The Skill of Self-Awareness / Self-Regulation
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Self-Awareness/Self-Regulation

SKILL DEFINITION

Sorts out strengths and weaknesses of self fairly accurately. Can identify one's own feelings and emotions. Has the ability to differentiate between subtleties in one's own emotions while understanding the cause of these emotions and the impact they have on the thoughts and actions of oneself and others. Willing to admit ignorance or lack of knowledge and understanding. Not defensive. Willing to be challenged, to listen to ideas and values of others, even though different from own. Recognizes the kinds of challenges she or he likes most. Admits personal mistakes, learns from them and moves on. Ability to be fully present in any moment and employ a style that is open, flexible and confident. Is flexible, and able to question one's own assumptions and perspectives. Able to pay attention to one's own intuition and how one's body is responding to external events and communication. Able to make decisions for appropriate extension of own energy in interacting with others so that appropriate "boundaries" are set and the interaction is well-balanced. Sees many ways to interact with others, and chooses in the moment what is most effective. Uses humor effectively to create lightness and energy. Confidently shifts perspectives and experiments with new possibilities for own action. Demonstrates confidence in working with strong emotions, and can self-manage and not be overpowered or enmeshed by others' emotions.

PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

We recommend that you scan through this list and choose as many activities to support your skill development that you can honestly adapt to your situation and commit to try. This may be all, or one.

1. Get involved with a group of your colleagues in a dialogue about openness at work. Look carefully at what are the "undiscussables" in your organization. Work through a "Left-Hand Column" exercise (consult your coach) that you will personally facilitate. Complete the "cost-benefit analysis" form on the "Left-Hand Column" undiscussables in your organization's culture. Chart the learnings for the group and then make a list for yourself as a reminder of the necessity for always being as open as possible.

2. Start a "Dialogue group" for exploring how to suspend assumptions while you inquire into a subject of interest. This could be a lunch group, or a team you are responsible for. Ask your coach about how to set this up.
3. As you sit in a team meeting, a feedback session with a direct report, or you listen to a teleconference, try to check your thoughts out. Are you totally in the present? Or are you reflecting on concerns you have about the future? Worried about how what you are hearing will connect with what you believe needs to happen? If you are not able to be an observer of the way that your thoughts are moving, then you are not staying present, and are "hooked" by your own agenda. Practice being able to get "unhooked." Review mindfulness exercises. Spend a bit of time on this each day.

4. Work on becoming aware of the stillness you can feel in your inner energy field. Try to think with your whole being---your body, feelings, and thoughts in a unified centered fashion. Keep noting this feeling and see if you can call it up whenever you need it.

5. Ask your coach to spend time with you exploring your values and attitudes about your management/leadership challenges. Being open requires that you be in close touch with your most fundamental beliefs and mental models. Using the SKL Development Log, you can design specific experiential exercises to get at your core mental frameworks.

6. Express your point of view, even if you sense you may be in the minority. Others may have the same thought but also be reluctant to challenge the group.

7. Depersonalize your opinions. If your opinions are challenged, respect that it is a difference of opinions, not personalities.

8. Be willing to say no clearly and directly. This is as much a part of being open as being able to say yes, as long as you are in total awareness of what you are open or closed to. Look carefully at your beliefs and how they influence what you actually say yes and no to. (See SKL unit on "Boundary Setting.")

9. Question whether you are able to delegate, or whether you need to work to let go of some of what comes across your desk. How are you going to discuss delegation with your boss? What do you need to practice to have this conversation? (See SKL units on Delegation and Communicator Role). Work to list things that you can safely say "no" to and practice how you are going to do this.

10. Practice identifying your own feelings and intuitions, by asking others in a meeting, "How do you feel about the direction we are taking on this?" or "What is your intuition/gut telling you about the decision we are making?" Getting others reactions can help you get better in touch with your own.

11. Identify the causes of your colleagues' emotions and how their emotions impact their buy-in to a decision. This will give you information you need to predict how your colleagues will react in the future and strengthen your own sense of awareness.
12. Work on using the right emotion to support different tasks, and at the right time. Experiment with different techniques or pay attention to what makes you feel a wide range of emotions. Can you "call-up" an awareness of somberness of happiness, of anger, peace, joy, etc.? Then practice putting yourself in these moods during your workday for certain tasks: slightly somber for focus on analysis, happiness for support in brainstorming or creativity.

13. Discuss the issue of integrity with a friend or confidante. Be willing to question whether you are staying "true" to your own sense of deeper "knowing" and your higher-level values.

14. For a week, set aside a certain time during the day when you can have absolute quiet, (at your desk, or in a chair), and see if you can identify how you have been feeling (not thinking) about the actions you are taking. Are they consistent with what you understand about your physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual needs? Record your perceptions to deepen this exercise. Note how your stress level is accelerating or decreasing your own sense of awareness and ability to stay in the present moment.

15. If there are times when you feel less optimistic, take note of when these occur. When are you triggered into pessimism? Can you establish any pattern to this? (Note: journaling about this for at least a month, or using the SKL Evaluation Log to check on your progress can help reinforce your attention to these patterns). Seek feedback from close friends, colleagues about what patterns they may have noted relative to your emotions.

16. Take any one or number of personal feedback tools on your personality preferences and emotional needs, and EQ: EQi-2.0, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, The Hermann Brain Dominance Indicator, FIRO-B, Motivation Assessment Profiler, etc. These tools will support your seeing yourself with greater objectivity and awareness. Adding 360 feedback such as an EQ-i2.0 360, or robust Leadership 360 increases the opportunity to raise your understanding of how your behaviors are perceived and understood by others.

TRAINING PROGRAMS

1. "Positive Neuroplasticity Training," by Rick Hanson, Ph.D.  
   www.rickhanson.net; https://beingwellinc  
   See information here about this training program that supports working with neuroplasticity to learn brain-saavy ways to feel more confidence, compassion and inner peace, awakening your self-awareness.

2. "The Essentials of Credibility, Composure and Confidence." (800) 873-7545,  
   www.enroll@skillpath.net  
   A one-day seminar from SkillPath. How to project competence, and professionalism. How to
keep your perspective under pressure. How to maintain your sense of self-worth and self-assurance.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Begin a personal journal. Write in this daily for several months, always working to express your real feelings or emotions. At the end of the second month, review all your entries and write a "Master Entry" on the subject of your openness.

2. Meditation is a well-recognized tool for becoming self-aware because it allows you to see and understand your thoughts and feelings in a more objective fashion. Get instruction on meditation and take this up as a regular practice.

3. Pick three people: one who you feel positive about, one who you feel very negative about, and one who is "neutral." Think through why you may have the feelings that you do about each of these people. Ask yourself if it is truly something that they are doing, or is it something that you are feeling for other reasons that may or may not be logical - perhaps this person stirs a memory of a good, or bad experience. Perhaps you had a chance to discuss something with one of your choices and their response was particularly gratifying or upsetting to you personally. Notice your own thoughts carefully, and see if you can analyze from where they come.

4. Get involved in a growth or consciousness-raising group where the expectation is that you will communicate your feelings and ideas with candor and open-mindedness.

5. In uncomfortable situations, work to uncover the source of your discomfort. See if you can decide what makes it uncomfortable for you without judging the source. Look at where the discomfort resides in your body.

6. Work on recognizing your own emotions by playing music from different sources and ideally different genres. "Shuffle" these so that each piece will get randomly played. As each piece plays, let yourself feel everything that the song elicits. Do not try to screen any part of the emotion out. Journal about what you are feeling and experiencing with each song for about 30 minutes. Concentrate on articulating the feeling and what you are experiencing for each
A piece of music. Recognizing your own feelings will support you in using these with greater awareness with others and recognizing their feelings as well.

**SUGGESTED READING**

This bibliography includes classics on this leadership competency, as well as newer material. We recommend that you scan the list and choose the one or two books or articles that can really get you started on becoming an authority on this subject. Even scanning the material should support your strengthening this skill.

   The Power of Inner Choice is a revolutionary 12-week course in book form that brings readers to a new level of self-awareness, while giving pragmatic tools to actually shift their lives.


   A succinct treatment of principles that will truly support Self-Awareness.

   Each of the Habits promotes self-awareness and self-regulation.

   Buddhist practices support self-awareness.


   Gardner shows that we change our minds gradually, in identifiable ways that can be actively and powerfully influenced.


   Emotional Self-Awareness is the keystone of the Emotional and Social Intelligence Leadership Competency Model. With this Primer, you'll learn what self-awareness is, why it's important in leadership, and how to develop it for effectiveness and high-performance. A quick read for anyone wanting to improve their own or their team's leadership skills, this Primer features thought leaders who are championing research in this field: Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Richard Davidson, Vanessa Druskat, and George Kohlrieser.


   Neuroscientist and expert in neuroplasticity show us what we an do to override the brain's default programming.

15. Hanson, Rick, Ph.D., Just One Thing: Developing a Buddha Brain One Simple Practice at a Time, New Harbinger Publications, 2011.
   This is a "lab book" for application of the neuroscience, and wisdom presented in Buddha's Brain. Easy to read, very short lessons give instruction on improving self-awareness, compassion, and positive psychology. Read one chapter each day, or repeat each chapter for a month. Most take 5 minutes.

   This book uses research in neuroscience to support awareness and activate positive brain states. Clear, down-to-earth book filled with practical tools and skills.

17. Hanson, Rick, Ph.D., Resilient: How to Grow an Unshakable Core of Calm Strength, and Happiness, Harmony Books, 2018
   This is Rick's best book yet on a critical subject for our times. He has accessed his terrific background, wonderful values, and soul to give us a terrific guide for strengthening self-awareness, and building a more satisfying life.

   According to the Kanes, "all problems are a projection towards the future of possible realities based on the past." Consequently, inhibitors to living life directly include the inability to let go of one's history--to forgive people and events from the past--as well as resistance to the circumstances of one's life, and repetitive, mechanical thoughts and behaviors. The essence of
self-regulating and boundary-setting is "a non-judgmental witnessing, viewing, or seeing of yourself and how you interact with your life." Awareness of a prejudice or pattern of behavior is--simply and immediately--enough to transform it.

   To be self-aware is to live honestly, genuinely, and purposefully to satisfy every aspect of your life. The intentional lifestyle is deeply personal and ultimately unique to each human being. There isn’t a definitive way to tell you how to do it. But Nancy Kay's book gets close, and her easy to follow work-book, brings structure to this process.


   This book is written for people who realize that positive thoughts and actions can dramatically change their lives, and create a workplace filled with meaning and purpose.


   This book gives 8 practices to ensure that we are more "aware" and "compassionate."

   This is a digest of some of the worlds' best scholarship and writing on this subject.

OTHER RESOURCES

WEBSITES

1. www.selfawareness.com
   This is an institute to promote self-awareness.

2. www.rickhanson.net
   Website for Rick's newsletter "Just One Thing," Taking In the Good and Neurology of Awakening and other courses, blogs, CD, etc. Recommended for those who don't have much time but want to improve in self-awareness.

3. http://mindfulnessexercises.us10.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=d55c45087faabb5d7ef95327d&id=0024ca3711&e=7e57c7883b
   Use Your Mind To Change Your Brain: Simple Steps from Dr. Rick Hanson

4. http://mindfulnessexercises.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d55c45087faabb5d7ef95327d&id=01bc3ada35&e=7e57c7883b
   Download a copy of Mindfulness at Work, by Sharon Saltzberg

5. http://mindfulnessexercises.us10.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=d55c45087faabb5d7ef95327d&id=4787f76bdf&e=7e57c7883b
   Sumedho, Ajahn, Intuitive Awareness
   One of the 20th centuries best mindfulness books

6. http://mindfulnessexercises.us10.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=d55c45087faabb5d7ef95327d&id=8bbed16622&e=7e57c7883b
   How to Calm Your Wondering Mind

7. http://mentalhelp.net/psyhelp/chap14/chap14e.htm
   This links to a helpful paper on self-awareness/self-regulation.

8. www.heartmath.com
   Has material and training in getting in touch with your feelings.

   Dedicated to helping readers move towards their goals, this motivational guide shows how to ask direct questions to uncover strengths and draw upon past successes. The answers to such questions as Am I following my dreams of someone else's? Is there someone I need to forgive in order to reach my goal? And what qualities of the human spirit do I need? Allow for penetration into the inner self to discover calls to action and deep-seated desires. Complementing the questions are metaphors and stories, offering accessible guidance to uncovering answers. Clear and insightful, these questions and exercises pave the path for self-improvement. All supports improving Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation.
10. Mindfulness Exercises: [https://mindfulnessexercises.com/](https://mindfulnessexercises.com/)
   A rich trove of worksheets, Blog Posts, Guided Meditations, Techniques and Activities for Building Awareness.

11. Mindfulness Exercises, Techniques & Activities for Adults (+ PDF's)
    [https://positivepsychologyprogram.com](https://positivepsychologyprogram.com)
    Particularly good for reducing social anxiety.

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**DVDs & Media**

1. "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," Covey Leadership Institute,
   [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
   A DVD that covers the book that has a lot to say about awareness and self-regulation.

2. "The Spirit at Work." Star Thrower Productions, (800) 242-3220,
   [www.starthrower.com](http://www.starthrower.com)

3. Get the "Buddha's Brain," App for your I-Phone or I-Pad.

4. "The Enlightened Brain: The Neuroscience of Awakening"
   A Training Course DVD available at [www.rickhanson.net](http://www.rickhanson.net)

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**BUSINESS CASE**

Blind Spots: Overcoming the hidden barriers that rob you of your power as a leader
by Thomas J. Ucko in Management and Leadership | April 2, 2011

This is a story about three leaders with very different blind spots who recognized some negative habits, changed their behaviors, and became more powerful and effective leaders.

Jerry, the CEO of a manufacturing company, fancied himself a participative leader. At his staff meetings he would stand by a flip chart, pose a question to his team, and record their answers on the chart. After a while his team noticed that he only recorded the answers he agreed with.

Jennifer, CFO of a startup, had great ideas and expressed them eloquently. Yet her audiences, whether the senior team or her staff, routinely tuned her out as she continued talking on and on, barely pausing to take a breath.

Charlie, a vice president with a biotech company, was a bright and competent executive. However, at his CEO's weekly staff meetings, whenever ideas were being generated, Charlie would pop up with an off-the-wall idea that had little to do with what was being discussed, taking the group off track.
What these leaders have in common are blind spots—behaviors, weaknesses, or biases that other people notice but they don't see in themselves.

While leaders may also have blind spots about their strengths, far more damaging are blind spots about their weaknesses or limiting behaviors. Lack of self-awareness in general is a common problem among leaders at all levels. In fact, a 1997 study found that 90% of leaders believe they rank in the top 10% of their peers.

Leaders who fail to recognize and deal with their blind spots risk reducing their effectiveness, limiting their careers, and shortchanging their organizations.

What does it take to increase self-awareness and reduce blind spots? Here's how the three leaders in the opening paragraphs shed light on their blind spots and changed their unproductive behaviors.

Jerry, the CEO who stood by the flip chart and only recorded the ideas he agreed with, heard about his blind spot from one of his long-term executives in one of their weekly one-on-ones. Jerry had learned to periodically ask his reports what he could do differently ("more of" and "less of") to make the top team more effective. This particular vice president was comfortable enough with Jerry to tell him the truth. Once Jerry recognized what he was doing, he saw how it reduced both trust and innovation in his team. He told the team what he had learned and asked the team to give him feedback after each weekly meeting. Over several weeks, Jerry was able to modify his behavior and in the process, regain the team's trust.

Jennifer, the CFO who didn't know when to stop talking, was identified by her CEO as "someone who would benefit from coaching." When I first met Jennifer she didn't agree with that assessment, didn't see that she needed to be "fixed," and was reluctant to be coached. After some discussion she became willing to at least have me interview her colleagues with the understanding that the announced purpose of the interviews was for Jennifer to become the best leader she could be. When she and I reviewed my interview summary, it became clear to Jennifer that her communication style was a problem for many of her colleagues; improving her tendency to go on too long became one of her development objectives. We agreed that in our coaching sessions I would give her a "time out" hand signal when she spoke too long. Over time, Jennifer paid more attention both to the length of her explanations as well as to the non-verbal reactions of her listeners, and greatly improved her "over-talking" problem.

Charlie, the biotech vice president who popped off at meetings, first learned of his colleagues' unhappiness with his behaviors when he received 360 feedbacks as part of a coaching program for all vice presidents at his company. When I reviewed the results of the online survey with Charlie, he immediately accepted the feedback. He saw his behavior as disruptive and agreed to change it. However, recognizing the need for change is one thing; actually changing an old habit is another. To develop his ability to monitor himself at meetings, I asked Charlie to keep a log.
After each meeting he reflected on how he had responded to others' ideas and whether he had taken the group off track. If he had, he wrote down his best recollection of what had been said before, what he had been thinking or feeling at the time, what he said, and what he could have done differently. By keeping the log, Charlie trained himself to become more self-aware. Over several months, the recognition that he had a choice in how he responded to others' comments moved from after the meeting, when he reflected back, to in the moment, so he could stop himself before he started.

While these three leaders found different ways to reduce their blind spots and unhelpful behaviors, their approaches were based on the following four principles.

**Feedback.**
We can't change what we don't see. The essential nature of blind spots is that we don't notice them ourselves. With rare exceptions, we need others to point them out to us. Whether through online 360 surveys, 360 interviews, or direct input from colleagues or coaches, feedback from others is critical for leaders to see what others are seeing.

**Willingness to take in feedback.**
Feedback by itself is useless if the leaders are highly defensive and unable or unwilling to let go of preconceived notions of themselves and accept their flaws.

**Willingness to act on the feedback.**
Leaders must not just accept the feedback; they must see the value of reducing their blind spots and ineffective behaviors, and commit to changing those behaviors.

**Self-awareness practices.**
When leaders have blind spots they engage in automatic, unthinking behaviors. When Charlie interrupted staff meetings with his off-the-wall ideas, he was on autopilot, not noticing what he was doing. When we bring awareness to a previously unaware behavior that we recognize as unproductive, we can choose to behave differently. Ways to do this include monitoring oneself (Charlie's log), ongoing feedback from colleagues (Jerry's team), and ongoing feedback from a coach (timeout signals to Jennifer)—or a combination of these.

Making changes that last are neither simple nor easy. It takes the attitude of a learner, the courage to accept ones imperfections, the persistence to stick with a path that can take six months or more—and often, the guidance of a skilled coach.

As demonstrated by the stories of the three leaders, the benefits of feedback and self-awareness can make a positive and lasting difference. Today's leaders would do well to keep in mind the classic aphorism that dates back to the ancient Greek philosophers: "Know Thyself."
VIDEO INSIGHTS

These clips vary in length and application for how they will support your skill building. We recommend trying them all at least once.

1. "Search Inside Yourself," Authors at Google, Chade-Meng Tan reveals how to calm your mind on demand and return it to a natural state of happiness, improve self-awareness to improve self-confidence, harness empathy and compassion into outstanding leadership and build highly productive collaborations based on trust and transparent communication.  
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8fcqrNO7so&feature

2. "Recognizing Others Emotions." If you can identify emotions in others, it serves to support your identification of these in yourself. It's a win/win  
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haW6E7qsW2c&feature

3. Rick Hanson: "The Self-Transforming Brian & Taking in the Good" from an "Awakening to Mindfulness Conference."  
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoebVUqvppg&feature=em-share_video_user

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3k7lykTWTk

5. "The Importance of Becoming Self-Aware"  
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyHmlcp2YCQ&feature

6. "Tony Robbins Explains How to Focus"  
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWZGg3h8kxM&feature

7. "Self-Awareness Exercise"  
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNQfwY6lBlg&feature=em-share_video_user

8. Rick Hanson and "Take in the Good" at Chicago Ideas Conference  
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-GJivPkHXk&feature

   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvOiSbEj8hQ&feature=em-share_video_user
10. "Staying in the Now: Mental Health Through Mindfulness"
   Dr. Stuart Eisendrath explores mindfulness as a technique for mental health.
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdZwybJF8Uc&feature=em-share_video_user

11. "Positive Emotion in the Midst of Stress"
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PMVh61Hfv&feature=em-share_video_user

12. "Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence,"
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e12aG13qsgE&list=PLvt690l5PHxWbuidRj6BO41MXqiliNJ3Nj

13. "How Your Brain Can Turn Anxiety into Calmness,"
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYJdekjiAog&list=PLvt690l5PHxWbuidRj6BO41MXqiliNJ3Nj

14. "Self-Regulation and Emotional Intelligence"
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_e5YDCwRuhA&list=PLvt690l5PHxWbuidRj6BO41MXqiliNJ3Nj

15. "Self-Regulation"
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAZl8c3znoU&feature=em-share_video_user

16. "Controlling Your Emotions Before They Control You"
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gzv2nt-L6XE&feature=em-share_video_user

17. "Getting Free of Self-Importance is the Key to Happiness,"
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=mgBs_W5CFw

18. "Emotional Intelligence and Leadership,"
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=ZpksAWfWlS0

19. "Leadership Takes Humility,"
    http://hbr.org/video/2363593483001/leadership-takes-humility

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OJqMPRYqOU&feature=em-share_video_user

21. "Daniel Goleman: Have Compassion for Yourself First"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5rTfqZJBhY&index=44&list=WL

22. "Letting Go of Seriousness"
http://mindfulnessexercises.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d55c45087faabb5d7ef95327d&id=96a27625ff&e=7e57c7883b

QUICK TIPS

1. Practice working on self-awareness regularly, if only for a few minutes.
2. Focus on your breaths to slow yourself down enough to feel your emotions and see your thoughts. Start counting the breaths over again each time a thought comes in.
3. Use a self-awareness exercise every day at your desk or at home.
4. Journal or write your thoughts down to note your patterns.
5. Work on suspending your belief systems and assumptions. Are you able to see these coloring what you say to others?
6. Question yourself. Slow down your "automatic responses" until you have done this.
7. Get a partner to work with on noting each other's perceived level of awareness or when emotions are not being well regulated.
8. Get external feedback on how you are expressing your emotions well and how you are not.
9. See if you can be aware of your desire to jump into a conversation, and actually stop yourself. How difficult is it to do this? How long can you take?
10. Can you vary your own rate of speech? Going much faster with some individuals? Much slower with others?
CASE STUDY:
"DROP THE CASE-- LETTING GO OF FEELING HURT AND MISTREATED"

"Lately I’ve been thinking about a kind of “case” that’s been running in my mind about someone in my extended family. The case is a combination of feeling hurt and mistreated, critique of the other person, irritation with others who haven’t supported me, views about what should happen that hasn’t, and implicit taking-things-personally.

In other words, the usual mess.

It’s not that I have not been mistreated – actually, I have been – nor that my analysis of things is inaccurate (others agree that what I see does in fact exist). The problem is that my case is saturated with negative emotions like anger, biased toward my own viewpoint, and full of me-me-me. Every time I think of it I start getting worked up, adding to the bad effects of chronic stress. It creates awkwardness with others, since even though they support me, they’re naturally leery of getting sucked into my strong feelings or into my conflict with the other person. It makes me look bad, too cranked up about things in the past. And it primes me for overreactions when I see the person in question. Yes, I practice with this stuff arising in my mind and generally don’t act it out, but it’s still a burden. I think my own experience of case-making – and its costs – are true in general. In couples in trouble, one or both people usually have a detailed Bill of Particulars against the other person. At larger scales, different social or political groups have scathing indictments of the other side.

How about you? Think of someone you feel wronged by: can you find case against that person in your mind? What’s it feel like to go into that case? What does it cost you? And others?
The key – often not easy – is to be open to your feelings (e.g., hurt, anger), to see the truth of things, and to take appropriate action . . . while not getting caught up in your case about it all.

*How?*

Bring to awareness a case about someone – probably related to a grievance, resentment, or conflict. It could be from your present or your past, resolved or still grinding. Explore this case, including: the version of events in it, other beliefs and opinions, emotions, body sensations, and wants; notice how you see the other person, and yourself; notice what you want from others (sometimes their seeming failings are a related case). For a moment or two, in your mind or out loud, get into the case: really make it! Then notice what that’s like, to get revved up into your case.

Mentally or on paper, list some of the costs to you and others of making this particular case. Next, list the payoffs to you; on other words, what do you get out of making this case? For example, making a case typically makes us feel in the right, is energizing, and helps cover over softer vulnerable emotions like hurt or disappointment. Then ask yourself: are the payoffs worth the costs?

With this understanding, see if you can stay with the difficult feelings involved in the situation (the basis for the case) without slipping into a reproachful or righteous case about them. To do this, it could help to start by resourcing yourself by bringing to mind the felt sense of being cared about by others, and by opening to self-compassion. And try to hold those difficult feelings in a big space of awareness.

Open to a wider, more impersonal, big picture view of the situation – so it’s less about you and more about lots of swirling causes coming together in unfortunate ways. See if any kind of deeper insight about the other person, yourself, or the situation altogether comes to you.
Listen to your heart: are there any skillful actions to take? Including naming the truth of things, disengaging from tunnels with no cheese, or the action of there-is-nothing-that-can-be-done.

Watch how a case starts forming in your mind, trying to get its hooks into you. Then see if you can interrupt the process. Literally set down the case, like plopping down a heavy suitcase when you finally get home after a long trip. What a relief! Enjoy the good feelings, the spaciousness of mind, the openness of heart, the inner freedom, and other rewards of dropping your case.

-----Case quoted from Dr. Rick Hanson's "Just One Thing" newsletter.

"Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power."  
_Lao-Tzu_

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act, but a habit."  
_Aristotle_

_Let he who would move the world first move himself._  
_Socrates_

"You must do what it is, you think you cannot do."  
_Eleanor Roosevelt_

"Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated."  
_Confucius_

_The wise see knowledge and action as one: they see truly._  
_the Bhagavad-Gita_
"No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care."
Theodore Roosevelt

"The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will ---- An education which should improve this faculty would be THE education Par Excellence."
William James