it is best to check your own perceptions and come to an event or meet a new person with an open mind. This will allow you to form your own perspective rather than rely on biases that have been shaped by judging and attributing certain behaviors to all members of a group.

- **Selective Perception:** interpreting information for meaning and accuracy, and discarding information that is threatening or not relevant. We are constantly bombarded with stimuli. This has always been true but even more so today thanks to the availability of the Internet, downloadable newspapers, 24-hour news channels, cell phones, e-mail, and fax machines. In an effort to reduce the breadth and impact of continuous stimuli, our brains attend to information according to our own experiences, interests, attitudes, and background. This means we are constantly “filtering”—absorbing and processing only those inputs we think we can handle, or want to handle, at any given time. For example, people tend to dislike thinking about their own mortality so they avoid the subject of wills and funeral planning. A college student whose main concern is graduating is probably not likely to be thinking of retirement plans. A manager with a project deadline is probably not going to read information for a meeting that's scheduled for next month.

Selective perception serves a useful purpose, but it hinders communication with others. Rather than automatically “tuning out” information with which you disagree, it is best to keep an open mind, being open to all new views about a situation before prematurely developing your own perception. (See Exercise 1-D for more on selective perception.)

- **Projection:** attributing one's own attitudes, characteristics, or shortcomings to others. For example, someone who cheats and lies might make the assumption that everyone cheats and lies. This validates our own perceptions of the way things are, or at least the way we think things should be. However, projecting our beliefs onto others denies them the opportunity to provide us with a unique and fresh perspective. Rather than transferring your own experience and feelings to another, it is best to consider each new situation and person in your life as unique, paying attention to *their* features and characteristics rather than yours.

- **Expectations:** forming an opinion about how we would like an event to unfold, a situation to develop, or a person to act, think, or feel. We tend to perceive, select, and interpret information according to how we expect it to appear. For example, when proofreading a paper you have written, you may pass over mistakes because you know what you intended to say, so you perceive it to be correct. Actually, the best way to proofread your own copy is to read it backwards! That way you're not preconditioned to see a word as you perceive or expect it; you see a word as it really is (try it!). By understanding what our expectations are and viewing a situation with a clear slate—minus preconceived notions about what to expect—we are better able to approach situations and people and form our own opinions based on actual experience rather than on assumptions.

- **Interest:** basing our activities and inputs on things that are likeable or appealing to us. We tend to focus our time and attention—consciously or subconsciously—on those things that are enjoyable and meaningful to us. For example, if we are in the market to buy a new home we will notice “for sale” signs in front of houses that previously would have gone unnoticed. If you have an interest in people, you might focus on a career in teaching or counseling, while ignoring other subjects such as computer science. The tendency to be drawn to things that interest us can be positive, in that it helps conserve our energy for the things that matter to us. However, as you increase your own self-understanding, it is important to reach out to things that go beyond what interests you at the time. By doing this we can broaden ourselves and our understanding of the things that are important and meaningful to others.

By understanding ourselves, we can begin to change our perceptions that are often affected by the biases described above. It is imperative for us to understand and confront

our biases. By doing so, we will increase our level of self-understanding and will be more understanding of others and their perspectives. The workplace is increasingly global and diverse. Companies are now involved in developing new business models. We will be better able to compete in this world and better equipped to formulate and embrace these new models by expanding our self- and other-awareness. This step will help us to be better managers and, just as important, better people.

Attribution Theory: A percentage of our perceptions are derived from what we attribute to the causes of behavior in ourselves or others. **Attribution theory** demonstrates that individuals tend to decide that a behavior is caused by a particular characteristic or event.²² We make these attributions or judgments about what caused the resulting behavior based on our personal observation or evaluation of the situation. For instance, after being fired from a position one might blame the dismissal on an internal factor or personal characteristic such as being an incompetent worker. Or the individual might blame the dismissal on an external factor such as a declining economy. Understanding how and why we make these attributions is important because several achievement theories stress that future decisions and behaviors are based more on our perception of why something happened rather than on the actual outcome.²³ Therefore, we tend to reinforce our beliefs of ourselves and others based on the perceptions we gain from these experiences.

It is also important to evaluate whether these judgments are attributed more to internal or external factors. Attributing outcomes to controllable factors tends to be a stronger indicator of future behavior than attributing them to uncontrollable factors.²⁴ For instance, if a person attributes the loss of a job to internal or controllable factors, she or he might feel shame, which could have one of two effects: hampering attempts to get a new position or pushing the individual to become a more effective employee in the future. However, if she or he blames the job loss on an external or uncontrollable factor, it may lead to anger. Perceptions in turn determine behavior in future situations based on the amount of personal control those involved believe they have over the situation.

The accuracy of our attributions is important because they may impact our future actions positively or negatively, yet personal biases have an impact on making attributions. Our own behavior or perception of ourselves has an impact on attributions. The **self-serving bias** causes us to overestimate internal factors for successes and blame external factors for failures. This may cause us to incorrectly evaluate our personal strengths and weaknesses. Another bias is related to the **fundamental attribution error**, which causes individuals to tend to overestimate the impact of internal factors and underestimate the influence of external factors when evaluating the behavior of others. We are more likely to judge people who lose their temper as unable to control themselves than to blame the situation. It would therefore be important as managers to remember to evaluate both internal and external factors before jumping to conclusions.

Others' Perceptions

Self-awareness is also gained through understanding how others view us and understanding how we are shaped by others' opinions of us. Stephen Covey refers to this concept as the "**social mirror**,"²⁵ which has its roots in Cooley's and Mead's work related to the concept of the "looking-glass self."²⁶ Covey explains that we gain perceptions of ourselves as a result of what other people say about us or how they react to us. We adopt a view of ourselves based on other people's views. How do others view us? How do we change our actions as a result of what we think others are thinking about us? These are the questions to ask to get a handle on how we are shaped by others' perceptions. By seeing ourselves through others' eyes, we can learn about our strengths and also about areas in which we can improve.

Learning to read accurately how others see us enhances our "self-maps," our images and judgments of ourselves. For example, you might say to yourself, I'm not a creative person or I'm an athletic person after hearing comments from others about our artistic or

athletic ability. The social mirror is based on our memory of how others have reacted toward us or treated us. Through feedback from others we can gain more insight or perspective into aspects of ourselves and our behaviors. However, our potential may not be based accurately on this information. The social mirror can be wrong or only partially correct. For example, an overbearing parent might say something negative such as “You’ll never amount to anything.” In this case, be very careful to first assess the statement—is it true? If the statement is not a reflection of reality, then work hard to dispel this image of you in your own mind, if not for the person who said it to you. Negative self-statements can be very damaging to one’s esteem. The social mirror is designed to help you learn about yourself, but you shouldn’t accept everything that others say to you as reality. (See Exercise 1-E for more on the “social mirror.”)

Self-disclosure

Another means of gaining self-awareness is through **self-disclosure**—sharing your thoughts, feelings, and ideas with others without self-deception, without distortion.²⁷ Talking with others allows us to share our feelings and responses. Self-disclosing is a key factor in improving our self-awareness; we must disclose information and interact with others to further clarify our perceptions.²⁸ Through verbalizing our perceptions, we verify our own beliefs, affirm our self-concept, and validate data received from an objective source. For example, if you’ve received a low grade on an exam, it’s helpful to discuss this with others. They can listen to your concerns and give you feedback. They might empathize with the fact you’ve received a low grade, then offer to problem-solve—for instance, identifying a test-taking strategy you can use in the future. They might also remind you that in general you do well in school. This helps you to maintain perspective even while going through a hard time about the exam.

Diverse Experiences

Another way of increasing self-awareness is through acquiring multiple experiences in diverse situations and with diverse others. For example, living or studying in a country other than your home country, learning a new language, traveling, reading books on new subjects, and acquiring broad work experience are ways to broaden our experience base. Even negative situations such as having to face a life-threatening illness, going through your own or your parents’ divorce, and overcoming a personal problem such as dyslexia can provide enormous learning and enhance your experience base.

As we encounter new situations, we use skills and acquire new ones, meet people and develop friendships, see new places, and learn first-hand about things we might have only read about. Being open to new experiences broadens our horizons. It helps us to see ourselves in a new light while giving us new information about ourselves and our ability to interact with the world. This boosts our confidence level and encourages us to reach out to further our experiences even more. It makes us more open to new ideas and diverse people with varying ways of living, working, and thinking. Expanding our experience base puts us into situations that test our abilities, values, and goals. This greatly aids in increasing our level of self-awareness.

Summary

Self-awareness is an essential skill for developing personally and professionally. If you have a high degree of self-awareness, you’ll be able to capitalize on your strengths and develop plans for improving or compensating for your limitations. Part of being self-aware is being able to monitor and change our behavior. By concentrating on self-improvement, we demonstrate to others our willingness to learn and grow, increasing the likelihood of being able to develop close relationships and success in a profession.

Key Terms and Concepts

Agreeableness	Motivation
Attitudes	Openness to experience
Attribution theory	Perception
Behavior	Personality
Conscientiousness	Projection
Diverse Experience	Selective perception
Emotional stability	Self-analysis
Expectations	Self-awareness
Extroversion	Self-disclosure
Fundamental attribution error	Self-monitoring
Interest	Self-serving bias
Modes of acting	Social mirror
Modes of interacting	Stereotyping
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Exercise 1–A Journal Writing

Journal writing has been used by educational disciplines, career coaches, and analysts for years. Developing reflective skills can lead managers and students to increased self-awareness, responsibility, and accountability as well as aid students to relate concepts and theories to practice.

In a separate notebook, keep an ongoing journal to record your thoughts, perceptions, insights, and goals for future interpersonal development. An entry should follow each class session or topic area. Your instructor will select the entry format and inform you of the collection dates.

The length of the entry is up to you. You should not be writing to impress; this is for your own personal learning and development. Write whatever you want, your ideas, feelings, and reactions relevant to the interpersonal skill being discussed. Your entry may be either negative or positive, as long as you try to be genuine and authentic. What you write should represent what you felt, thought, or learned that seemed important to your development. Entries might include such areas as these:

- Insights gained or concepts being explored.
- Reactions to the instructor, course, or other participants.
- Feelings/thoughts about yourself related to the course content, participants, and so on.
- Questions raised, resolutions made, things tried, risks taken.

Begin your first entry by doing a personal analysis based on your current perceptions of your interpersonal skills. Answer the following questions to give yourself a basis to compare your future development.

1. How would you describe your overall interpersonal effectiveness?
2. How would you describe your interpersonal relationships? Write about your best and worst relationship.
3. What are your personal strengths regarding interpersonal skills usage?
4. What are your weaknesses regarding interpersonal skills usage?
5. What are your goals for interpersonal development?

Every subsequent journal entry should include the following:

- The date.
- The interpersonal area being covered.
- A reevaluation of your strengths and weaknesses.
- What you have learned regarding the skill area or yourself or personal improvements obtained.
- Goals and action steps for future growth and development.

Source: From Robert Loo and Karran Thorpe, "Using Reflective Learning Journals to Improve Individual and Team Performance," *Team Performance Management* 8, no. 5/6 (2002), pp. 134–40. Reprinted with permission of Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Exercise 1–B The Big Five Locator Questionnaire

1. Participants are to complete the Big Five Locator Questionnaire. On each numerical scale indicate which point is generally more descriptive of you. If the two terms are equally descriptive, mark the midpoint.
2. Complete the scoring sheet, following the instructions.
3. Place the scores on the Big Five Locator Interpretation Sheet.

Source: The Big Five Locator is a quick assessment tool to be used with an instructor and willing learners. Care should be taken to follow up this profile with a more reliable personality assessment instrument. This instrument was developed by P. J. Howard, P. L. Medina, and J. M. Howard "The Big Five Locator: A Quick Assessment Tool for Consultants and Trainers," from *The Annual, Developing Human Resources*, by J. William Pfeiffer and David Leonard Goodstein, Vol. 1, "Training," 1996, pp. 119–22. Copyright © 1996 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The Big Five Locator Questionnaire

Instructions: On each numerical scale that follows, indicate which point is generally more descriptive of you. If the two terms are equally descriptive, mark the midpoint.

1.	Eager	5	4	3	2	1	Calm
2.	Prefer Being with Other People	5	4	3	2	1	Prefer Being Alone
3.	A Dreamer	5	4	3	2	1	No Nonsense
4.	Courteous	5	4	3	2	1	Abrupt
5.	Neat	5	4	3	2	1	Messy
6.	Cautious	5	4	3	2	1	Confident
7.	Optimistic	5	4	3	2	1	Pessimistic
8.	Theoretical	5	4	3	2	1	Practical
9.	Generous	5	4	3	2	1	Selfish
10.	Decisive	5	4	3	2	1	Open Ended
11.	Discouraged	5	4	3	2	1	Upbeat
12.	Exhibitionist	5	4	3	2	1	Private
13.	Follow Imagination	5	4	3	2	1	Follow Authority
14.	Warm	5	4	3	2	1	Cold
15.	Stay Focused	5	4	3	2	1	Easily Distracted
16.	Easily Embarrassed	5	4	3	2	1	Don't Give a Darn
17.	Outgoing	5	4	3	2	1	Cool
18.	Seek Novelty	5	4	3	2	1	Seek Routine
19.	Team Player	5	4	3	2	1	Independent
20.	A Preference for Order	5	4	3	2	1	Comfortable with Chaos
21.	Distractible	5	4	3	2	1	Unflappable
22.	Conversational	5	4	3	2	1	Thoughtful
23.	Comfortable with Ambiguity	5	4	3	2	1	Prefer Things Clear-Cut
24.	Trusting	5	4	3	2	1	Skeptical
25.	On Time	5	4	3	2	1	Procrastinate

Scoring The Big Five Questionnaire

Instructions:

1. Find the sum of the circled numbers on the *first* row of each of the five-line groupings (Row 1 + Row 6 + Row 11 + Row 16 + Row 21 = _____). This is your raw score for "emotional stability." Circle the number in the EMOTIONAL STABILITY column of the Score Conversion Sheet that corresponds to this raw score.
2. Find the sum of the circled numbers on the *second* row of each of the five-line groupings (Row 2 + Row 7 + Row 12 + Row 17 + Row 22 = _____). This is your raw score for "extroversion." Circle the number in the EXTROVERSION column of the Score Conversion Sheet that corresponds to this raw score.
3. Find the sum of the circled numbers on the *third* row of each of the five-line groupings (Row 3 + Row 8 + Row 13 + Row 18 + Row 23 = _____). This is your raw score for "openness to experience." Circle the number in the OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE column of the Score Conversion Sheet that corresponds to this raw score.
4. Find the sum of the circled numbers on the *fourth* row of each of the five-line groupings (Row 4 + Row 9 + Row 14 + Row 19 + Row 24 = _____). This is your raw score for "agreeableness." Circle the number in the AGREEABLENESS column of the Score Conversion Sheet that corresponds to this raw score.
5. Find the sum of the circled numbers on the *fifth* row of each of the five-line groupings (Row 5 + Row 10 + Row 15 + Row 20 + Row 25 = _____). This is your raw score for "conscientious." Circle the number in the CONSCIENTIOUSNESS column of the Score Conversion Sheet that corresponds to this raw score.
6. Find the number in the far right or far left column that is parallel to your circled raw score. Enter this norm score in the box at the bottom of the appropriate column.
7. Transfer your norm score to the appropriate scale on the Big Five Locator Interpretation Sheet.

Big Five Locator Score Conversion Sheet

Norm Score	Emotional Stability	Extroversion	Openness to Experience	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Norm Score
80						80
79			25			79
78						78
77	22					77
76			24			76
75						75
74						74
73	21		23			73
72		25				72
71				25		71
70	20	24	22			70
69					25	69
68				24		68
67		23	21		24	67
66	19					66
<hr/>						
65		22		23	23	65
64			20			64
63					22	63
62	18	21	19	22		62
61					21	61
60		20				60
59	17		18	21	20	59
58						58
57		19				57
56			17			56
<hr/>						
55	16	18		20	19	55
54			16	19		54
53						53
52		17			18	52
51	15					51
50		16	15	18	17	50
49						49
48	14	15			16	48
47			14	17		47
46		14			15	46
45			13			45
<hr/>						
44	13			16	14	44
43		13				43
42			12			42
41				15	13	41
40	12	12	11			40
39						39
38				14	12	38
37		11	10			37
36	11					36
<hr/>						
35		10		13	11	35
34			9			34
33	10	9			10	33
32				12		32
31			8			31
30		8			9	30
29	9			11		29
28		7	7		8	28
27				10		27
26		6			7	26
25	8		6			25
24				9	6	24
23						23
22			5		22	22
21	7	5				21
20				8		20

Enter Norm Scores Here: Adj = S = O = A = C =

(Norms based on a sample of 161 forms completed in 1993–94.)

Name _____ Date _____

*Big Five Locator Interpretation Sheet**Scores:*

Emotional Stability _____

Extroversion _____

Openness to Experience _____

Agreeableness _____

Conscientiousness _____

Strong Emotional Stability: secure, unflappable, rational, unresponsive, guilt free	Resilient 35	Responsive 45	Reactive 55	65	Weak Emotional Stability: excitable, worrying, reactive, high-strung, alert
Low Extroversion: private, independent, works alone, reserved, hard to read	Introvert 35	Ambivert 45	Extrovert 55	65	High Extroversion: assertive, sociable, warm, optimistic, talkative
Low Openness to Experience: practical, conservative, depth of knowledge, efficient, expert	Preserver 35	Moderate 45	Explorer 55	65	High Openness to Experience: broad interests, curious, liberal, impractical, likes novelty
Low Agreeableness: skeptical, questioning, tough, aggressive, self-interest	Challenger 35	Negotiator 45	Adapter 55	65	High Agreeableness: trusting, humble, altruistic, team player, conflict averse, frank
Low Conscientiousness: spontaneous, unconcerned with deadlines, adaptable, fickle, impulsive	Flexible 35	Balanced 45	Focused 55	65	High Conscientiousness: dependable, organized, disciplined, cautious, stubborn

Note: The Big Five Locator is intended for use only as a quick assessment for teaching purposes.

Source: The Big Five Locator is a quick assessment tool to be used with an instructor and willing learners. Care should be taken to follow up this profile with a more reliable personality assessment instrument. This instrument was developed by P. J. Howard, P. L. Medina, and J. M. Howard. "The Big Five Locator: A Quick Assessment Tool for Consultants and Trainers," from *The Annual, Developing Human Resources*, by J. William Pfeiffer and David Leonard Goodstein, Vol. 1, "Training," 1996, pp. 119–22. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Exercise 1–C Self-monitoring Questionnaire

For the following statements, indicate the degree to which you think the following statements are true or false by circling the appropriate number. Use the following key as a guideline for scoring:

- 5 = Certainly, always true
- 4 = Generally true
- 3 = Somewhat true, but with exceptions
- 2 = Somewhat false, but with exceptions
- 1 = Generally false
- 0 = Certainly, always false

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In social situations, I have the ability to alter my behavior if I feel that something else is called for. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 2. I am often able to read people's true emotions correctly through their eyes. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 3. I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 4. In conversations, I am sensitive to even the slightest change in the facial expression of the person I'm conversing with. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. My powers of intuition are quite good when it comes to understanding others' emotions and motives. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 6. I can usually tell when others consider a joke in bad taste, even though they may laugh convincingly. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 7. When I feel that the image I am portraying isn't working, I can readily change it to something that does. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 8. I can usually tell when I've said something inappropriate by reading the listener's eyes. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 9. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 10. I have found that I can adjust my behavior to meet the requirements of any situation I find myself in. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 11. If someone is lying to me, I usually know it at once from that person's manner of expression. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 12. Even when it might be to my advantage, I have difficulty putting up a good front. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 13. Once I know what the situation calls for, it's easy for me to regulate my actions accordingly. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

Scoring Key:

Add up the circled numbers, except reverse the scores for questions 9 and 12. On those, a circled 5 becomes a 0, 4 becomes a 1, and so forth. High self-monitors are defined as those with scores of 53 or higher.

Source: Based on R. D. Lennox and R. N. Wolfe, "Revision of the Self-monitoring Scale," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, June 1984, p. 1361. Copyright © 1984 by the American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

Exercise 1–D Selective Perception

How does selective perception affect the interpretation of what we see and hear?

Your instructor will read two scenarios. Following the reading of each situation, write in the appropriate column what you see and hear from the description (what picture comes to mind?), what judgments you make or conclusions you draw about the situation, and what (if any) actions you would take.

Scenario One:

Scenario Two:

What I see/hear:	My judgment:	What actions I would take:
1.		
2.		

Questions to be considered individually and discussed in small groups:

1. Why do we interpret the same scenario differently from others?
2. What impact does this have on developing relationships?
3. What if in scenario one the person you "met" was a woman? How would your interpretation of the situation change?
4. What if in scenario two, the person with the daughter was her mother instead of her father? Or perhaps the discussion was between a father and his son? How would your interpretation of these situations change?
5. Why is it important to know what our biases are?
6. Let's say it's three years in the future. You've been working for a *Fortune* 500 firm as a member of a product development team. The meeting is about to start when a man matching the description in scenario one walks in. What's your judgment? Why?
7. As the meeting proceeds, he's about to open his mouth. Before he speaks, do you assume that he is credible or not credible until proven otherwise?
8. How do our biases help/hinder us in the workplace?

Exercise 1-E
The Social Mirror

To recognize the potential inaccuracy or incompleteness of the “social mirror,” or others’ opinions about you as a person, take a moment to reflect on how the social mirror has affected you. Use the questions as a guide. Reflect back on all aspects of your life: personal (dealing with family and friends, roommates, neighbors, significant others), academic (teachers, coaches, classmates), and professional (bosses, co-workers, subordinates, mentors) to examine what influences others have had on your self-image and other areas of importance to you (community, religion, sports, etc.).

1. What would others say about you that is generally positive?

2. What “constructive suggestions” would others offer to help you improve or change?

3. What do you most like about yourself?

4. What do you most dislike in yourself and would like to change?

5. What beliefs do you have about yourself that limit you?

6. How might these beliefs have been created or influenced by your social mirror?

7. Since it is possible—perhaps even likely—that these weaknesses or limitations are more imagined than real, what could you do to turn them into strengths?

Source: This exercise is adapted from Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Leadership Training Manual.

Exercise 1–F
Expanding
Self-awareness

1. Identify a behavior of yours that you would like to change. Practice a different form of that behavior for one week. For example, if you constantly interrupt others, try to go a week without interrupting others. Keep a record of every time you change this behavior. Reward yourself at the end of the week for being conscious of the need to change. Attempt a different behavior in week two. And so on.
 2. Observe a person you admire at work or in school off and on for several days. How would you describe their attitude? What evidence do you have of this? What can you do to emulate their positive qualities?
 3. Write on a sheet of paper adjectives that you wish could describe your personality. Identify some ways in which you could make changes to incorporate these qualities into your interactions with others.
 4. Ask a few close friends for feedback about you as a person, your strong qualities, and areas you could change.
 5. Reflect upon the last time you found yourself under a lot of pressure. How did you react? Respond? Behave? Develop a plan to help you think clearly in future situations to have a more controlled and less emotional response. For example, if you usually have a physical response when you get angry, think of an alternative means to handle your anger.
-

Exercise 1–G
Reflection/Action Plan

This chapter focused on self-awareness—what it is, why it’s important, and how to acquire and increase the degree to which you possess it. Other elements which comprise the self, including personality, attitude, and emotional intelligence, were also discussed. Complete the worksheet below upon completing all reading and experiential activities for this chapter.

1. The one or two areas in which I am most strong are:

2. The one or two areas in which I need more improvement are:

3. If I did only one thing to improve in this area, it would be to:

4. Making this change would probably result in:

5. If I did not change or improve in this area, it would probably affect my personal and professional life in the following ways:
