

Exploring Leadership

SOCIAL AWARENESS: SOCIAL AWARENESS

Social awareness encompasses many skills. In a nutshell, it is looking outward to learn about and appreciate others. Communication and empathy will foster awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns and allow you to take an active interest in them.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

How often has someone said, "How's it going?" and you immediately answer, "Fine," without thinking about it? Were you fine? Were they sincere? Why do you think this kind of superficial conversation is so common?

There are four levels of communication: *superficial*, *fact*, *thought*, and *feeling*. With some people, you never get past the first two levels, which means your relationship remains distant and your influence weak. To increase your social awareness, you want to reach that last level and share your feelings with others more openly so that they will in turn open up to you. Appropriate self-disclosure increases others' trust in you, improving communication overall.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Give examples of the four levels of communication to illustrate social awareness.
- Develop socially appropriate responses to change the level of communication.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Copies of the worksheet for every participant (Appendix)
- Pencils

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

FACILITATION TIPS:

- Have the groups sit in circles if possible to make passing the worksheet go more smoothly.

- Break into groups of four and have each group sit in a circle.
- Hand out the social awareness Worksheet (Appendix).
- Read aloud/Review the four levels of communication. Discuss briefly if necessary.
- Have participants follow the instructions to complete the activity.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Which level of communication is the most difficult for you? Why?
- How hard was it to change the level of communication? Did it matter which level you started on?
- Do you think you have a high level of social awareness?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Describe some real-life situations when changing the level of communication (up or down) would be desirable.
- Why would a person with a high level of social awareness be a valuable asset to a business or large organization?

Superficial	Fact
Thought	Feeling

CONCLUSION:

Observation skills are fundamental to social awareness. When you pay close attention to what's happening around you, your awareness of your surroundings can help set the tone of how you approach varying situations. Social awareness is a huge area of study that encompasses many skills in the leadership curriculum, but it may be the single most important factor in your success because no matter what you pursue, it is going to involve other people.

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REFERENCES

- <http://www.isei.com>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2020/06/05/the-road-to-social-awareness/#17d8451f6f80>
- <https://www.insperity.com/blog/social-awareness/>



APPENDIX: SOCIAL AWARENESS WORKSHEET

adapted from the Institute for Social and Emotional Intelligence

Directions: Get into groups of four. Fill out the first line asking for a superficial comment, then pass your paper to the person on your right, while getting a different one from the person on your left. Fill in line two where you will write down a fact and continue passing until all four lines are filled and your original paper comes back to you. See the examples to get the idea, but make up new statements.

Superficial statement: _____
(e.g., "Hi, how are you?")

State a fact: _____
(e.g., "I have a cold.")

Express a thought: _____
(e.g., "I think there's something going around.")

Share a feeling: _____

Now read the statements on your sheet and see if you agree with their categorization. Consider how switching levels of communication can help others to manage their emotions. For example, if someone is very angry, it may help to switch from feelings to facts. Likewise, if someone has expressed a fact and you feel there is more they want to say, expressing a thought or feeling of your own may move them to say what they are really thinking.

You're going to pass the paper again, but this time you will write a socially appropriate response to each of the above sentences. The purpose of your response is to move the conversation to one of the other levels of communication. So, for example, don't respond to a fact with a fact; try to say something that will raise the level of communication.

Response to the superficial statement:

Response to the statement of a fact:

Response to the expression of a thought:

Response to the sharing of a feeling:

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REFERENCES

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