

# Awareness

MARCH 2021



“Sentio, ergo sum.” - I sense therefore I am.



Skilled Helpers Collaborative

Individual Perspectives  
Collective Meaningful Content

**Every Month a New Topic!**



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# Awareness

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Did you know, we are the only species who know that they know? Thanks to the development of our conscious we were able to discover this. Hence the choice of this month's topic. Discover what the Skilled Helpers of this wonderful collaborative project have to say about Awareness...

Resilience, change and even love are topics we as human beings are aware of. In addition, we can be aware of an act, such as being aware of the effort you take each month to read our collaborative articles.

### The Skilled Helpers Collaborative

The Skilled Helpers Collaborative is an initiative aiming to bring meaningful content to you. Various skilled helpers from different backgrounds sharing their perspectives regarding a specific topic.

Grateful for their willingness to participate in this collaborative project, this month's contributors are:

Mathias Sager - Psychologist  
Rika Cossey - Transformational Coach  
Kally Tay - Freelance Expert  
Sujit Gogoi - Career Clarity Coach  
Claire Rajan - Life Coach & Enneagram Coach

Did you know, we are the only species who know that they know? Thanks to the development of our conscious we were able to discover this. But does our conscious make us aware? Does awareness equal consciousness? Or does being aware have everything to do with mindfulness and / or intelligence? Maybe awareness is a behaviour, an activity or a choice?

Discover what the skilled helpers of our wonderful collaborative project have to say about Awareness. Read the articles below and if it resonates, let us know by leaving a comment.

Don't hesitate to Connect with one of the Skilled Helpers, in case you could use guidance.

Enjoy this month's copy!

Warm regards,  
**Patty Wolters**  
Skilled Helper  
[www.pattywolters.com](http://www.pattywolters.com)



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## **TOWARDS A BROADER AWARENESS (Introduction to a tool of self-reflection)** by Mathias Sager

### **Missing global awareness**

Looking at people's stress and anguish, the conflict between societies and how the environment gets maltreated, it seems that the human ability of mentally embracing, being aware of a global collective as a species did not keep pace with the globalization of the world. Is there a lack of a kind of mentality (respectively, awareness) in the sense of how populations connect themselves to a broader context like all humanity?

### **Transcending the narrow world of the ego**

It appears challenging to bridge between individual and collective levels of reasoning. However, the feeling of interconnectedness is essential in contributing to health and well-being. Indeed, research findings suggest that psychological well-being is dependent upon one's connection to a broader, even widely anonymous social scope that comes with a sense of meaning in life. Carl Jung spoke about different parts of the self that transcend the 'ego' self and that these need to be integrated to complete a harmonious inner self. The power of imagination can overcome an inflexible ego-centered mind. Imagination is also required to imagine future events, which constitutes (besides recalling matters of the past) a part of the ability to mentally 'travel in time'. If people don't imagine the future, their sense of self, and the perceived agency diminishes.

### **The social and temporal dimensions of awareness**

Moreover, it is a person's relation to the social world and time that can determine his or her meaning-making. In other words, it is a core construct of beliefs in these dimensions that forms a so-called 'worldview'. 'Sensemaking on a worldview level' and 'mental schemas' are appropriate related terms at the cognitive level to determine what one is aware of. Hence, awareness seems to be linked to such mental schemas as they help to understand how people self-reflect on their socio-temporal worldviews.

### **Reflecting on one's worldview**

Worldviews are arrangements of beliefs used to create meaning of one's experience of reality. From a cognitive perspective, worldviews involve 'thinking systems' including intricate patterns of thoughts and beliefs that integrate as an interactive whole. Beliefs are mental constellations that stand for relationships between categories, which determine how one experiences (i.e., is aware of) the world. For example, social worldview schemas would represent an individual's beliefs about the social world. To mentally build a worldview, the abilities to learn and imagine, all of which require reflection, are essential. And humans do reflect on the continuum of time, a mental process that involves thinking about the past, present, and future.

**Meaning-making through awareness about one’s socio-temporal scope of thinking**

Accordingly, what results from combining thinking about social relations and time, is a socio-temporal matrix (see Figure 1) that can be used a framework to identify and visualize worldviews, and that can facilitate the exploration of psychological effects related to a person’s meaning-making and well-being based on their socio-temporal scope of awareness.

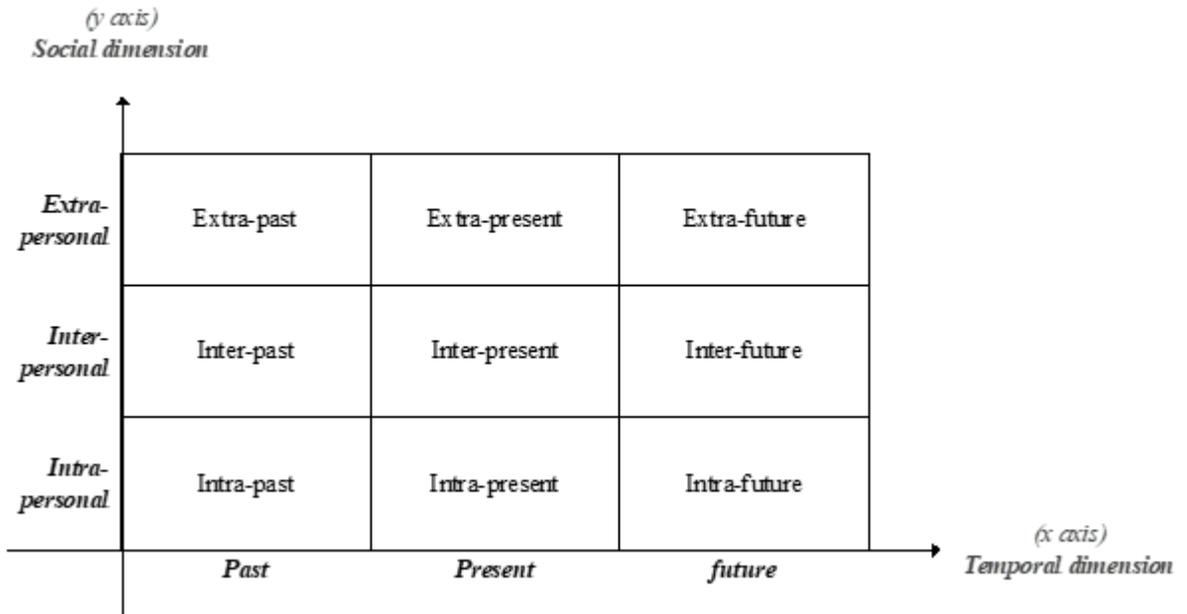


Figure 1. The socio-temporal matrix of worldview schemas

**Socio-temporal worldview schemas**

The nine fields of the matrix can be used to inquire about socio-temporal mental schemas, which means the scope and configuration of a person’s awareness. An individual’s worldview schema is expected to consist of a specific set of matrix fields, depending on whether one’s belief system emphasizes certain socio-temporal mental states over others. For example, one may emphasize other-related extra-past (e.g., socio-cultural upbringing), behave in an inter-present, rather relationship-dominated way, while focusing, however, on a self-oriented intra-future. Such a socio-temporal mental worldview schema might link to specific meanings as, for example, a more independent (i.e., denoted by the intra-past instead of an inter- or extra-past) and other-oriented (i.e., depicted as the extra-future rather than an inter- or intra-future) cognitive socio-temporal worldview preference.

**A tool for self-reflection**

In that sense, the socio-temporal matrix provides for a tool, respectively a mental map to support the navigation of socio-temporal worldviews, which, again, represents the scope and configuration of one’s awareness. The matrix has proven to be useful for self-reflection and fostering awareness about oneself and others.

You can use a free online version of the tool at <https://mathias-sager.com/the-novel-self-reflection-tool-online/>

Connect with Mathias Sager, psychologist @ [www.mathias-sager.com](http://www.mathias-sager.com)

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## Awareness

by Rika Cossey

### **“Sentio, ergo sum.” - I sense therefore I am.**

I came across this phrase in a workshop recently and it made me pause. "I sense therefore I am" - what does that mean to me? What does it mean for me to sense something and how does this sensing connect to me as a human being on this planet Earth today? How aware do I have to be to sense myself, other people, and the universe around me?

I work a lot in the realm of climate change and nature (re-)connection. One of my signature coaching moves is to be outside. I like going for walks while I talk to clients and colleagues using my phone and headset. I have even participated in workshops while I was walking my dog. Being outside and moving, generally gives me better access to my thoughts. I think and create much better when I'm outside.

### **Boxes and senses**

I have a hard time explaining this feeling of open space in connection with my thoughts to anyone. It's an experience I can only share but not define. When I'm inside, in front of my screen (as I am right now), I can feel boxed in. But when I'm outside, the possibilities seem endless. Sometimes I can even feel ideas shrinking as soon as I sit down and face "reality".

When I'm outside I sense with every one of my sense: I feel the cold air on my skin; I see the open sky and squint at the sun, I smell freshly cut trees and the soil, I hear birds chirping and deer running through the undergrowth, I taste ... not much really. I am aware of what is going on around me and in me when I'm outside. I pay attention to what's going on because I need to know where I'm going and what's happening around me. This awareness is what nature demands of me.

And then I step into the house and I rarely have this demand on my senses. On the contrary, if I smell, feel, hear or see something unusual, my alarm system goes off. Indoors is supposed to be awareness-free time. It'd supposed to be the time where security prevails and where we can live our lives.

And yet, I am a different person indoors from outdoors - I'm less aware, less creative, less focused, less ... me.

### **Choices**

I know that I live an extremely privileged life today. I can choose to be indoors or outdoors. My ancestors didn't have that choice. Their outdoors might have been life-threatening and their indoors might have been sickening. Today, my outdoors and my indoors are equally enjoyable and safe. And I know that both are available to me at all times - I can choose to be where I feel most comfortable. I can choose indoor safety to outdoor thrill and uncertainty. And I know that we, as human beings, spend more time indoors than ever before today.

I sense there I am - I'm beginning to wonder if we aren't blocking our senses when we spend too much time indoors. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting lockdowns have brought many people face-to-face with their lack of freedom to be outdoors. Relatively suddenly the awareness grew that there is more to life than four walls and a roof. The reports of people hearing birds, seeing wildlife, and feeling sunshine on their faces after long periods inside are a clear indication. We need to employ our senses to feel that we are alive.

And I think this awareness of everything surrounding us has been (and continues to be) one of the positive outcomes of lockdowns. When we stop sensing (or when we are forced to stop), we lose touch with ourselves, with the elements that make us human. We need to feel, see, hear, smell, even taste our outdoors to become one with ourselves.

### **Being aware of sensations**

Putting our senses into the realm of our awareness, into the moment when we are fully alert of our

surrounds and ourselves, is the moment we can be who we truly are. When I see a moose jumping across my path, I'm astonished by its grace, beauty and, frankly, size. I can feel my heart racing and I can hear my eyes rushing. Time stops and my thoughts are disrupted. I am alive and it's wonderful to be here. And I am who I truly want to be.

Nature offers us a break from sense-free indoor time every day. It's just a few steps to a world where you can sense and therefore you are.

**Connect with Rika Cossey, Transformational Coach @ [www.rikacossey.com](http://www.rikacossey.com)**



## Why We Need More Awareness On Workspace Abuse

by Kally Tay

In recent years, there is a growing movement that is advocating for the elimination of workspace abuse. Cases where employees were abused by their fellow employees have been increasing in recent years, with some being so severe that it has caused companies to be under scrutiny.

While there is some action done by companies to stop it, it is clear that it is a culture that continues to persist. But why is it happening despite calls for it to end? What can be done to make it an issue that companies must react to immediately?

- Bullying in the Workplace is a Taboo HR Subject

One of the major reasons why workspace abuse persists is that it is a subject the HR wants to avoid tackling at all costs. There can be many reasons why this is the case. It could be because of the “power” held by those involved, especially those who bully the victim. If the bully has an important position in the company, HR will have a nightmare trying to replace them and not get the leadership to pressure them into laying off the issue. It is also possible that some HR teams or the company do not have a clear policy on workspace abuse.

- Awareness means more people can self-protect

Whichever the reason may be as to why HR doesn't want to tackle any bullying claims in the workplace, it is important that employees take a stand against it. Some victims do not report their situation because they are not aware of the company's anti-workspace abuse policies. By building awareness, these people will be able to protect themselves and find support if needed. It will also open discussions on how others can help protect those who are victimized without fearing possible retaliation from those who abuse or bully others.

- Train colleagues and managers to detect signs of bullying

One should also launch or request training for everyone to participate. There are special training courses to combat workplace abuse, and they include ways on how to identify workspace abuse as it happens, how to stop it and how to resolve it. Some training courses may even help people discover what behaviours should be avoided to prevent bullying and empower others to report bullying cases without fear.

- Allow abuse to be anonymously reported

Some victims of bullying and workplace abuse don't want to report their situation because they fear that they will be ostracized for speaking out, which can lead to further abuse. Others don't want to report because the ones who are bullying them are more powerful than them. Those who see bullying do not report because the bullies may turn against them and transform them into victims. Some may not want to get involved at all and ignore what they see before them.

In this case, it is important to have communication and support systems that will allow these victims to report abuse situations. Ask your company to set up a hotline that anyone can dial to speak about abuse cases or get help if they feel they are being targeted. If that is not possible, look for organisations who can provide assistance and list down their contact details so everyone in the workplace can get help. Surveys can also help employees raise their concerns regarding bullying, especially when they see someone being bullied or experiencing it.

- HR and Managers to take reports of abuse seriously

If companies want workspace abuse to end, HR and managers should change their stance regarding the issue and take each report seriously. HR officers and managers are keen to get everyone working productively to keep the company growing. However, if workers are not happy because of the toxic and abusive work environment, productivity will decrease and result in unhappy workers. If it continues unresolved, the company may lose the precious talents they need to get the company to flourish.

If you are the HR officer or the team leader, listen to the discussions in the workplace and try to get to know everyone's position. You can sit down with them, hear out their concerns and find a solution that everyone can agree on. You should also be a model for the rest of the employees to emulate, especially when dealing and working with others.

- Openly discuss the effects of workplace abuse on individuals

Finally, workspace abuse is very serious and can have lasting impacts on its victims. When it comes to their health, victims of workspace abuse can experience anxiety, high stress levels, panic attacks and even ulcers. Some may even show a loss of energy and high blood pressure, which can lead to serious health complications in the future. With their physical and mental health declining due to abuse, they will slowly lose their motivation to work and find it hard to focus because all they think about is how to get away from their bullies. Some may even feel isolated or trapped in their situation, further affecting their mindset.

Have regular talks to discuss the effects of workplace abuse with the entire team. You can invite an expert to speak about these impacts so that employees who may have been victimized by abusers can ask questions. If you can't do these talks, have resources available for everyone to read and discuss with each other. Remember to be sensitive when discussing these issues and don't judge others if you see them react to the topic being addressed.

If we want our workspace to stay productive and welcoming for all, we must do our part in ensuring that no one will be subjected to abuse. Whether you are a regular employee or the team leader, it is crucial that you step in and lead the initiative to fight against it. As more and more people become aware of the impacts of workplace abuse, there will definitely be changes in the workplace that will improve it for the better.

**Connect with Kally Tay, Freelance Expert @ [www.middleme.net](http://www.middleme.net)**

## Awareness

by Sujit Gogoi

Awareness means focusing our attention on self as well as on our outside environment at a particular moment. Self-awareness simply means being aware of our own thoughts, feelings, emotions, and our actions. It can also be defined as a skill that we cultivate over time which helps us to make better decisions in life.

Although self-awareness serves as a powerful guidance for making almost every important life decision such as career, relationships, etc., unfortunately, it is something that is rarely taught in schools or colleges, or even at our homes. Being aware of ourselves helps us to know what works best for us. We get to know our values, passions, interests, strengths & weaknesses which helps us to better navigate throughout our life. Not only that, it also helps us to stand strong in times of adversities.

While we are growing up, we might not be aware of what we like, what we dislike and how our actions impact ourselves and the outside world. We go about acquiring things that we think would give us happiness until we realised that happiness received then was just for a short period of time. We take actions that negatively impact ourselves or our environment.

However, being open and having an attitude of learning & growth opens the door to self-awareness. Challenges can no longer remain an obstacle to our visions but can be a way to be more self-aware and better understanding of self.

### What are the Benefits of Self-Awareness?

- 1) Creates more fulfillment in life by aligning your thoughts and actions with your ultimate vision.
- 2) Increases job satisfaction by better utilisation of the strength and working on the weaknesses.
- 3) Improves personal and professional relationships by managing your emotions effectively.
- 4) Helps to become an effective leader by being more empathetic and having a better understanding of what the followers want from you.
- 5) Increases motivation at the workplace by finding out your passions.

### How can we improve self-awareness?

- 1) By learning from mistakes and challenges instead of regretting or complaining about it.
- 2) By practicing mindfulness. Spending most of the time being present (For instance, observing thoughts, feelings, emotions or actions objectively without any judgement) will help to develop self-awareness.
- 3) Spending a few hours a day with our own selves is another way to develop self-awareness.
- 4) Reading books that we find interesting can also help us to improve self-awareness. It can be fiction as well as nonfiction.
- 5) By keeping a daily journal. Journaling about the learnings, challenges, happy moments during the day is another best way to develop self-awareness.

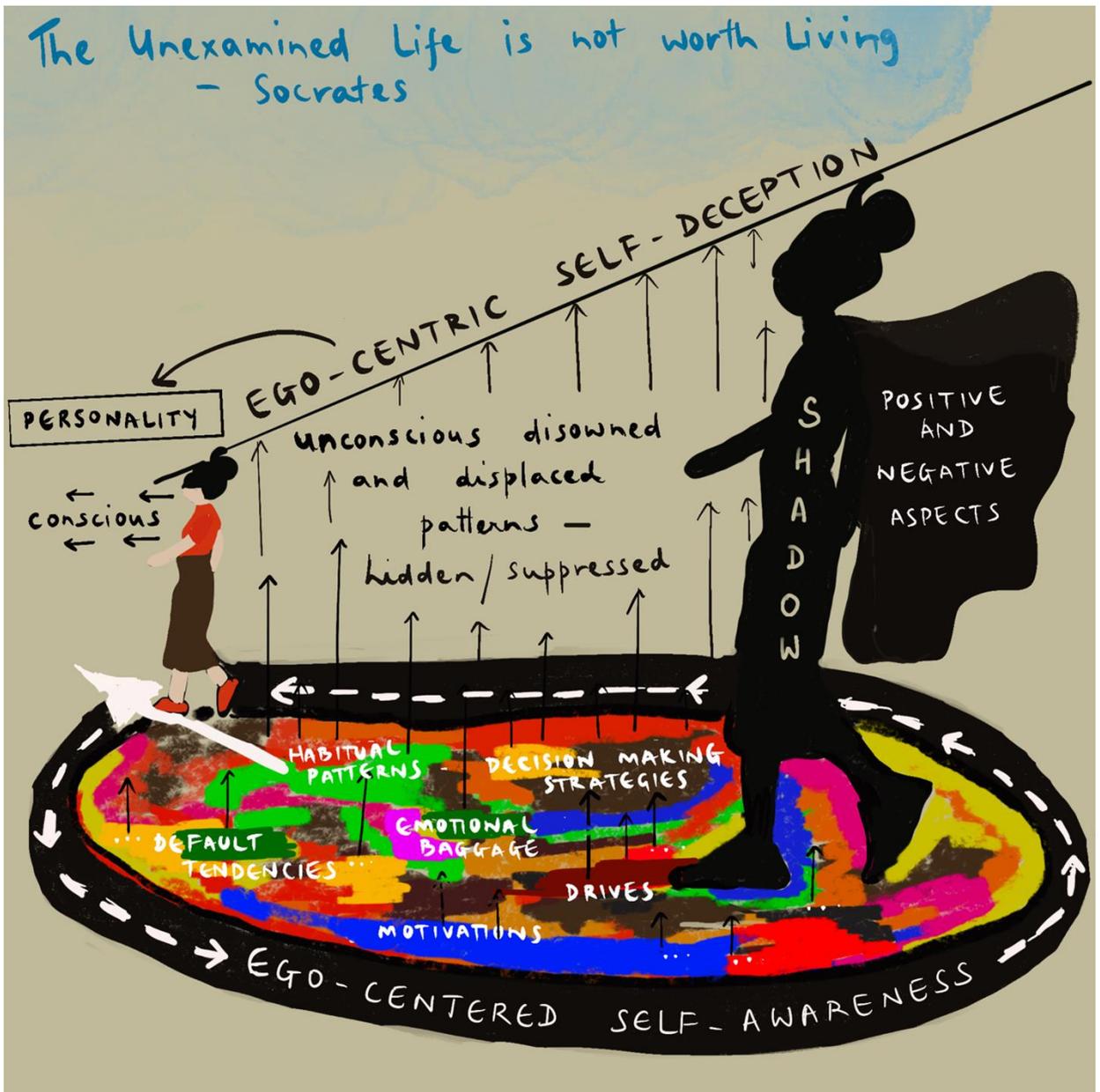
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## Awareness

by Claire Rajan

The Unexamined Life is not Worth Living – Socrates



Awareness is multifaceted and can be dealt with in many ways and at many levels. Given, that I tend to focus on how things, situations, circumstances, events and relationships impact me directly, I would like to approach awareness through a personal lens and how it relates to individual egocentricity.

We navigate our personal lives via many dimensions - the spiritual, physical, material, personal, interpersonal etc. We are each endowed with capabilities, strengths, shortcomings, the will to act, minds to think and heart through which we express. As such humans have a lot going on to make sense of both within ourselves and our perceived reality. Compound this with rapid stages of growth - life appears very demanding.

The process by which we try to make sense of our lives in a way ties into awareness, in particular, Self-awareness.

Self-awareness explains my current state, my past and a possible future like nothing else does.

Growing awareness has helped me understand myself better - what I know about myself, what I don't know about myself, what others seem to know about me and what I still need to discover about myself, which is referred to as the shadow.

A considerable amount of my time is spent focusing on how to increase my self-awareness and consequently I have also questioned how egocentricity plays into this type of relentless inward focus.

After all, if I focus so much of my time and energy on myself, isn't that highly ego-centric?

If we really think about it, each of us is highly egocentric. We are all always thinking about ourselves all the time. Whether it be in relation to our individual story, work, relationships, time, efforts, focus, purpose, goals and visions. It stems from a need to make sense and meaning of our lives. Even when we are helping another, it is because at some level it offers us a sense of purpose and value. Towards this end, we are able to share ourselves with other people too. When we are focused on creating a vision for our lives and accomplishing goals, it offers us the sense that we are using our time and resources usefully. We can adequately justify our focus as helping others but at a fundamental level it is tied to us. We cannot take ourselves out of the equation, however hard we try.

So, if we are ego-centric in that we focus on ourselves at an individual level, where does self-awareness fit in?

My investigations have led me to believe it offers a healthier way of dealing with our egocentricity. From one perspective, it helps us to come to terms with who we are and how we can change for the better and balance our needs with the needs of others.

Without self-awareness, we are consumed by our egocentricity. Within this perspective, we are unable to differentiate our needs with those of others and we might be very well helping ourselves at the expense of others. This might be underpinning our behavior however altruistic our actions and motivations might appear to be on the surface. We are driven by a need to meet our own needs above all else.

Let us now consider what lies at the other end of self-awareness – it is self-deception. Self-deception is a common ego-based defensive mechanism that we employ automatically to survive from our earliest days. In having to deal with challenging situations, our defensive strategies come into play and we learn to cope. Given we all possess an ego that is a defensive structure we learn ways to deal with life as it is presented to us. This form of dealing might not necessarily be the most effective for our overall wellbeing.

We learn to pretend and learn helplessness. We learn how to manipulate and get our way with others. We pretend to be okay even when we are not. We suppress our feelings even when it is dangerous to hold onto unwanted emotion. Each of us within our individual circumstances use our readily available defensive mechanisms to function and cope. Over time, such seemingly innocent and common processes lead to our habitual patterns. We soon become unconscious to our maladaptive strategies and fall into a form of self-deception. We deceive ourselves in believing coping is thriving and being okay is all there is. We maintain our lives by putting on all sorts of masks to survive, cope and fit in. As we grow older the patterns of self-deception are so automatic, we don't even realize we are using them. We just begin to accept many of these strategies as part of our personality.

So, what is holding us together within a false sense of security is self-deception that offers us the promise of survival.

As humans we also come with a whole lot of needs, wants and desires. Equipped with an egocentric structure and self-deception in place we go about getting our needs met. When we live in self-deception we do not recognize how much we remain shut off from ourselves.

I use the example of the popular model called “The Drama Triangle” to demonstrate how self-deception blinds us. The model highlights three roles we might readily adopt to get our needs met. The victim who is being victimized, the villain who victimizes. The villain does this by denying the needs of the victim or taking advantage in some way. Then, the rescuer who satisfies his/her own need for being useful by keeping the victim in need of them. It is when we are facing life's challenges that we are most often in survival mode. The challenge might be stressful and beyond our current capability to handle...and without realizing it we step into one of these three roles.

Within certain contexts, we behave like a victim, in others we behave as a villain, and yet in some others we play the rescuer. The drama in our everyday lives is the consequence of us being driven by the play of our own egocentricity tied to self-deception, in trying to get our needs met, along with life's/other's pressing demands.

The alternative to self-deception, is self-awareness. By noticing our self-deception and thereby increasing self-awareness we are giving ourselves the opportunity the shift from egocentricity to what I consider as ego-centeredness.

Ego-centeredness is a term I use to describe when we can stay focused on ourselves in order to discover the many ways, we are self-deceptive. It offers us the promise of living instead of coping and pretending.

Among so many other things, awareness helps us understand how we are wired, our default tendencies, habitual patterns, deeper motivations, emotional baggage, drivers, challenges, the choices we make, decision-making strategies, the needs we want to meet both for ourselves and others and so much more.

Life without a doubt can be periodically challenging, and we each have to grow up fast. And so, we do. However, we not only grow up fast we also land up moving fast. In moving fast, we think fast, in thinking fast we cope and do not pause to consider the ramifications of coping. We don't realize the importance of slowing down and holding space for ourselves to really understand what is driving us outside our conscious awareness. In moving fast, we act from our habitual unexamined patterns that have come into existence based on our past conditioning, inherited world views, and self-deceptive egocentric defensive strategies.

Born in egocentricity we unconsciously perpetuate drama because it helps us get our needs met. The problem remains when we do not become mindful and pay attention to ourselves in a manner that questions and examines the self-deception that has come to run our lives.

What might offer some resolution to many of our personal dilemmas is a reorientation to ego-centered self-awareness.

From a place of ego-centeredness we can hold more space for ourselves. We can slow down and consider all that we are and have become and what we are capable of becoming. We can engage with our own life using a truly unifying perspective.

This unifying perspective that self-awareness offers, speaks to me like this: "me, my needs, you, your needs...and I don't have to meet my needs at your expense, because I am willing and capable of meeting my own needs". This unifying perspective that seems to grow with self-awareness also functions to reduce much of the unnecessary everyday drama.

**Connect with Claire Rajan**, Life Coach & Enneagram Coach @ [www.clairerajan.com](http://www.clairerajan.com)



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