

# Becoming a More Self-Aware Leader

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CCH Learning:

Hello everybody and welcome to today's webinar, Becoming a More Self-Aware Leader. My name is Susannah Gynther from Wolters Kluwer CCH Learning, and I'll be your moderator for today.

A few quick pointers before we get. In the handout section, you'll find the PowerPoint slides for today's presentation. If you're having sound problems, please check your settings in the audio section on the GoToWebinar panel. Try to toggle between audio and phone. And just a reminder that within 24 to 48 hours, a notification for the e-learning recording will be emailed to you.

You can ask questions at any point during the presentation by sending them through the questions box. I'll collate those questions and ask them at the Q&A towards the end of today's presentation.

CCH Learning also offers a subscription service, which many people have termed Netflix for professionals. It provides members with access to our entire library of recordings as well as live webinars for a competitive flat fee. That's for over 500 hours of content. For CPD purposes, your viewing is logged automatically. Your presenter today is Deborah Assheton, who is the owner and director of The Amplify Group, a business that uses best practise frameworks to deliver very practical, high impact leadership change and interpersonal skill building workshops, coaching, and leadership programmes. Deb's passion is to help professionals deepen their self-awareness and embed behaviour that creates new levels of performance engagement and results for them. Deb offers executive coaching, leadership development programmes, short and public workshops. Deb has over 20 years experience in executive leadership positions, where she has managed very large teams of more than 3,000 people for some of Australia's best known and highly regarded companies, including Vodafone, Bupa, and OPSM. Deb holds a BA in psychology and a master's of organisational coaching from Sydney University. Deb's clients span the retail and wholesale property management, banking, legal, technology, transport and motoring, and telecommunications industries. I'll now pass you over to Deb to commence today's presentation.

Deb Assheton:

Thanks very much, Susannah. Hi everyone. Let me just get organised and share my screen here with you. Great. So Susannah, just confirming that you can see my screen?

CCH Learning:

Yes, I can.

Deb Assheton:

Yeah. Awesome. Okay, so today's topic is becoming a more self-aware leader. And what we're going to look at in this fabulous topic is we're going to start by looking at what is self-awareness, and why is it important? And then we're going to spend the bulk of the webinar talking about how self-awareness works and ways to grow our self-awareness.

And obviously, self-awareness is not a linear thing, so there is no checklist as such, although there are very well established, proven ways to cultivate and grow our self-awareness, and also ways to stifle or hinder that growth, which I am going to talk through today. So let's get in and have a chat about self-awareness.

So self-awareness is defined as conscious knowledge of one, so our own character, feelings, motives, and desires. And obviously within character feelings, motives, and desires, there's quite a lot. So it includes all of our thinking, it includes our feelings, it includes our goals when we talk about desires. It includes our daydreams, our fantasies, it includes our fears, and our thoughts around those. So it's the conscious knowledge of those things. So self-awareness technically doesn't include what is not conscious to us.

So part of growing self-awareness, just at a baseline level, is expanding the things about ourselves that we are conscious of. So what we're going to do today is talk about how we become more conscious, and then also how we cultivate self-awareness within that.

Self-awareness is part of the faculty of emotional intelligence. So your self-awareness is not related to how smart you are as in IQ. It is related to or it is part of our emotional intelligence. And emotional intelligence is a form of social intelligence that's about our ability to monitor our own, and then those of others' feelings and emotions, and to be able to discriminate among them, and to use the information that we get from our feelings and emotions wisely.

Self-awareness is the core or the foundational factor of emotional intelligence. And the way emotional intelligence works is that with self-awareness as the core, then there are other capacities that sit on top of that. So self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills in that order. So if we don't have a strong sense of self-awareness and self-regulation, that limits our emotional intelligence.

So self-awareness as part of emotional intelligence is really important for us. And this is the bit about, why is self-awareness important? Because emotional intelligence is important. In fact, you could argue that emotional intelligence is the single most important faculty that you can cultivate. It seems to be based on quite a long period of highly regarded research, more important in your ultimate life success than is IQ. It is also the key factor in terms of how we respond to change and life challenges. It is the key factor in resilience. And emotional intelligence has a lot to offer the world. When you're working with somebody who's emotionally intelligent, whether they're male or female, they're able to participate and add value in ways that are growth oriented, that are about taking responsibility, that are really positive in the space of positive regard.

So emotional intelligence is very important for us in terms of our enjoyment and life success. And then also in the workplace for leaders, emotional intelligence is considered to be one of the core foundations of any level of leadership, and I want to talk more about that today.

So if we want to be emotionally intelligent, we have to have this foundation of self-awareness. And when we have the foundation of self-awareness, we start to see the benefits associated with broader emotional intelligence, and the benefits that self-awareness brings internally, as well as some of these external world outcomes that you're seeing here.

So when we talk about self-awareness, there's kind of one big watch out, and it looks a bit like this. And you might've come across people who think they're really self-aware, but you're actually seeing it very, very differently, or who think that they're highly emotionally intelligent. But what you see is not emotional intelligence or not self-awareness. You see a whole heap of poor behaviour and poor thinking, and I'll talk more about that when I use the word poor. But just generally speaking, self-interested behaviour, what we would call below the line thinking and responses to life.

So one of the things that we want to watch out for on our journey of self-awareness and emotional intelligence is seeing ourselves falsely. And when I say seeing ourselves falsely, what I mean is thinking that we're more emotionally intelligent or more self-aware than we actually are, believing that we are a super self-aware person, or only considering self-awareness from an internal perspective.

So when we talk about self-awareness, there are two ways to acquire it, two broad categories. Number one is the way that we process information and reflect on life events, which I'm going to talk more about in a moment. And number two is how we seek and receive feedback from the environment.

Now, when somebody only listens to their own voice and doesn't seek or receive, so they're not open to feedback from the environment, you can end up like this banana. Where we think we're super self-aware, but actually, we're not. We are believing our own fantasies, because we're not actually open to feedback from the environment. And the same is true for emotional intelligence.

Self-awareness and emotional intelligence are a little bit like humility. So if you have to say, "I'm a very humble person," you're probably not there. So one of the things we want to be careful of with self-awareness is thinking that we're super self-aware or thinking that we're super emotionally intelligent, because that can actually limit our capacity for openness, and we can get caught up in our own delusion. So let's talk a little bit more about self-awareness and how it works.

So self-awareness is a process, not an event. For the very, very, very, very, very vast majority of people, it is a process that takes decades and it is a becoming, not an event where you have an epiphany, and you all of a sudden become enlightened.

Now for those of you that know your history, there are a number of people who have after decades of personal self-development, had an epiphany and become enlightened. But that's not generally how it happens singularly as an event. It is a process that is hopefully lifelong, and maybe you have the epiphany towards the end. But we're thinking in terms of process.

It is primarily a process of shedding, not acquiring. And what we are shedding is conditioning and defensiveness. So self-awareness is arguably what you are born with. And then we are very heavily conditioned by society, by our family of origin, by the society that we live in, by the global culture that we're part of, we're very heavily conditioned, and those things limit our capacity to see ourselves clearly.

So the process of self-awareness is primarily one of shedding conditioning, which is not who you are or not real for you, and also shedding defensiveness. So shedding resistance, shedding anger, shedding reactivity, shedding neuroticism. So shedding all of those things, so that we come back to a place of calmness and balance, rather than being reactive all the time, which is where defensiveness comes from. Again, I'll talk more in a moment.

It is very attainable. Self-awareness is kind of a natural birthright in my view, and that would be what most research says as well. It's learnable and it's very attainable if we want to do the work around becoming more self-aware, and enjoying some of the benefits that come with that.

It is largely an internal journey that's best fed by the external world. So if you think about the banana, what we want is a deep commitment to becoming more self-aware. And then we use external events, however troublesome and difficult and challenging, or joyful and expansive that they are, to feed that process within us. So rather than just being on the surface of life, we use events, and we use challenges, we use problems to help us understand more about who we are, and develop that capacity for self-awareness. So that journey, if we want to become more self-aware, it requires that we take responsibility for seeing ourselves in the story.

And I'll use some examples in a moment. But if you see events as only happening to you, then we don't tend to see ourselves in the story. And if we're not in the story, then we can't learn from the story. We can't understand our role in the story. We can't use the story, or the event, or the judgement, or the person, or our reaction to understand more about who we are and where we are right now as a person. So we have to take responsibility for this journey, which means taking responsibility for seeking feedback from the environment.

It requires that we process and integrate learnings as we go in life every day, as not just experience things superficially. So where we have events in the workplace, where we have events in life to become more self-aware, we have to process those events through the questions of things like, "What can I learn from this? How did I contribute to this positively or negatively? Where am I getting in my own way? What is there that I need to understand that I'm not currently seeing?" Or simply to welcome more understanding into our awareness so that we can see the event from a broader perspective, for example.

So when we're wanting to become more self-aware, we have to have this active internal process of seeking to understand and seeing ourselves in the story, so that we can process and understand differently and more deeply and more expansively, rather than just dismissing everything as just, "That just happened," and not reflecting on it.

It's not for the most part supported by society. So we don't learn about self-awareness or emotional intelligence at school. It's not part of the curriculum, crazily so. And often we may have grown up in families where self-awareness and emotional intelligence wasn't taught to us either implicitly or explicitly.

And in society, we see loads of examples of low awareness, low levels of responsibility. We see that in organisations, we see it in government sometimes. We see it in many ways a lot of the time, taking responsibility, and reflecting, and becoming more self-aware is not necessarily rewarded as a process. However, the outcomes often are. So often, people who have developed this capacity are ultimately celebrated or recognised in some way for their wisdom, or their contribution, or their sense of presence. But the journey itself is often not rewarded. So it can feel quite lonely to be on this journey.

It is however, what will make you the leader in the room from a workplace perspective and often outside of work. When I ask people in the courses that I run, "What is the behaviour that you see from a person that makes you think, that person's a leader?" When I ask people that, without fail, thousands of people over the years in many countries have said, "It's things like they ask questions, they're really present, they're welcoming. There's something about their body language that indicates that they're quite powerful and strong and confident. They're inclusive. They often raise things that other people are scared to raise, but do it in a way that brings people on the journey." All of these kinds of characteristics that we ascribe to leaders are associated with self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Not IQ, not age, not the highest paid person in the room, not the expert, not the most senior, not the CEO, not the owner or the founder. None of those things are what people raise. What people talk about are self-awareness capacities and emotional intelligence capacities, are what makes a person or people leaders in the room.

So let's get on and talk about ways that we can grow our self-awareness. And I've got a poll for you, because this would be great to understand. And you can answer any of these, so you're not just limited to one response. So Susannah, if you could open the poll, that would be great. The statement is ways to actively grow self-awareness, and you've got five options.

I use resources, so that could be books, videos, blogs, whatever. I have a reflection process, so that might be a gratitude process, or you might meditate for example, or you might journal. I seek feedback from others, I step into challenges and change, and I work on responding constructively to events.

So I've just put down five options. There are obviously other ways, but these are often the categories that lots of behaviours fall into. So Susannah, if you wouldn't mind sharing the results of the poll when that's ready.

CCH Learning:

Certainly. I've launched the poll, so please put a click into the radio button. And as Deb said, you can select all that apply. So this one is a multiple. You can have more than one choice on this poll. Thank you.

Deb Assheton:

Great, wonderful. So yeah, so these are basically the categories that help us to actively grow our self-awareness. Even if you're passive about it, life will often teach us often the hard way, and we become more self-aware, but these are the active ways to really step into it. So Susannah, what are the results from the poll?

CCH Learning:

Okay, so I'll just close the poll and let's have a little look, shall we? So it looks like 78% of people seek feedback from others. Then we've got 67% of people... There's three of them there on 67%. So they use resources, they step into challenges and change, and they work on responding constructively. And 56% said they have a reflection process. Thank you, Deb.

Deb Assheton:

Thanks, Susannah. Well done guys. That's fantastic. So the majority of you are doing a number of these things, which is awesome. Really, really awesome. And I'm going to get into some details later in the webinar. But all five of these categories are proven, successful categories if we stay with it. So we'll talk more about them, but it's wonderful that you are obviously active in this process.

So what I want to do now is get into talking about how self-awareness works at quite a nitty-gritty level. So I'm going to ask you to just indulge me in a little activity. I'm going to ask you to close your eyes, and I want you to think the word wolf. So W-O-L-F, the four-legged, wild, beautiful creature. I want you to think the word wolf. So just close your eyes, and in your head think the word. And hear yourself think the word.

So when you've done that, you can open your eyes. I'm going to assume that you kind of all got there, but not everybody does. So I'll often have participants say, "Actually, I can't actually consciously hear myself think the word wolf." If that's you, I suggest you practise. For the most of you, will probably have got there.

So I want to talk a little bit about how the brain processes the information both internally and externally. And I'm not going to go into a whole topic of neuroscience. I'm just going to talk about some very, very basic things here, because it's not about the brain, it's about our capacity for consciousness.

So when there's an event, whatever the event is, it doesn't matter. Every event in life, every event that we experience is processed through our five levels of brain. So it processed firstly through our amygdala, which is the oldest part of our brain. It's the reptilian brain. It's around 2 million years old. It's here at the back of the base of our skull. And we have five levels of brain, which are increasingly modern. At the most modern level, we have the neocortex, which is right at the top here, and this is our reasoning part of the brain. So it's the part of your brain that's attending this webinar.

And when it's engaged, this is our creative response. It's where a lot of our emotional intelligence sits. It's the most modern part of our brain, and arguably the most constructive.

So everything that happens is filtered through the amygdala first, and then through the other three parts of the brain, and finishes in the neocortex. When we have traumatic experiences, very difficult experiences, life-threatening experiences, scary experiences, the amygdala gets triggered. And often, we can react before the information hits the neocortex. So this is when we see people panic, for example, or highly reactive. Often the information in that event is not necessarily making it to the neocortex. And by the time it does, and we've calmed down, we sometimes regret how we behaved.

Other times, the amygdala is the absolutely perfect place for us to respond. So if you are being chased by something that eats you, you want to respond from the amygdala. At the same time, hopefully being a little bit creative in our response from the neocortex. But you want to be able to run, right? And sometimes the best thing to do is not think about that, but to do, which is what the amygdala will do for you. Its job is to keep you alive.

Now, there is a part of our brain, which is the part that I asked you to listen to a moment ago, that sits above all of it. And it's called the witness. The part of your mind that heard you think the word wolf is called the witness. So that's the part of you that is conscious of your thoughts. It's conscious of what's happening in your body. It's conscious of what's happening in your heart. So your consciousness can hear your thoughts, it can notice your feelings, and it can notice your physicality.

So for example, if you've got tension, it will notice tension. If you feel pain, it will notice pain. And it is always on. The capacity to witness your thoughts, your feelings, your emotions, your physicality is the seat of all self-awareness. Starts right here with witnessing.

So this is the first way that we cultivate self-awareness is to stay in our witness, to notice our thoughts as they happen. So if you have something happening in the workplace and you think, "Oh my God, this is the worst decision that's ever been made anywhere. I can't believe that this is happening." Rather than reacting, you can notice your thoughts about that and notice, "Okay, I've got a lot of judgement here. I'm feeling very negative. I'm actually really fired up. This is not a place I want to respond from. I want to calm myself down before I think about how I'm going to respond."

So this capacity to witness is the seat of all self-awareness. And often, rather than witness, we go into avoidance. So when something that we perceive as negative happens, we go into one of these three options, which are the enemies of self-awareness. We go into resistance and avoidance, clinging and idealisation, numbing and delusion. These are our categories of go-to.

So resistance and avoidance is about defensiveness, procrastination, and this general unease and tension, and often anxiety. Clinging and idealisation is where we go into the if only, when then, one day. So it's this idealising. It's absent-mindedness, it's daydreaming and fantasising. Numbing and delusion is the world of indulgence and addiction. So there can be food, alcohol, TV, phones, work, gaming, gambling. We can become addicted to pretty much anything as you know. These are the three categories of behaviours that stop that process in our brain where we reason things, and we witness things, and we actively think about becoming more self-aware and how we want to respond. These things get in the way of that, and they stifle our capacity to reflect and grow.

So resistance and avoidance is often emotional and looks like blame, justification, envy, shame, manipulation, judgement, jealousy, really nasty list. Clinging and idealisation looks like daydreaming, fixation, neuroticism, wishful thinking, zoning out, and all forms of fantasising.



Numbing and delusion is about indulgence. So that's often overwork. It's habits that we overuse that are not good for us. It's medication, overmedicating, passivity, excuses. They're all in this world of numbing and delusion.

So my second poll for today is, what are your go-tos? And you can only choose A, B, or C. So sorry, you can choose none of the above. You can choose all of the above. I did not put in an option for some of the above. So for those of you that have got one that's really big, just choose that. If it is all of the above, then choose E. And if it's none of the above, if you've managed to outgrow these responses, then you can choose D. So what we want to do ideally, and hopefully Susannah, you've opened up that poll.

CCH Learning:

Yes, I've now launched that poll, so please-

Deb Assheton:

Right. I'm already seeing the results here. And I mean I say this slightly, but because my go-tos actually have been historically all three, with a really big focus on C. And as I worked through... I would argue I'm somebody who I think has quite an addictive personality. And what I found in my own journey was as I worked on that addictive personality and removed indulgences from my world, which was very hard to do, I then went into A and B. And so my personality sort of swung from one to the other, all in efforts to avoid taking responsibility and being more self-aware.

So when I ask you to choose which one's your go-to, or if it's all, I do it with a very open heart and lots of lightness, because I have zero judgement myself here. Ideally, what we want to do in our process of becoming more self-aware is to transcend all three as options. Resistance, avoidance, clinging, idealisation, numbing, and delusion are not good for us, and they're certainly not good for self-awareness, and they're certainly not good for emotional intelligence. They serve no purpose beyond avoidance and protecting our ego.

So what we want to do is to find ways and cultivate those ways to transcend all six categories, or all three categories and six subcategories. So how do we go on the results, Susannah?

CCH Learning:

All right, so let's have a look. I'll close the vote and let's have a little look here. Well, 50% said E, all of the above.

Deb Assheton:

I'm with you people.

CCH Learning:

25% who said C. And then 13% each on A and B. Back to you, Deb.

Deb Assheton:

Okay, thanks, Susannah. And nobody who said none of the above. So I wouldn't answer none of the above yet either. And I've been doing this work for a very, very long time. So well done on your honesty.

So what we want to do as part of our... The journey of self-awareness is at least at the outset, transcending all of these. To get beyond them is coping mechanisms because we don't need them and they don't help us.

So what I want to do is look now, I want to look at a very simple model that can help us understand where we are called above or below the line. For those of you that have done these webinars before with me, you might've heard me talk about it. It's a great model for thinking about this. And then I want to talk about four ways to help move beyond these.

So these six, so resistance, avoidance, clinging, idealisation, numbing, delusion, have no power in them for you, for me. No power whatsoever. And I'm not talking about power over other people, I'm not talking about force. I'm talking about personal power, to respond, to grow, to take responsibility, to be the best part of yourself. None of these have that aspect of you. So let's have a look at a model that can really help us understand whether we are in any of those coping mechanisms or whether we are in our power.

So the model's called above or below the line. You've got this in your notes obviously. So we can be below the line. The model asks us to imagine that we have a line. And when we're below the line, we're demonstrating some form of defensiveness. When we're above the line, we're demonstrating responsibility, accountability, self-awareness, learning. So if you looked at this through growth mindset, when we're above the line, we're in that growth mindset. When we're below the line, we're in a fixed one. When we are below the line, we are in a form of avoidance. And it often looks like clinging, idealisation, justification, blame, envy, manipulation, denial, addiction. All of the things I just talked about on the previous slide are demonstrations that we are below the line. We are avoiding something. When we're above the line, we are taking responsibility. So we've managed to transcend the desire to avoid, which can be exceptionally strong.

So you might have something horrible happen in your life. And of course like me, your first reaction is possibly to want to deny that that's happening, to avoid having to deal with it. When we get past that and we step into responsibility, that's where we find our power. This is the world of self-actualization, of emotional intelligence, of achievement and integrity. Integrity stands for being integrated as a person. It means that there's no part of yourself that you've left behind or left out there in the ether.

When we are avoiding things, we have got parts of ourselves left behind everywhere. When we're in denial, we park whole parts of our lives. That's how addiction works. We don't want to deal with the addiction, so we sit in denial. And they're all aspects of being below the line, and there's no integration because you've got this addiction. So you are un-integrated, you are not in integrity, if that makes sense.

So when we are below the line, there's no power and we're in avoidance. When we're above the line, we're stepping out of avoidance as much as we consciously can, and we're in a space that's constructive. We're back in our power.

So when we're below the line, it's often in response to difficult emotions. And again, we're never taught how to process difficult emotions. We're not taught how to process anger, resentment, envy, jealousy, all things that are part of being a human. We're not taught how to process fear, let alone how to process abject terror. We're not taught how to process disappointment, or shyness, or sadness, or grief. So we're often not good at this. When we talk about processing difficult emotions, and great emotions by the way too, like joy, and aliveness, and excitement, which often people find hard to deal with. We've got four categories of options, four. And I want to talk through those now. Two of them are not good for us and two of them are.

So often when we're processing something difficult, let's take anger as an example. The two categories of behaviours that are not good for us in terms of how we process anger are suppression and explosion.

Suppression includes clinging and idealisation. It includes addiction, although addiction can also fall into the explode. It includes zoning out, daydreaming. It includes fantasising. All of those things are forms of suppression.



Explosion is where we act out that anger. So it's aggression and violence. Obviously, it's also force, it's manipulation. It is in the world of blaming and justification when they become very aggressive. It is also, addiction can fall very much into this space.

The two options or categories that are good for us are experiencing and expressing. So experiencing is where we experience the emotion, the anger in this case, physically, and intellectually, physicality, in our body. And expression is where we share how we feel. So we are talking and sharing our experience of this anger. And there's lots of different types of ways to experience and express, just as there are suppress and explode.

So poll number three today is, which unhealthy pattern do you tend to default to? Now, I haven't put in option D, which is I don't default to either of these anymore. The options for you are A, B, or C, and Susannah will have opened that poll.

And the reason why I don't put in D is because even people who are very self-aware and emotionally intelligent will often dip into suppression or explode without acting on it. So the default unhealthy pattern is still there, that just don't fall into the pattern like they used to.

So for me, for example, I can go into both. I go into a suppression, like a daydreaming or a fantasy. And then also, a judgement and very much an anger, and a resentment is what I feel more on the explode side.

What I've learned to do is to process those effectively, so that I don't fall into those patterns. So they're still there, the unhealthy pattern's still there, but I've learned over time not to fall into it to such a great degree as I have done previously. So Susannah, what are the results from that poll?

CCH Learning:

Thanks for that, Deb. I'll just close that poll, and let's have a little look. Shall we? We have 40% each on the suppress and explode, with 20% saying they do both suppress and explode.

Deb Assheton:

Thanks, Susannah. And look, yup [inaudible 00:37:34]. So it's good to know what our patterns are. And often, one leads to the other. So if you are suppressing, suppressing, suppressing, then there's only a certain amount that we can handle, and then we tend to have an explosion. And then that goes back to then we go, "That wasn't a good idea." And so we tend to go back into the suppression. So that pattern can also work quite negatively in our lives.

So thinking about these enemies of mindfulness, which are often encouraged by society and celebrated, they're actually not good for us at all. And they can leave us in this cycle of imploding, exploding, imploding, exploding, that is really not healthy for us. And one of the goals of becoming somebody who's more self-aware is that you don't need to go into any of them ever again. You've got mechanisms that are above the line that help you respond to life. And a key component of that is using the witnessing capacity.

So we start to learn how to choose to stay above the line, regardless of what happens around us. It doesn't mean that we never think below the line, but we don't behave from there anymore, because we know that that's not healthy. Not healthy for us, and certainly not healthy for the people we're dealing with. So what are some of the ways that we learn this choice, and we stay grounded in this choice of staying above the line? I'm going to go through four.

Number one is to think about the perspective that you bring to life events. It's a very, very simple lesson. Number one is only one slide. So what is this? Well, this is a great big pile of cow poo, steaming pile of cow poo. Now some people would say, "Well, that just is crap. That is terrible, that's awful, and that's going to stink. And it's something that's awful." Other people would say, "Well, actually what I'm looking at is a great big pile of fertiliser." It's the same thing. But if we think of something as fertiliser, we think about how to use it, rather than how to resist, or avoid it, or judge it.

So number one is see it as fertiliser, whatever it is. And that's not easy to do. I'm not for a moment saying that this isn't easy, these things are easy. They are however, quite simple. When life presents you with an event, you have a choice to see it as a great big pile of crap or a great big pile of fertiliser. And when you choose option B, when you choose fertiliser, that immediately starts to put you above the line. Because there's nothing to resist, there's nothing to avoid, there's nothing to run from. This is actually something that you could step into the challenge of and grow from, but not necessarily that you like it. So never said it would be fun. So number one is look at things as fertiliser.

Number two is to focus on power, not control. The truth of life, one of the deep truths of life is we have virtually no control over what's happening to us. We do have control over what we think, what we say. We have control over our body to a large degree. We have control over our attitudes. We certainly have control over how we respond to events. But we don't have control outside of that. Where we find self-awareness is in the realm of power, not control.

So when people focus on control, we usually end up feeling a lack of it. Because the truth is, I don't even have control over the seat that I'm sitting on right now, and neither do you. We actually have very little control. When we think about that, particularly in the workplace, we expose ourselves to anger, anxiety, and grief. And trying to regain control is a way of avoiding and compensating for not having it. It doesn't really move you forward.

When we focus on maintaining or regaining our power, i.e. getting ourselves above the line, rather than trying to control events, respond to them from a place of power, this generates feelings of strength, agency, and options. So you think more broadly. That's very healthy.

So when something happens in life, rather than thinking about control, think about, where's my power in this situation? Where can I be above the line and step into it? So fertiliser, power are number one and number two.

Number three is to focus on experiencing and expressing, rather than suppressing and exploding. You just don't want to go there, they're in the realm that those things happen. Suppressing and exploding happens because we've been in the world of idealisation and clinging, addiction, all of the enemies of self-awareness that I just spoke about. So we want to stay out of that space, and focus on experiencing and expressing.

And the reason for that is very important. When we talk about suppressing or exploding, what we're really talking about is resisting what's happening in life. Now, that's actually not possible. By the time you resist something, it's already happened. So if you've had a bad news and you want to resist that or you go into denial, you're denying the process in your head, not in reality.

So the ultimate outcome of resistance is that our life gets smaller. We don't grow, and in fact, we shrink because our brain is focused on something that's not real. Just because we don't like something, doesn't change it. And it's exhausting. And often, what we are resisting is the need to begin again to find a new way. Whether it's a new job, or a new relationship, or a physical change, or life after loss. What we're often resisting is that beginner's mindset, or of having to adapt.

Now resisting the need to adapt is exhausting, and it depletes us, and it can deplete our resilience. So the foundations of expression and experiencing are about openness and acceptance, and being open to feeling and thinking about what we're going through rather than resisting or avoiding it. Openness, acceptance, and experiencing and expressing are what helps us to move forward, because they're grounded in reality as it is.

And so how do we do this? Well, actually, the ways to experience and express are probably what a lot of you are doing already. What we need to do to shift the dial here is to become really conscious and refuse to go into any of those suppression and explosion that I talked about. So the clinging and idealisation, for example, addiction. We say, "They're no longer options for me because I want to become more self-aware."

And so experiencing is about, you might go for a run and work on that anger, or you might go to the gym and get on that punching bag, and work on the anger there. And what you are doing is letting it out. You can write, you can meditate, you can contemplate, you can go on retreats or holidays. Not holidays that are about drinking all day, but holidays that are about reflecting on where you are and resting, for example. Or you might go on a holiday or a retreat to process something specific.

So this is about feeling what's going on in your body, and expressing is about talking or sharing how you feel. And it might be venting, but it's doing it in a way that's quite constructive, which I'll talk about in a moment.

So this is about working with someone else, whether it's a therapist or a confidant at work, who can help you to process how you feel. And you might vent. So you might say, "Look, so-and-so just did this and I'm feeling really upset about it and really angry. So I'm going to vent for five minutes, and then I'm going to figure out what I'm going to do."

And so that venting is very time controlled. And it's an explosion, venting, where you're really venting. But it's managed and done in a way that's constructive. And in that case, it's a release, it's an expression, rather than a suppression or an explosion.

So we can bring venting and frustration to the table in ways that are constructive, by acknowledging them and limiting them so that we can move forward. So we don't see them as helpful. We acknowledge them and see them as a problem, so therefore we manage them so that we can move forward.

And for leaders, these are really important aspects in the workplace, because there are frustrations every day in the workplace. Things go wrong, plans fall apart. Clients can be difficult. We can have problem employees. There can be interpersonal conflict. We can have all sorts of things happen where it's very easy to go below the line.

But if we have a culture of going below the line, then nothing changes. And in fact, it becomes an even more difficult place to work. And whatever the initial difficult event was becomes exacerbated and entrenched.

So as a leader. If we can help... Well first of all, lead by example, by learning how to do these things ourselves, which many of you are, but also bringing some of these aspects into our teams and the way that we work. We create an environment that is more self-aware. We create a team that's more self-aware.

And so what can that look like? Well, it doesn't look like all of your team sitting and meditating together for 10 minutes every morning, although it could look like that if you really wanted to. What it looks like is where something's going wrong at work, let's say there's a project that's failing, you might say, "Okay, I'm going to ask my team to write down the 10 reasons why they think the project's failing and how they feel about that."

So there's experiencing as writing, for example. And you might say, "I'm going to give them an activity where I want them to contemplate how they would fix the project." So there's contemplation. And then you can bring them together. And in a workshop type environment or over a series of workshops, you talk about how people are feeling about the project, how it's affected them, and what you'd like to do to move forward.

This is experiencing and expressing in the workplace, rather than trying to fix it all yourself. And by doing that, not give your people a chance to experience, and express, and contribute. This is a very practical way of moving us all forward as much as it is about our personal self-awareness. So part of becoming a more self-aware leader is obviously becoming a more self-aware person, but bringing those capacities into the workplace so that you lift the people that you lead even further above the line. So number three is experiencing and expressing.

Number four is about the capacity for self-regulation. And this is probably everyone's least favourite actually. So I've got marshmallows there on the screen. Self-regulation is the second part of emotional intelligence, and it is an aspect of self-awareness in and of itself. And one of probably the most famous study around self-regulation is called the marshmallow test. And you can Google it if you want to. It was a Stanford test that was done in the 1970s with four year olds. So four year old children were asked a question, they were offered a choice. The choice was you can have one marshmallow now, or you can wait 15 minutes and you can have two.

And what the scientists who did the researchers who did that test were testing was, what's the difference between the children who choose the first marshmallow now or who wait and have two? That capacity for self-regulation, what difference does that make?

And the experiment actually ran over 21 years. So those children were then followed and assessed again at seven, 14, and 21. And many of these self-regulation marshmallow tests have been done since. And what researchers consistently find is that the children who chose to wait and have two, so who exhibited self-regulation skills at seven, 14, and 21 had more friends, were more socially accepted, did better at school academically, were more involved in sports, and generally enjoyed greater levels of health.

And we find this throughout life. The capacity to self-regulate supports self-awareness, which supports the capacity to regulate. They're intimately entwined.

Self-regulation is actually two capacities joined together. So number one is self-control, and number two is self-discipline. Control is about our ability to resist impulse. And discipline is about our ability to repeat desired behaviour.

So part of what helps us stay above the line is resisting the impulse to go below it. So resisting the impulse to go into fantasy or addiction. And part of what helps us to stay above the line is repeating desired behaviours, experience express. So putting in place practises that grow as self-awareness.

And that can be things like exercise, and blogs, and using resources. So those five aspects that we talked about right at the start of the webinar are aspects of discipline. So what I'd be encouraging you to do is to really think about... And actually we've got a poll, but I'm going to skip it because we're running out of time, and I just want to finish up on these last couple of slides. But I'd really encourage you to think about, what are you stronger at? Are you stronger at self-control or self-regulation, or you're not good with either, or you're strong in both? The research is that we tend to have one that is easier out of the two for us. So for me, for example, I find self-regulation, the ability to repeat desired behaviours easier than I did impulse control. And I've had to work on that.

And so part of becoming more self-aware is about making sure that you've got acceptable levels, healthy levels of both capacities, self-control and self-discipline, so that you can regulate. And when you can regulate, that means that you're far less likely to go below the line.

So let's have a look. We've got a couple of minutes left, three or four minutes, and then I'll allow some type of questions, or hopefully we'll have some type of questions. I want to talk about some other simple tactics for getting yourself above the line in the moment, because often this is where self-awareness can sort of fall apart.

Breathing and posture are two critical ways to get ourselves above the line in the moment. So if you think about your breathing, when you breathe a little more deeply into your diaphragm and you lift your chest. So not superhero style, but just lift your chest, what you're doing then is opening up... You're putting your shoulders back. You're opening up your breathing, you're opening up your bloodstream, which means that your heart, your lungs, and your mind get more air, more oxygen, and more blood. So you think better and your reactivity comes down because you're calmer. So breathing and posture, really important.

When you get a bit lost in a conversation and you find yourself getting defensive, go back to the conversation goal or rephrase above the line. So instead of saying, "So-and-so was responsible, they did this," blah, blah, blah. Above the line, you might say, "Deb's work was late to me and I didn't follow her up. And so now the work is late to you." So rather than saying, well, "Deb's work was late and she's responsible," you see yourself in the story and rephrase above the line. So use language skills to get you back above the line.

Has a wonderful practise called a three word practise, which is really healthy, really in the world of experiencing and expressing, where you set three words for how you want to behave. So if you're going to morning tea, and you know that impulse control is a problem, and there's great big buffet and it's full of muffins, your three words for morning tea might be healthy, small, green. So you might choose salad for morning tea. Or it might be healthy, small, water. So you're going to have some fluids.

So you choose three words that help you to stay aware, and conscious, and above the line. And of course you can move from the mindset of, "I have to," to, "I get to." So, "I have to go to work today," versus, "I get to go to work today and do"... So I get to puts us back in our power.

Longer term, it's really about stopping patterns that hurt us, cleaning up chaos in our lives, do not leave parts of ourselves behind. Focus on meeting our needs from above the line rather than below the line. Check our values. So often when we stay angry about something, we're getting something out of the anger rather than getting something out of resolving the anger. So we can check our values. And seeing life as being for us, not to us. So not have to, but I get to. So seeing life as being for us or by us. So back in our power.

And then what I've got is two slides that can help you to think about how to stay constructive in thinking and how to stay constructive in feeling. And again, there's no linear way to do this, but these are some resource slides that can help you when you're feeling a bit stuck. They're there so that you can hopefully consult with them and get some help on thinking and feeling from above the line.

And I've also put in some additional resources for you. Any books or blocks from Deepak Chopra, Michael Singer, or David R. Hawkins are fantastic. David R. Hawkins is very technical. He is a psychiatrist, but he mapped out the levels of consciousness. For those of you that are really into this work, his book, *The Map of Consciousness* is great. Michael Singer is also great on the witness capacity.

Some other great books and videos are also here for you. And I just want to say congratulations on your journey. And yeah, thank you for joining me today. And that's it for me today, Susannah. So we've got a couple of minutes for questions.

Not a problem, Deb. Well, I'll just take that back. So just hold on a tick for me, and we'll just take that back. So let's take that back, and I'll turn that back on. So yes, as Deb said, we will be spending the next few moments taking questions. So just a reminder to please type them into the questions pane. To give you time to type those up, I will mention our upcoming webinars.

So what have we got coming up? Well, we've got Managing an ATO Audit. We're also looking at Non-cash Transactions in SMSFs, and knowing the limits. We also have coming up our ever popular Structuring a Medical Practise, and we're looking at The Financial Disadvantage and their Access to Aged Care. We'll also be looking at How to Move Beyond Dollars for Hours and Changing Your Selling Strategy, and First Year SMSF Audits.

If you are interested in any of those, please head to our website at [wolterskluwer.cchlearning.com.au](http://wolterskluwer.cchlearning.com.au). Have a look and see if they're right for you. So let's have a little look at our questions. Okay, so I have one question from Mel. Mel said, "Hi, Deb," said it was a great session, and he asked to get a copy of the slides. Well, Mel, you can download the slides from the handout section on the GoToWebinar panel, or you can also get a copy of the slides, unless I forgot to put them up on the... Let me have a quick look. Maybe I forgot to put them up on the LMS, so on our platform. They're also there available to be downloaded, and will be available to be downloaded with the e-learning as well.

Okay, so let's have another question. I have a question from Sarah. Sarah was asking, now she knows that this wasn't part of your presentation, but can teams become more self-aware? And she's wondering, should she do some more of this work with her team?

Deb Assheton:

So, great question. Yes, they can. And so what I'd recommend is that you obviously be working on it yourself first. You have to lead by example, obviously with self-awareness. But absolutely, you can share some of these slides with teams. You can talk about how do we get better at experiencing and expressing as a team. And that helps you to get better at what you do. So it has an engagement and performance benefit. So absolutely. Go for it.

CCH Learning:

Thank you very much for that, Deb. So I hope that helps you there Sarah. I also had a question from James. James was saying, "I do some of this work now and I love it. However, I still hesitate when it comes to change and challenges. What's your advice on this?"

Deb Assheton:

Yeah, look, I hear you James, and I think that's probably pretty normal. We have to do this work for a long time. But my experience of this is if you reflect back over the challenge and the changes where you hesitate, that they're probably getting bigger and bigger. So things that you would've hesitated on five years ago are probably a bit of a no-brainer for you now.

And so I don't know, maybe as life gets bigger and challenges and change get bigger, we always hesitate a little bit. So I'd encourage you to push through the hesitation, and don't let it derail you. And also just to remind yourself that things that you would've hesitated probably are no-brainers for you now. So keep going.

CCH Learning:

Thank you for that, Deb. So there you go, James. Don't give up, I suppose is the big thing there. Keep going, and thank you for that very much, Deb.



Well, that does bring us to the end of our questions for today, but if you do have any other questions, Deb's details are there on the screen. So please reach out if you do have more questions.

So in terms of next steps, I would like to remind you all to please take a moment to provide feedback when exiting. We've asked you a couple of questions about today's webinar, so it's really important for us to hear your opinions. It's also a reminder that within 24 to 48 hours, you will be enrolled into the e-learning recording, which can be watched multiple times, and have access to the PowerPoint, transcript, any other supporting documentation, and of course your CPD certificate.

I would very much like to thank Deb for the session today. And to you, the audience for joining us. We hope to see you back online for another CCH Learning webinar very soon. Please enjoy the rest of your day. Thank you very much.

Deb Assheton:

Thanks everyone.