



What is self-awareness?



By [Amanda Morin](#)

You might hear people talk about self-awareness as an important skill – not just for kids, but for adults, too. Self-awareness is the ability to tune in to your own feelings, thoughts, and actions.

When people are self-aware, they understand their strengths and challenges and know what helps them thrive. They also understand that how they see themselves may be different from how others see them.

People with strong self-awareness skills can:

- Recognize their strengths and challenges
- Understand and talk about their needs and feelings
- Recognize other people's needs and feelings
- See how their behavior affects others
- Develop a growth mindset and learn from their mistakes

When people understand themselves better, it's easier for them to build positive self-esteem. That's especially important for people who learn and think differently and who struggle with certain skills and tasks.

Self-awareness gives them a way to look not just at their challenges, but also to see what they're good at.

Types of self-awareness



Self-awareness doesn't develop all at once. The process begins in childhood, as kids start being able to recognize and name their emotions, strengths and challenges, and likes and dislikes. And it keeps developing over time.

There are two types of self-awareness: private and public. Private self-awareness is when people are aware of something about themselves that others might not be — like being anxious about reading out loud.

Public self-awareness is when people are aware of how others see them. That doesn't start happening until the age of 5. Before then, most kids don't realize that other people aren't always thinking and feeling the same way they are.

Having self-awareness makes it easier to build self-esteem. Learn about [ways to develop self-esteem](#).

Self-monitoring and self-advocacy

Why do some people have trouble figuring out what needs to be done to complete a task? Or noticing mistakes in work they've done and correcting them? Self-awareness helps people keep track of what they're doing. This is called self-monitoring.

Self-awareness also helps with self-reflection — thinking over what happened to find ways to make things work better next time. What's working and what's not working? Self-awareness can also help people speak up for what they need, or self-advocate.

Learn more about the importance of [self-monitoring](#) and [self-advocacy](#).

How to help develop self-awareness

Gaining self-awareness can start in small ways, like recognizing strengths. People often focus on what needs improvement. But they don't always consider what they do well.

[Recognizing those abilities](#) helps build self-esteem. It also allows people to use their strengths to work on challenges.

For families: Get [self-awareness tips for grade-schoolers](#) and [tweens and teens](#).

For educators: Download a [self-awareness worksheet for kids](#).

For adults: Learn more about [self-advocacy](#) and why it's important.

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