

Developing Self-Awareness Companion Guide

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Introduction

A criteria for powerfully leading others is learning how to lead yourself first. It all begins with you. And you can only direct yourself if you know who you are, what you are capable of, and what you desire. Self-leadership relies on your self-awareness and self-management to guide your beliefs, emotions, and behaviors in the pursuit of your worthy ideals.

Self-leadership hinges on our understanding and self-awareness of our Self as the “Orchestra Director” of our internal orchestra and its instruments, that is, our various parts. When healthy and accessible to us, our highest Self directs the other parts within us to rise and serve us, or to pipe down as the case may be, and to support us in pursuing our desires and goals.

In my #1 bestselling book, *Healing Leadership*, Section 1: “The Secrets to Healing Leadership,” chapters 1 through 11 are all about you—eleven intro chapters exploring your self-awareness, what it means to work and live purposefully, recommending best practices and high-performance habits to improve your Self-leadership and ability to manage your emotions, raise your energy, and boost your creativity and productivity.

Be Self-Aware

You’ve probably heard the expression, “The first step to solving a problem is recognizing it.” Self-awareness is being aware of your emotions, monitoring your needs, understanding your values, managing your energy and strengths, leveraging these strengths in your roles, and monitoring and acknowledging them in others. This text will support you in learning how to build a robust foundation for becoming a self-aware leader.

Being a self-aware leader implies that we are cognizant of how our behaviors, words, and attitudes impact those around us. *Self-awareness* is one of the four components of *emotional intelligence* (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). The other three components are *self-management*, *social awareness*, and *relationship management*.

Understand Your Emotions

Part of self-awareness is sensing, pinpointing, and understanding the emotions you are feeling. This is important because once you notice your emotions, you can then guide how you respond to them—easier said than done you say? One model I’ve found useful in understanding the range of human emotions is the *Emotional Guidance Scale* by Abraham and Esther Hicks. In the *Emotional Guidance Scale*, they identify a range of twenty-two commonly felt emotions, including seven

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groups of positive emotions in the upward spiral and fifteen groups of negative emotions in the downward spiral. (Please Google the *Emotional Guidance Scale* to view the diagram.)

Self-management is another component of emotional intelligence. The key is acquiring the ability to locate your leading emotions and using emotional fitness tools to help you move up the scale to feel a more positive state to operate from. The benefit is that you will be more *response-able* and constructive in how you interact, instead of blowing up and lashing out at the people around you or making poor, critical decisions when you are in a negative emotional state. In the *Emotional Guidance Scale*, the #1 positive emotions group includes joy, knowledge, empowerment, freedom, love, and appreciation. The lowest negative emotions group, #22, encompasses fear, grief, depression, powerlessness, and victimhood. The common emotions you and others variously feel lean toward the middle and lower end of the negative emotion spectrum: #11 overwhelm, #12 disappointment, #13 doubt, #14 worry, #15 blame, #16 discouragement, #17 anger, and #18 revenge. To move up from #18 revenge to a more positive emotion—even within the negative emotions group, for example, to #13 doubt—requires *self-management*.

The most significant takeaway from this discussion is how important it is to understand and tap into your emotions, whatever they might be. After you get a hold of where you are emotionally, the next step is to self-manage those emotions. What I've described is one way to accomplish precisely that.

The last two components of emotional intelligence are *social awareness* and *relationship management*—noticing emotions in other people and using your self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness to build healthy, collaborative relationships. As a socially aware leader in a business setting, you can sense the vibe or energy in the room—when the team is excited, concerned, or a team member seems sad or upset. Leveraging your social awareness, you're able to observe people's emotions based on their behaviors, physical demeanor, body language, expressions, and tones of voice, to name a few. If they're yelling, they may be angry. If they are crying, they're obviously upset, sad, or grieving. At that point, validate what you notice, show empathy, and listen to their concerns in a way that cultivates relationships and addresses the issues at hand.

Why are we bringing up emotions and being self-aware? If we don't acknowledge when we feel a certain way, it will be challenging to recognize when other people are in distress and to

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support them. And if we tend to shove our emotions down to our feet, then we'll be likely to misjudge others who are more attuned and open to expressing their feelings, even in the workplace. Typically, our work environment isn't welcoming of employees displaying emotions. But these emotions have a source; there are bona fide reasons why people cry or display anger at the office. As an emotionally intelligent—self-aware—leader, you must be well equipped to manage and inspire different types of people; you must create an environment at the workplace that doesn't judge people for showing emotions at work. To show up fully, healing leadership requires us to embrace the full spectrum of emotions in ourselves and others, self-manage our emotions, and help our teams self-manage their emotions without losing control of ourselves and becoming disempowered by the feelings. As you notice emotions in others through your social awareness, you will become a more empathetic and influential leader; you will get to the source of the issue and strive to heal it versus ignoring the issue and letting a bad situation fester.

Recognize and Monitor Your Needs & Values

Another aspect of being a self-aware leader is recognizing and monitoring your *needs*. According to Tony Robbins, there are six universal human needs, which I covered in *Fearless Women at Work* and teach to my clients. I believe it's worth reiterating them here in the context of this conversation. Before I highlight them, know that we all have these needs—every one of us; the difference is in the intensity and level that we experience them.

The first need is the need for *certainty*, which includes the need for safety, having a roof over your head, a steady floor under your feet, food to eat, a job, and so on. While certainty is essential for many of us to function productively, we also require *uncertainty*, which refers to variety, diversity, adventure, breaking the routine, spicing things up. We also need *significance*, to feel that we are important and matter to someone or something. As gregarious beings, we also need *love/connection*, a sense of belonging, and if we can't have love, we will settle for connection. The last two needs are *growth* and *contribution*—the need to learn, expand, make progress, be of service, help others outside of yourself, or a social cause.

Typically, two of the six universal human needs are your *primary needs*—these are your main drivers and an invisible force directing your behavior. Before I launched my business, I assessed my human needs through this lens and discovered that my primary human needs at the

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time were certainty and growth. However, these needs seem to be at odds with each other. On the one hand, the potential for personal and professional development in a business of my own seemed extremely exciting and exhilarating. There was also some level of uncertainty in that, which I enjoyed. On the other hand, an intense need for certainty, a steady paycheck, and financial well-being paralyzed me when I thought about trading the relatively stable corporate track I had known as an adult in a professional career to venturing out on my own to run a business from scratch. While reconciling the levels of these conflicting needs (high certainty versus high growth), I realized that I had no chance to pursue my dreams and experience the growth and impact that I craved during this stage in my life unless I lowered my need for certainty.

These insights led me to prepare financially and transition out of the corporate world in a way that supported my need for certainty. Subsequently, I focused on saving even more, consolidating and eliminating expenses, and redesigning my lifestyle to align with my new goals. Being a self-aware leader enables you to understand your needs in different situations. Our needs may vary depending on what we're facing personally and professionally at a given time. And if we're able to notice our needs, we can articulate them and influence our outcomes.

In parallel, like a compass, our *values* guide what we believe, think, say, or do. Another quality of self-awareness is understanding what you value, what matters to you as a leader in your life. Personal freedom, family, gratitude, faith, kindness, communication, integrity, loyalty, contributing, wellness, love of career, and fun are at the top of my list.

Similar to honing in on your emotions, strengthening your understanding of the six human needs and getting clear on your values can result in advancing your relationships by monitoring the needs and values of your team, colleagues, partners, clients, and stakeholders across the organization and externally but within your sphere of influence, including your household and loved ones. It has been beneficial for my clients and my personal life to integrate the human needs and values perspectives into my leadership roles, especially when handling interpersonal conflicts. During discord, we often fail to reflect on what others also need and value. And sometimes, we obsess on satiating our individual needs and values, discounting or neglecting the needs and values of the other party. Our behaviors speak for themselves. The self-aware leader can leverage this empowering tool, seek to name and validate the needs and values of those involved, and then respond with kindness to resolve or alleviate the conflict and move forward positively.

Influence Your Energetic State

I would like to address another feature of your self-awareness, your *energy*. When I was getting divorced back in 2009, seeking answers, healing physically and emotionally, I began to dabble into the field of energy healing and energy medicine. Learning from mentors—including Donna Eden, Barbara Brennan, Tony Robbins, and Sensei Victoria Whitfield—and as a student of energy, I am now more self-aware about how I can positively impact my energetic state. And I'm aware of the power that we each possess to direct our thoughts and energy flow to generate the emotions we desire daily. I learned that unless I first understood how my own energy worked, I couldn't grasp what would cause me to feel excited and joyful one day and unmotivated and low energy the next.

What I continue to learn and fine-tune through daily practice is to put myself in the energetic state that supports my activities throughout the day. One strategy is to focus my thoughts on what I desire, not what I fear, and call out the emotions that naturally help me achieve my goals. What were foreign concepts to me growing up are now a source for managing my mental and physical wellness on a daily basis. Members of the www.ExecutiveBound.com community and visitors can download a daily practice tool and ten empowering emotions directly from our home page. This tool guides you through creating the emotional state that will automatically drive the behaviors you determine will support your success and well-being. This tool is powerful.

As a leader, having self-awareness about your energy level is a tool in your tool belt. Use it to heal how you're showing up in your roles. Get clear on what raises your energy, what lowers it, and how to shift from a low-energetic vibration to a higher one. Engage in gratitude and activities that you enjoy and find delightful. We emanate energy and resonate or clash with it within our environments.

On a business retreat with Sensei Victoria in September of 2020, I learned that “energy work is a source of personal independence.” The more you know about regulating your energy, the more influential you become for yourself and others. The level of energy you bring into a space influences that space. You can become a part of the flow versus operating apart from the natural flow of the room. Once we awaken to the fact that we influence others using our energy, we'll be

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ready to claim it. With our energy, we positively influence the physical or virtual spaces we enter, and therein lies our power to contribute, influence, and impact the places we frequent.

And so, this is how energy works: Whatever state you are in, you put yourself there. What does this mean to you? Notice your patterns—the emotional state you most frequently experience on an average day. Suppose you’ve gotten accustomed to showing up with low energy and a feeling of overwhelm or worry. In this case, you can begin to shift into a more empowering, energetic state by using the tactics laid out in this text. Practice will help you alter this old pattern if it no longer serves you. You possess the ability to create your emotional state. To make any upgrades or shifts from old habits requires boosting your self-awareness first.

I encourage you to begin practicing these concepts while engaging in your personal development. Notice your emotions as you go through your day.

Know Your Superpowers

How do you build your self-confidence? Get crystal clear on your areas of strength and leverage them every day as much as you can. Another characteristic of being a self-aware leader is knowing your areas of strength, or *superpowers*, that is, understanding the qualities and capabilities you possess that you can offer to serve the people around you. Your strengths are the skills you are great at, the abilities you can naturally use or have learned to use over the years. Self-awareness itself is an area of strength, for example, knowing when you have reached the end of your skill set so that you can ask for support or learn something new.

We have a wide range of strengths in our area of expertise, whether finance, operations, compliance, legal, technology, education, and the sciences. Your areas of strength are at the core of your personal brand. In a nutshell, your *personal brand* is what people say about you when you leave the room or how people who know you describe you to their colleagues and friends. If you were to ask someone, “Who could I talk to about marketing for my small business?” And the person says, “You should talk to Ginny about that,” that is part of your personal brand—people relate to you as an expert in a particular area. Unfortunately, if you have a reputation of *not being* self-aware or clueless, that’s also part of your brand. When you know your areas of strength and you’re able to articulate them as well as own them and live them consciously, others around you can count on that and recommend you to others who may need your expertise in that area.

As you may have heard, when you overuse your strengths, they can become a weakness. Therefore, being aware of where and when you are overexerting your strengths and the need to pull back are also essential. For example, as a coach, I've trained extensively to help my clients embrace their *limiting beliefs*, or "shadows," as we call them in the profession. These "limitations" are self-imposed hurdles or challenges that seem real to us until we dismantle them. While coaching, if I overuse this pathway, I may be missing out on using other techniques to help my clients move forward, for example, expanding their perspective, experiencing the moment, envisioning the future, and so on.

What are some of your top strengths and areas of expertise? Become self-aware about those because knowing them will allow you to bring them forward whenever you need to. Raise your hand and engage when the opportunity to use your strengths presents itself. Just as valuable for you and your organization is also knowing when to keep your hand down. If you realize that your expertise is not aligned with a new initiative or opportunity or that you get drained by the core work required, that is an excellent time to bow out.

As we discussed, noticing your emotions, managing them, being *response-able* by responding constructively; and acknowledging your needs, values, energy, strengths, and opportunities to contribute or grow will enhance how you monitor them in other people more effectively. These tools will help you make better decisions on your behalf and on the behalf of the people who rely on your leadership. As you hone your self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management skills and apply them to your work teams and use them to enhance all your relationships, you can support yourself and others at a whole new level.

Empowering Questions for Reflection

1. Whatever state you are in, you put yourself there. What does this mean to you?
2. What needs are you looking to meet?
3. What values support your efforts?
4. What is your energetic state or level on a typical day?
5. How do you build your self-confidence?
6. What are some of your top strengths and areas of expertise?

Resources

1. Emotional Intelligence 2.0 (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).
2. TEDGlobal talk by Amy Cuddy, “Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are”
3. Emotional Guidance Scale (Abraham and Esther Hicks) – Google to see diagram.
4. Healing Leadership: How to Lead, Love, and Thrive in Business and Life – www.healingleadership.com.
5. Self-Awareness Workbook, additional assessments, training videos, and more! www.executivebound.com/wind