



## SELF AWARENESS-AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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### *Synopsis*

*Self-awareness is one of the most important aspects of a personality development program. In fact it is an essential ingredient of a perfect personal effectiveness plan of an individual. Self analysis comprises of looking into self or trying to learn about oneself in a sincere and honest way and have an holistic approach to know oneself. The question that arises is, how to approach or execute the self analysis plan. The person should have a well defined and practical way of looking into oneself and trying to know more about oneself in this journey of life. There may or may not be an external guide or coach to help an individual to know himself or herself better.*

*Personal effectiveness is an important aspect of an individual's success. The personal development program of an individual starts with Self Awareness which enables to dig into himself/herself and try to know more about self. There are several approaches to know about oneself better. The present article focuses on four simple steps in self awareness which are discussed in detail and could be useful to an individual to achieve effectiveness and personal success.*

### **Key Words**

Self analysis, self awareness, SWOT analysis, personality development, personal effectiveness plan

## ***Introduction***

"Self awareness is accurately assessing ones feelings,interests,values & strengths,maintaining a well grounded sense of self discipline". "self awareness is the capacity for self introspection and the ability to recognise oneself as an individual". It should not be considered as the process of consciousness or introspection."It is the belief in one's capability to organise and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations( Albert Bandura's theory of self efficacy).

It can be used as a social and emotional learning tool to find a spectrum of skills to execute a personal development program with success. The process of self awareness gives us an opportunity to make an objective evaluation of our current behaviour with respect to our internal standards. When we develop a positive attitude and a self belief in our capacity, it drives our behaviour as to how we think,feel,act, react to people and situations. "To know that we know what we know and that we do not know what we do not know is true knowledge".

The essence of personal growth and success is to 'Know oneself'. A person aspiring success should dig into himself and try to understand himself better in terms of identifying one's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Self Awareness is a very extensive topic and to simplify it is a major challenge and this article deals with the subject of self awareness in four dimensions.

1. Self Analysis through SWOT( Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) technique
2. Angela Ruskin's S.P.A.R.K. cycle & Personal Skills set
3. Lawrence Kohlberg's six levels of Moral Development
4. Self Analysis questionnaire

## **SWOT Technique**

Self Awareness using the SWOT technique is perhaps the simplest and the best method to know about self. SWOT refers to Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The objective of doing the SWOT analysis is to identify our strengths and weaknesses which are from inside whereas the opportunities and threats are from the external environment. The most important

aspect to identify in our strengths and weaknesses are whether they are properly aligned with our opportunities and goals.

**Strengths** or positive points would always produce a positive emotion that is invariably authentic. Engaging or harnessing the strengths produces positive emotions like harmony, happiness, satisfaction, joy, sense of pride and fulfillment. A person could be having an array of strengths. If they are not in tune with the goal or do not fit the job or profession one is in, then all the strengths are a waste or just futile. There is no point in boasting of strong points that do not enhance our success on job. They are just ornamental. Always identify the core strengths and harness them in a right way to produce win-win results.

Besides the strengths, an individual should also identify his\her signature strengths, which are unique and special to an individual. According to Martin E P Seligman, author of 'Authentic Happiness' signature strengths are the strengths of character or personality which a person feels he is authentic about. He owns them and feels a unique sense of joy, pride, elation, satisfaction while displaying them. There is a simple method to identify the signature strengths. List out about twenty strengths in the personality and rate them on a scale of 10. The top four or five strengths could be the signature strengths. Check whether the signature strengths are in tune with overall goals and objectives. If they are in tune with the goals then it is as if, half the battle is won.

**Weaknesses** or negative points in our personality should be identified and a committed plan of action should be made to overcome them. Many individuals try to camouflage their weak points or try to hide them under a carpet. As a person aspiring success, we should develop a proactive approach to spot them and overcome them. Find out if the weak point identified becomes a bottleneck on the career path. Remember that every weak point is stumbling block in the career.

**Opportunities** are identified by successful individuals and utilized by them in the best possible way. For example, a person seeking finance as a specialization could look for national and international opportunities with a national corporation or a multi-national corporation in the areas like investment banking, portfolio management, wealth management, project consultancy and a host of other areas of finance.



OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
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### Angela Ruskin’s S.P.A.R.K. cycle & Personal Skills set

According to Angela Ruskin a person has to create or design a personal development portfolio based on six skills sets. 1. Communication Skills 2. Team work & Leadership 3. Self Awareness 4. Problem Solving 5. Organizational Skills 6. Basic & extended skills set and the S.P.A.R.K. cycle.

1. Communication Skills are very essential for the overall success of an individual. Among the communication skills the most discussed skills are the LSRW-Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

2. Team work & Leadership: A team is not formed by just bringing people together and assigning a particular job. All the members should share a collective vision and a fair understanding of what they are supposed to do as a team. The leader has to treat each and every member as a STAR. Star is an acronym for Special, Team Spirit, Awareness (rules, procedures, goals) and Role-clarity.

3. Self Awareness: Identifying one’s strengths and weaknesses, Opportunities and threats is an important aspect of self awareness. Besides knowledge of Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, self awareness also means knowing about our drives, likes and dislikes, values, habits, feelings, emotions.

4. Problem Solving is an important analytical skill which is manifested in the following ways. Finding Problems, Identifying change, Being receptive to change, being flexible and adaptable, drive and initiative, resourceful

5. Organizational Skills –Prioritizing, Planning, Goal Chart, Time Chart, Time management. Planning is very important to apportion the time available and going after the goals in a planned manner. When we are planning we are essentially designing a personal or professional Agenda. Prioritizing, Planning, Goal Chart, Time Chart and Time management help a professional in maintaining a perfect work-life balance or work-work balance.

6. Basic & extended skills set: The extended skill set is an important one and it complements the other five skills that have been discussed before. According to Angela Ruskin, the extended skill set is like a 'benchmark' or 'bread & butter' qualifications like a driving license. Some other skills that constitute the extended skills set are basic IT or computer skills, Cross-Cultural aspects, language skills.

**SPARK** stands for Self Evaluation, Planning, Action, Recording and Keep on Reviewing. It is like a record unique and personal to an individual.



Source: <http://barney.inspire.anglia.ac.uk/minisites/pdp/spark.html>

Based on the personality development skills suggested by Angela Ruskin, the following table-1 is prepared to approach the subject of self awareness.

S.No	Type of skills set	Suggested skills	Skills you possess	Skills to develop
1.	Communication Skills	Listening Speaking Reading Writing Negotiation Assertive Persuasive		
2.	Team work & Leadership	Interpersonal Skills Gregarious Leading people Getting along with people		
3.	Self Awareness	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats		
4.	Problem Solving	Finding Problems Identifying change Being receptive to change being flexible and adaptable drive and		

		initiative resourceful		
5	Organizational Skills	Prioritizing Planning  Goal Chart  Time management		
6.	Basic & extended skills set	Driving  IT or computer skills  Cross-Cultural aspects  Language skills		

*Table 1-Grid prepared based on the 6 skills sets proposed by Angel Ruskin*

### **Lawrence Kohlberg’s six levels of moral development**

Another aspect of self awareness is to identify the ‘level of our moral development’ at which one exists or is working. According to the famous social scientist, Lawrence Kohlberg, there are six ‘levels of moral development’ which are described as follows:

Level-1: We do things because we want to avoid trouble

Level-2: We do things for a reward

Level-3: We do things to please others (to strike our own egos)

Level-4: We do things to obey external rules

Level-5: We do things to be considerate of others because we take care of others’ feelings

Level-6: We do things to live by our own sense of what is right

A proper and thorough self awareness exercise should lead us to identify at the exact level of moral development we are operating or working. It is said that it takes a life time to become a level-6 thinker and it is infact something we should not ignore. We should always strive to reach the level-6 and transform into a model of morality so that we live a level -6 life by choice. We should not act for the sake of recognition or reward but for the pleasure and satisfaction of

executing the things that are right. A person leading a level-6 life will make an impact on the society by his actions and deeds because they are always tuned in for the benefit of the society. The level-6 people are the benefactors to the society.

### Self Analysis questionnaire

S.No	Question	Yes	No	Sometimes	Seldom
1	Do I like myself				
2	Do I know myself?				
3	Do I set the right goals?				
4	Do I respect and treat all individuals the same way				
5					
6	Do I have the competencies required in my field?				
7	Do I have the skills required in my field?				
8	Do I notice imperfections and shortcomings in me?				
9	Do I plan to overcome the shortcomings?				
10	Do I know the opportunities available to me?				
11	Do I know my threats?				
12	Do I feel envious of others?				
13	Do I get irritated easily?				

14	Do I speak lies				
15	Do I bring ego in all my interactions with people				
16	Do I care for people?				
	Do I have a positive attitude towards				
	a. Self				
	b. People				
	c. Situations				
17	d. Job\profession				
	Am I aware of the fact that each shortcoming				
18	could become a threat or stumbling block in my				
	career?				
19	Do I know myself?				
20	Have I set the right goals?				
21	Do I have the competencies and skills required in				
	my field?				
22	Have I noticed imperfections and shortcomings in				
	me?				
	Am I aware of the fact that each shortcoming				
23	could become a threat or stumbling block in my				
24	career?				
25	How do I plan to overcome the shortcomings?				
26	What are the opportunities available to me?				
27	What are my threats?				
28	Do I manage my stress properly?				

29  30	Do I follow etiquettes in my interactions with people?  Have I developed a right attitude and perception?  What do I know about myself?  What is my destination?				
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Table -2 Questionnaire on Self Awareness

A person should make a honest and sincere attempt to answer the questionnaire in the table -2 and find out areas of self improvement. A person may feel uncomfortable in answering the questionnaire but it helps a lot in self improvement and in preparing a personal development plan. For all positive qualities the response should be 'Yes' and for the negative qualities the response should be 'No'.

### Self Awareness Action-Plan

When we are aware of Self it helps us to change our behaviour, change our emotions, by changing our interpretations in our mind. Self awareness is part of our emotional intelligence. It helps in improving our personal, professional and social relationships. The emotional quality of relationships is of utmost importance. If we pay more attention to our emotions then there is a chance that we get a better understanding of what we do, how we act, react and interact, how we are aware of our habits. Honest self evaluation is not just like a magic bullet but it works wonders on our personal growth and enhancement. During arguments do we carry a thought that "I am always right". Then it is time to change our indestructible self righteous stand and start thinking about the situation and try to understand and accept what is right and justified. Don't react emotionally if the other person's views or opinions are different from ours and he does not

agree on any aspect. Anger should not be a default reaction under such situations."When you know better you do better"- Maya Angelou. Spend some time alone and learn to develop your personal resources."- Alexander Reid Martin.

Another important exercise is to constantly monitor our "mental chatter". Be aware of this important aspect of the thought process and try to manage it in a rational way for self improvement. If we do not control the mental chatter it will go on its own without any aim or direction. It happens at each and every waking moment of our life and therefore we must always check and manage out internal conversation or mental chatter. Keep a journal and note down the exact thoughts and find out whether they are routine and or goal directed.

Some of the self improvement exercises are listed below which help an individual to keep track of the success path.

1. Learn to look at ourself objectively in terms of our strengths and weaknesses, whether we are able to take criticism positively and objectively and whether we are very critical of our bad decisions and try not to repeat them
2. Write our own manifesto in terms of strengths and weaknesses, goals and whether the goals can be leveraged with the existing strengths or some new strengths should be developed, and whether the weaknesses are a hindrance to our goals. Find out what are the improvements needed to achieve the goals.
3. Identify the desires or wants and convert them into goals and prepare an action plan to achieve them. Write the decisions and find out the impact of decisions after 6 or 8 months.
3. Keep a journal and list out all decisions and the results
4. Perform a self review at regular intervals and make up the overall personality. It is a difficult and annoying exercise but it is very critical for the success. We always go through our internal monologue or conversation of justifying our actions and responses. Make a honest and unbiased review during the internal conversations. The best way to find peace of mind is to stop overthinking everything.

The following self reflection exercises are suggested to be practiced at the end of each day:

1. What were my thoughts the whole day...average, objective, goal oriented
2. Have I done what I was supposed to as per my time plan.

3. Have I spent time in doing physical exercise
4. Have I lost my temper on any person during the day
5. Have I wasted considerable time in social media
6. Am I in a state of 'Self-Control'.
7. Do I 'Retroflect' my behavior. Retroflection is 'imagining or doing for ourselves what we do to others'.
8. Do I subject myself to online self-assessment test regularly

## **Conclusion**

Instead of thinking about the fruitless actions to satisfy our ego we should always be in a continuous and objective process of self analysis to make improvements to our personality and become effective on all occasions. We should always learn not to blame the environment or the externalities for what we do especially when we encounter the failures.

It is apt to quote Lao Tsu, "Knowing others is wisdom. Knowing yourself is enlightenment". Hence, an individual should make a sincere attempt to pass through the four steps suggested to elevate oneself to a new level. A person has to take responsibility for his thoughts, feelings & actions and should develop a personal development plan based on the answers or things identified as barriers to the individuals growth and try to bring a positive change in life. According to John and Patrice Robson, "Self awareness is the key that unlocks the riches of life".

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