

Self Awareness

Part 1 of 4

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1. Intro

Start of 4 part series based on book – may not ever be published, will try

Going to get your reaction – bunch of lab rats

Called four steps to self-fulfillment

Today is step 1 – self-awareness

These are the four steps

Next talk in February, then another in May and June

So you may be get bored and stop coming, just don't tell me why

I'll assume everyone is sick

I am completely oblivious to things that would humiliate normal people

But I get that – feeling I have, know it's kind of crazy, but don't want to change it

Example of difference between becoming aware of feelings and deciding whether you want to do anything about them

Turn to self-awareness

2. What is self-awareness

Understanding to extent possible – your feelings, why you feel that way, why you do what you do and say what you say

Today, not about what to do about what you discover – that comes up when we get into self-acceptance

So this is not a problem-solving exercise today

Threshold issue -- distinguish between the world's awareness of you and your own awareness of yourself

World gets to know you by what you say and do

But only you know what you are thinking – at least so far, Russians

And, you don't even know a lot of time what you are feeling

All of us products of evolution – very powerful instincts or predispositions, that are then shaped by environment

We are unaware of most of this brain activity

In fact, a lot of it you don't have access to, even if you work at it

Brain like a computer – conscious like the working memory, which is tiny fraction of what is going on

Ever check task manager – 86 programs running in background

Nervous system has hundreds, perhaps thousands of programs running in background – everything from controlling blood pressure and body temperature to our tendency to feel gloomy on rainy days or to feel guilty

But you can almost certainly know a lot more

3. Quotes in program

Give some window in how people have viewed it over time

Know yourself – ancient Greeks and even earlier, but Plato's description what Socrates dialogues – know your place

That has been the approach of religion

Instead, worship God, obey his rules, it will all work out, in this life or the next understanding of yourself, secondary

but see Stoics and Spinoza

Once we get to psychology, great interest in self-awareness

So over time, people have recognized value in greater self-understanding

4. What are feelings?

Could use term in several ways

sensory experiences

emotions

moods

predispositions, deeply held attitudes

beliefs and values

in general, cognitive involvement increases with each category

that is, logical, analytical, problem-solving brain activity – takes place in frontal lobes

I'm going to use term feelings to be that fourth category – deeply held attitudes, perspectives on ourselves and our lives

5. where do feelings come from?

Go back to reading, brain has massive number of nerve pathways

Many learned, but many inherited, imprinted on our DNA

Imagine brain as control panel with thousands of dials

Control everything from blood pressure to need for approval, propensity to feel guilt, tendency to be upbeat or gloomy

We are unaware of vast majority of controls

we inherit DNA that sets dials somewhere on the spectrum

but these only a starting point, they are predispositions – not fixed, rarely are we condemned to these predispositions

then our environment dials it higher or lower

our parents, our relationships, our failures and successes, maybe some insights we derived from people close to us

sometimes through on our efforts and cognitive problem-solving we can set a dial it higher or lower

but one thing is clear – feelings run very deep

even though they may have great effect on what we do and say, we are often unaware of them

6. How to understand our feelings?

So how do we understand them?

First step, is to decide to put some effort into it, not going to happen without that – if you want to dig deeper

Second, realize that you are the only one who has access to them

not possible to have electrodes implanted and print out our inner thoughts -- CIA, Russia

Three basic ways– passive reflection, active reflection, conversations with others, therapy is a hybrid

I've talked about passive reflection, such as meditation

Active reflection – actively working on problem-solving

Short-term v. long-term

Long-term is a way of taking time to reflect on why we feel the way we do

Short term is way of taking time, second or two, to reflect on how we are feeling in the moment

Most valuable – if you can do it, is listening to others – irony, that one of your weaknesses is defensiveness, that keeps you from listening

Therapy kind of hybrid, where you do most of the talking

But listening to others, they should do most of the talking

7. Suggest you examine four basic feelings

Could list many more, but these are central

Adequacy or inadequacy – very different from objectively successful, some people who are on the surface very successful feel inadequate

Some signs – feel a need to put people down, to name drop or talk about important things you have done, fabulous trips you have taken, in effort to elevate yourself,

Conversely some people with modest success feel adequate

What causes that?

Self-acceptance key, but that is getting ahead of ourselves

Issue at the moment is just to understand

Need to control your environment – what other people are doing, how they are conducting themselves

Feel anxious if people doing something differently than we would do it

Instinctively loving and forgiving or instinctively negative and skeptical – meet someone, what stands in your mind, what do you say about them later, find it hard to like people, or easy, a or not forgiving

Will Rogers saying – I never met a man I didn't like, unrealistic, but a very appealing idea

Hard to like someone who goes around beheading people

So more aspirational

Instinctively look at positive or negative – go to a restaurant, finding things to like or focus on things not to like – Oaks and Willoughby's perfect – nothing to dislike, but most times there are both positive and negative

One way to get started on self-awareness is to look at these four factors

Again, step 1 is making an inventory, not trying to change anything

8. Conclusion

Self-awareness can be painful – but important step toward self-fulfillment

Helps make progress on other steps

Last point – if you don't particularly like what you find in making your inventory

be forgiving of yourself

If you are working on understanding your feelings, you are doing more than most people ever try to do

Entirely separate issue whether you want to do something about those feelings

Start there and then decide what to do – if anything. Will take up the idea of self-acceptance next time.

If you want to get on path of self-awareness we ask for

1. patients and determination to pursue it
2. courage to face what we find
3. confidence that this path will add to joy and peace in our lives