



Self-Awareness Then Right Action

1.) Quick Quote To Consider

"I think self-awareness is probably the most important thing towards being a champion."
Billy Jean King, 20-time Wimbledon Champion

2.) Self-Awareness Then Right Action

Self-Awareness allows right action. Before you can take effective action to solve a problem or change a situation, you need to truly understand the issue. Are you fixing the real problem or a symptom? Do you have all the information? Is your interpretation of the situation correct? How are you contributing to the situation?

For the last two issues, we've explored the power of self-awareness. In this issue, you'll read the stories of other people, in their own words, who were able to successfully change a challenging situation by using self-awareness.

Contributing to the Challenge

I was managing a person who was underperforming and had a personality very different from my own. As I started to observe my interactions with the person, I became aware of how my actions and in-actions contributed to my challenge. I was shouldering all the responsibility for the employee's poor performance. Although it initially was energizing to pull things out of the fire to save the day, eventually it was tiring and frustrating. Because the person made me feel good about my abilities, I had started to solve her problems for her and not address the issue of her poor performance.

Once I realized how I was enabling her to under-perform by solving her problems for her, I realized that she needed to be the one to solve her own problems. With this insight, I requested her to identify a solution and a personal development plan. From this exploration, she discovered that the job was a wrong fit for her. We then were able to transition her out of the department and help her discover something better suited to her talents.

Truly, self-awareness is the first step to making any change. Without this tool, you really are running in circles without effective or productive outcomes.

2 + 2 = 5

Over the years, I've tried many different approaches to uncover a direction for my career. Although I've been with the same organization and department for 14 years and have been successful, I wanted a career that was more satisfying. I tried everything from career counseling to therapy. Though there have been some pearls of wisdom, none of them seemed to redirect my thinking sufficiently to alter my thought-equation. 2+2 always equaled 5 for me.

My self-awareness patterns have usually involved diagnosing what is wrong and remaining focused on that. By using new assessments, self-awareness and coaching, I discovered a



different way of problem solving for me. This new approach is about highlighting what's right, what I do well and perhaps even excel at. I'm finding that by approaching the issues from this perspective and with more self-awareness, I'm beginning to come up with new and surprising answers. Now 2+2 equals 4.5. Not 5.

Achieving Wholeness

My challenge was both personal and professional. On a personal level, I was struggling with the diagnosis and treatment of a potentially debilitating disease. On a professional level, I was trying to create an independent identity for a division of a company in a specialized niche and very competitive industry.

Stress was aggravating my physical condition and adding to my struggle to manage the transition at work. With self-awareness, I discovered that I was my own worst enemy. I generated unnecessary stress in my life because I wasn't accepting and controlling my disease. It was controlling me! By refusing to change my active lifestyle, I was simply adding to the pain and frustration I was experiencing. It impacted me both personally and professionally.

From this awareness, I changed my lifestyle. Instead of rigorous exercise, I started taking early morning walks. I learned to literally stop and smell the roses each morning. I also changed my work hours to allow me to have more rest when I needed it. I now listened to my body and was rewarded with a healthy body and mind that allowed me to address the challenges that were really important at home and in the office.

I also developed a trusted group of advisors who listened to my frustrations and provided useful feedback that allowed me to take gradual steps toward "leaving the nest" at a more comfortable pace for the parent company. I saw that the relationship was similar to that of a parent letting go of a child leaving home. The parent is simultaneously happy and afraid for the child. The fear is confusing for the child because it can be perceived as a lack of faith in his or her ability to succeed.

With these changes, my health improved and I was now mentally in control. Now I'm working on retraining my mind to accept the limitations and to remember that tomorrow will likely be a better day. Professionally, my division has substantially grown its client base and continues to grow. I now am able to invest more time mentoring my staff and helping them to grow professionally. The benefit to me is that they can now manage more of the workload. The key is a combination of tenacity, confidence, great advice, and a loyal and devoted staff.

In a nutshell, we are our own worst enemies sometimes. The good news is that once we open our eyes to what we can do to effect change in our lives, we can move forward on our journey and feel whole in mind, body, and spirit.

Self-Awareness Then Right Action

I want to thank the three people who shared their stories with us. Their sharing demonstrated confidence, wisdom, and a willingness to contribute to others' growth.

When faced with a challenge, high-achieving executives often want to solve it. Now! We immediately go into action. But action before awareness is not always successful, because we don't understand the deeper issues causing the situation. When our solutions don't work, we're puzzled. Why didn't my solution work? Who or what is stopping my success?

Often we look outward to find a cause for our challenge or problem, instead of looking inward to see how we are contributing to the situation. As many of you have experienced, it's challenging to change others. But you have complete control over changing yourself. Sometimes simple adjustments can have profound impacts.

Becoming self-aware before taking immediate action can increase your successes. As one of our guest writers shared with us, "Then we can actually move forward on our journey and feel whole in mind, body, and spirit."

To learn more about the power of self-awareness and how it can make profound differences in your personal and professional life, please contact Karen Depew at 301.990.6331 or karen@northwoodconsulting.com.