

## 7 Examples of How to Increase Self-Awareness

### 1. Pay attention to what bothers you about other people

Often the things that irritate us the most in other people are a reflection of some quality we dislike in ourselves.

We all have aspects of ourselves that we're not proud of—a tendency to bend the truth a little too often, for example.

If we don't know how—or believe it's possible—to change these things, we can end up doing the next best thing: Not thinking about them. And while ignorance can feel like bliss, it isn't really. Not in the long-term.

So, whenever someone does something that seems to particularly annoy or irritate you, ask yourself: ***Could this be a reflection of something in me that I dislike? Do I do some version of that?***

### 2. Meditate on your mind

You've probably heard of [mindfulness meditation](#). It's the simple practice of keeping your attention focused on your breath or some other physics sensation. Then, if you notice your mind wandering to other thoughts, gently returning your attention to your point of focus.

While mindfulness meditation has been [shown to be beneficial for everything from weight loss to depression relief](#), it can actually be a powerful way to increase your level of self-awareness.

Specifically, mindfulness meditation is one of the best ways to learn more about how your thoughts work. When you practice watching and observing our thoughts without attaching to them or thinking about them, you begin to realize a powerful idea:

## **You are not your thoughts.**

All too often we lack self-awareness because we're actually thinking too much. We easily become lost in our thoughts, assuming they're true or worth engaging with simply because our minds decided to throw them at us.

A regular mindfulness practice will open your eyes to how the thinking mind works and how much more there is to you than the mere content of your thoughts. **Learn More: [How to Start a Mindfulness Practice: A Quick Guide for Complete Beginners](#)**

### **3. Read high-quality fiction**

It's often said that [great writers are great observers of the world around them](#). And it's this capacity to notice subtle details and features of life that allow them to recreate it so movingly in their work.

But the very best writers are expert observers of human nature in particular. It's their job to notice the tiny details of thought, emotion, desire, and action that most of us miss amid the frantic business of daily life.

By describing people carefully, good fiction teaches us how to think about people carefully and with compassion. And the better we get at observing others, the more likely we are to look at ourselves the same way.

So spend 30 minutes sometime and come up with a list of good fiction you've been meaning to read or ask a knowledgeable friend to recommend a few of their favorites.

**Learn More:** [How to Become a Prolific Reader](#)

### **4. Identify your emotional kryptonite**

Nobody likes to feel sad, anxious, ashamed, or any other variety of painful emotion. Which is understandable since they feel bad, sometimes painfully so.

And while we all recoil from negative emotions, each of us tends to have one particular negative emotion that we especially dislike and try to avoid.

We all have certain emotions that we especially dislike. And more often than not, that means we try very hard to avoid feeling that emotion.

But perhaps most importantly, by avoiding the emotion, we're avoiding listening to what the emotion has to say to us. Negative emotions are painful because our mind is trying to get our attention, sometimes for a very good reason.

Learning to tolerate the discomfort of our emotional kryptonite can unlock a wealth of insight about ourselves and our world if we're willing to listen.

**Learn More:** [How to Clarify Your Emotions](#)

### **5. Learn a new skill**

If we want to cultivate flexibility and freshness within ourselves and the way we see things (i.e. self-awareness), we should go out of our way to be a beginner. And one of the best ways to do this is to learn a new skill.

Whether it's playing the piano, speaking Mandarin, or water coloring, committing to learning a new skill is a powerful exercise in mental flexibility and self-awareness.

## 6. Identify cognitive distortions

[Cognitive distortions](#) are *inaccurate thoughts and beliefs that warp how we see things, including ourselves*. Just like we all can get into unhelpful physical habits (e.g.: nail-biting, snacking late at night, etc.), we all have certain [mental habits that aren't doing us any favors](#).

A major source of a lack of self-awareness is inaccurate mental habits and self-talk. *If we can learn to identify these patterns of inaccurate thinking, we can become more self-aware—and probably end up feeling better too.*

Learn More: [Cognitive Restructuring: The Complete Guide to Changing Negative Thinking](#)

## 7. Make time to clarify your values

Here's a frightening question: *How often do you make time to deliberately and carefully consider your highest values and aspirations?*

If you're like most of us, the busyness of daily life tends to sweep you up—day after day, week after week—in a constant stream of activity without much time for reflection, especially reflection on your [personal values](#).

So is it any surprise then that we have a difficult time reaching our goals and finding satisfaction when we don't spend any time contemplating what that would even look like for us?

What's more, it's probably not surprising that we end up chasing artificial goals that culture and society tell us are important but that we don't genuinely find meaningful and rewarding.

*A special form of self-awareness involves becoming aware of and clear about the things that really matter to us:*

*Why are we here?*

*What are we called to do?*

*What makes for a fulfilling life that we can be truly proud of?*

*These are big questions. And while they sound intimidating, that's probably because we just don't spend much quality time actually considering them. Give yourself the time and space to consider these bigger questions and how they apply to your own life.*

**Source: <https://nickwignall.com/self-awareness/>**