

Awareness - the "secret sauce" of personal change

Most folks experience problems in their life – at work, at home, at play and in relationship; it's part of the human condition.

Awareness is what allows one to (1) see how one is creating a problem and/or (2) see that there is nothing one can do about a particular problem. Each has its value.

For example, one cannot change the fact that life is impermanent. Things change. One cannot change the fact that life is based on cause and effect. Awareness (not just "knowing", as we'll see in a moment) of these facts supports one to let go. Being aware, and dropping resistance, life's "problems" cease to be problems. Awareness is the key to reducing or lessening some "problems" - by seeing how one plays one's role in the cause and effect equation. "If I do/believe this, then that will/won't happen." "If I don't do/believe this, then that will/will not happen." Awareness is the key.

Most folks, (99%), remain at a static level of awareness. Why? Because their environment makes no drastic changes and they feel they are moderately "successful" with how they are and how they are. Life is "working" OK, so they continue to do what they do, the way they do it. They live on "autopilot", in a world of routine, and often behave in counter-productive and mentally and emotionally dysfunctional way. They effort to limit change, refuse new information, or engage in new experiences. Awareness has come to a standstill.

The 1% who are proactively seeking awareness engage in efforts to change - they read, attend classes, welcome new ideas and perspectives, try new things, meditate, seek out others different from themselves, and look for challenge and stimulation. With awareness, their perspective expands - moving from a focus on "me" to a focus on others, e.g., family, immediate groups, and perhaps to all of humanity and then to all living things. These folks are standing at a higher point on the mountain. They are more able to see how their past had created their present and how their present is creating their future.

How does awareness work?

As one increases their level of awareness, they gain clarity on the dynamic of cause and effect, how it affects one, and how one affects it. People see how a world of effects flows from one's beliefs. They gain clarity on their internal beliefs and begin to inquire into their previously unexplored assumptions about reality. Many see that what they thought was "reality" is, in fact, just an effect of what they believed was "true" and now is not. They begin to see what most do not. Not unlike how a child first becomes aware of himself (generic), and then sees he is separate from others. Later, he becomes aware of his body, then his motions, his senses, his emotions, and, if truly aware, his beliefs, thoughts, assumptions, expectations, etc.

The deeper truth of awareness

Few really discern how their thoughts, actions, and beliefs affect their world of cause and effect, or understand how the world of cause and effect affects them.

Awareness of one's thoughts, actions, beliefs, and assumptions is important because these elements create just about all of one's life experience. The way one thinks, processes information and creates one's "internal" reality actually creates how one feels, how one behaves and determines who and what one attracts in one's life and how one interprets and gives meaning to what happens "out there."

Becoming aware of how they create their internal reality, one gains a choice over what happens in one's life. Awareness creates choice. When one becomes a witness, watcher and observer of one's thinking,

feeling and acting states, one can witness exactly how one's internal states generate one's feelings, emotions and subsequent actions.

The downside of being unaware

When one is unaware of how they create their life they live life on autopilot – unconsciously creating a life they were taught (programmed) to create as a child. They are "faturizing their past." The unaware lack a consciousness of their internal map of reality, of the thoughts they think, the beliefs they have and the effects they create. They are creating life unconsciously. If one is unable or unwilling to learn how to become a witness, watcher and observer of one's self, life continues to happen on autopilot – thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions just "happen."

Awareness allows change

When we're aware of *how* our internal map of reality (thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, etc.) lead to our behavior, then we have a choice as to *how* (1) we create our internal state and (2) how we behave. This awareness allows us to do what we know we need to do and not do what we know we need not do – because awareness "sees" the consequences of our thoughts and actions. Slowly, self-limiting thoughts and behaviors begin to melt away as we will learn to not engage in thoughts and actions that don't serve us. Awareness keeps us from being on autopilot - engaging in self-destructive thoughts and behaviors over and over again. One cannot act in a way that is self-destructive while being aware.

Awareness is not *knowing*

Repeat - awareness is not *knowing* – being aware of how you do something is not the same as knowing that you do something. This is important. The unaware know they engage in self-limiting and self-sabotaging behavior. But, they don't stop.

Awareness is seeing "inside" - that what you do "inside" creates an outcome while you're doing it.

Looking at beliefs is critical. A belief is a thought that we think is "True". In order to feel safe and secure with "our truth", we engage in an unconscious circular, incorrect type of logical "thinking" which we take to be "common sense", for example:

"This is true for me because I have evidence it is so." (1) I attract people, events and circumstances that are my "evidence." If I believe all ____ are jerks, then I'll attract the people and circumstances to prove me "right." (2) I interpret my experience in a way that makes me right. While there may be numerous interpretations, I'll chose the one that supports my belief. (3) I'll behave in a way that allows my belief to be right.

For the unaware, all this is happening on autopilot. For them, how can it not be true! These folks are unconsciously self-selecting the people, places, circumstances, events and interpretations that allow them to be right (while rejecting other people, places, circumstances, events and interpretations that may point to the contrary.)

Being aware of our beliefs, and seeing how they generate people, places, circumstances, events, and the *appearance of truth*, is important. Most folks, keep believing what they believe and live on autopilot, creating outcomes based on their beliefs.

Awareness allows one to "go deep" – to be a witness, watcher and observe of one's internal state - leading to insights, AHAs and a deeper understanding of "reality" than can change one's view of one's self, one's place on the planet, one's view of humanity, the planet and all of life. The upshot is that what we have taken for so long to be "true" will often be uncovered for the illusion and delusion it most often is.

Awareness comes with a cost

Awareness does not happen in a microwave fashion. Awareness takes awareness – focus, intentionality, purposefulness, and consistent practice.

If you choose to pay the price you can be sure to experience a whole new world – one where self-limiting and self-sabotaging beliefs, thoughts and actions will begin to fall away. In this new world, you'll become OK with the impermanence of things, of life itself – "no longer fighting the good fight" – and trust, let go and surrender while experiencing less pain and suffering from trying to hang on for dear life in all the ways that bring you anxiety, stress, sadness, depression, anger, regret, and resistance, etc. Too, being aware of the "cause-effect" nature of life, you'll be more aware of how your internal state affects your experience of life and come to make more conscious, healthier life choices.

The strategy to gain awareness

There are specific practices you can engage in, consistently, to support your capacity to become more aware. First, is daily meditation. Second, is spending time every day (ten minutes here and there) being a witness, watcher and observer of your self – noticing your internal pictures, scripts, and dialogs, and then noticing how these elements directly affect your immediate internal experience – how you feel physiologically, your feelings and emotions. You can also play back the "tape of your day" at night and revisit an experience or two and observe what you thought, felt, and said to yourself at the time that affected your experience in a particular event. Third, explore your internal reactivity and states associated with someone about whom you have strong feelings. What goes on in you at those times - beliefs, thoughts, feelings, emotions, and physiologically? Fourth, practice, practice, practice. Practice does make, if not perfect, certainly, much, much better. In time, you'll discover a whole new you - one who will not be able to create internal self-limiting and self-sabotaging states without seeing what you're doing. As you become aware (*seeing* what you're doing, not *knowing*), you'll begin to resist.

As you gain new levels of awareness about how you live life from a negative place (as a result of your beliefs), you'll be much more conscious of how you (1) attract people and circumstances that help you prove you're "right"; (2) choose the one interpretation that gives the "appearance" you're right; and (3) behave in ways causing you to be right (about your belief).

Watching, witnessing and observing the internal process you go through prove yourself "right", with an active *curiosity*, and watching and observing your actions will lead to discovering what doesn't really serve you – over time supporting you to let go of self-limiting and self-sabotaging beliefs, assumptions and thoughts. As you let go, a new sense of aliveness, enthusiasm and lightness will arise supporting you to understand with a deep awareness that "my life doesn't have to be this way." That's awareness!

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Have you ever engaged in a formal/informal process of self-awareness?
- How well do you really, really know yourself?
- Are you open to new possibilities and insights about yourself? What would your colleagues, friends, spouse or partner say?
- Are you comfortable with your emotions?
- Would you say you are in touch with your body?
- Do you often resist or feel uncomfortable with reality that is not "your reality?" If so, why?
- Do you often search deep and wide for ways to prove you're "right?"
- Have you even been described as a "control freak?"
- Have you recently given up any belief or premise that you found has been a persistent cause of upset for you?

- Would you say you are more self-aware than you were last year, two years ago, five years ago? Remember, "aware" (aware of what's happening deeply inside you), not just "knowing" more about yourself.
- Where do you find stillness every day?
- How did you become aware of who you were as you were growing up?

"Getting in touch with your true self must be your first priority." — Tom Hopkins

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