

# 10 Ways to Improve Your Self-Awareness

## *A quick guide for students*

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Self-awareness is one of the most important parts of emotional intelligence. It helps you understand what you're feeling, why you're feeling it, and how those emotions influence your choices. When you build self-awareness, you gain more control over your reactions, your relationships, and your future.

### **1. Step Out of Your Comfort Zone**

Avoiding uncomfortable feelings doesn't make them disappear; they just show up later when you least expect them. Instead of pushing emotions away, let yourself notice them. Doing small, uncomfortable things on purpose builds confidence and helps you grow.

### **2. Know Your Triggers**

A trigger is anything, like a situation or condition, that sets off a strong emotional reaction—like a loud environment, a classmate who gets under your skin, or a situation that stresses you out. When you understand what pushes your buttons, you can prepare for it and respond with more control.

### **3. Don't Judge Your Feelings**

Feelings aren't "good" or "bad"—they're information.

- You feel frustrated when expectations don't match reality.
- You feel excited when something good is coming.
- You feel sad when you've lost something important.

When you stop judging emotions and simply notice them, they pass more quickly and don't take over your day.

### **4. Avoid Big Decisions When You're in a Bad Mood**

When you're down, everything can feel worse than it really is. You might think your school, friends, or even your future is a mess—even though deep down you know that's not the full truth. Wait until your mood settles before making major decisions.

### **5. Avoid Big Decisions When You're in a Great Mood Too**

Strong positive emotions can cloud judgment just as much as negative ones. When you're excited, you might agree to things you don't actually want or overestimate something's value. Enjoy the good mood—just don't make big choices in it.

### **6. Take a Bird's-Eye View**

Imagine stepping outside yourself and watching the situation from above. This helps you see the bigger picture rather than react automatically.

*Example:* If a younger sibling interrupts you, your first reaction might be irritation. But from a higher perspective, you might see someone who just wants attention or connection.

## **7. Notice Your Emotions in Movies, Music, and Books**

If a song feels like it was written “just for you,” or a movie scene hits hard, pay attention. Media often expresses emotions we haven’t found words for yet. Use those moments to understand yourself better.

## **8. Revisit Your Values**

Life gets busy—school, friends, family, social media, activities. When you feel overwhelmed, pause and check in with your values.

Ask yourself:

- Are my choices matching who I want to be?
- Do my friendships support me?
- Am I doing things that go against what I believe?
- Will my current habits get me where I want to go?

Values = what you believe

Mission = how you want to impact the world

Goals = what you’re aiming for

## **9. Check Your External Signs of Stress**

Your emotions show up on the outside. When you’re stressed, your posture, appearance, room, and energy often change.

Check in with yourself:

- How does my face look today?
- Am I taking care of my hygiene?
- Is my room messy or organized?
- Am I walking with confidence or looking down?

These clues help you catch stress early.

## **10. Ask for Feedback to Fill Your Blind Spots**

Everyone has a “blind spot”—parts of themselves they can’t see clearly. Ask trusted people (teachers, counselors, coaches, friends, family) for honest feedback. Listen more than you talk, stay open, and remember that feedback is meant to help you grow.

### **Why Self-Awareness Matters**

Self-awareness helps you understand your emotions, recognize their causes, and choose how to respond. Many people either ignore their feelings or let them take over. But when you learn to pause between emotion and reaction, you gain more control over your choices—and your life.

*Source: Adapted from Gail Mayer, “Emotional Intelligence – 10 Ways to Improve Your Self-Awareness,” From Gnome to Goliath (2017).*