



Exploring Leadership

SOCIAL AWARENESS: SOCIAL AWARENESS

Social awareness involves many important skills. Simply put, it means looking outward to learn about and appreciate those around you. By improving your communication skills and empathy, you can better understand others' feelings, needs, and concerns, which leads to more meaningful interactions.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

How often has someone asked, 'How's it going?' and you automatically replied, 'Fine,' without thinking about it? Were you truly fine? Why do you think such superficial conversations are so common?

Four Levels of Communication

There are four levels of communication: superficial, fact, thought, and feeling. Often, conversations only skim the surface with the first two levels, which keeps relationships distant and limits how much you can connect with others. To enhance social awareness, aim to reach the deeper levels by sharing your thoughts and feelings. Encourage others to do the same. Sharing in a respectful way helps build trust, enhancing communication and connections.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

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

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Worksheets for each participant (see Appendix)
- Pens or pencils

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

In this engaging activity, you'll explore the four levels of communication while working in small groups. By practicing different types of statements, you'll learn how to connect with others on a deeper level.

FACILITATION TIPS:

- Have groups sit in circles to pass papers easily and build connection.
- Remind students there are no wrong answers—just practice and growth.
- Encourage students to avoid "auto-replies" like "I'm fine" or "whatever" when writing, and share real thoughts.
- Break into groups of four and have each group sit in a circle.
- Hand out the Social Awareness Worksheet (see Appendix).
- Read aloud or briefly review the 'Four Levels of Communication' section, discussing it as needed to ensure everyone understands.
- Have participants follow the instructions to complete the activity together.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Do you think you have a high level of social awareness?
- What level of communication do you struggle with the most, and why?
- How hard was it to switch the level of communication?
- Did starting at a specific level make a difference?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Can you think of real-life situations where adjusting the level of communication (up or down) might be helpful?
- Why do you think a person with strong social awareness would be a valuable asset in a workplace or organization?

Superficial	Fact
Thought	Feeling

CONCLUSION:

Observation skills are key to developing social awareness. This awareness enhances relationships and helps create a collaborative atmosphere where everyone feels they belong and are understood. Paying attention to what's happening around you allows you to approach situations more effectively. Social awareness encompasses many skills from the Exploring Leadership curriculum and may be one of the most important factors for success, as it's essential in any work with others.

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REFERENCES

- Institute for Social and Emotional Intelligence <https://isei.com/>
- The Road to Social Awareness <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2020/06/05/the-road-to-social-awareness/#17d8451f6f80>
- 8 social awareness strategies that will make you a better leader <https://www.insperity.com/blog/social-awareness/>



APPENDIX

Social Awareness Worksheet

adapted from the Institute for Social and Emotional Intelligence

Directions: In your group, fill out the first line with a superficial comment, then pass your paper to the right and receive a different one from the left. Write a fact on line two, then pass the paper. Continue passing until all four lines are filled. Use the examples below for guidance, but come up with your own statements.

1. Superficial statement:

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

2. State a fact:

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

3. Express a thought:

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

4. Share a feeling:

(e.g., "I wonder when I will feel better.") _____

When all lines are filled, return the paper to its original owner.

Read the statements and see if you agree with each category. Consider how changing levels of communication can help manage emotions.

For example, For example, if someone feels upset, moving from feelings to facts can sometimes help ease emotions. Similarly, if someone shares a fact, responding with a thought or feeling may encourage them to open up more.

Now, pass the paper again and write a socially appropriate response for each sentence. Focus on encouraging a more meaningful conversation. Remember: avoid responding to a fact with another fact. Instead, respond in a way that encourages deeper sharing.

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:
