

Psychology of Emotion: Theory and Applications
Professor Dilwar Hussain
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati
Module 10, Lecture 24: Skills of EI-Self awareness

I welcome you all to Lecture Number 24, the second lecture of Module 10. Module 10 focuses on Emotional Intelligence Part 1. In the previous lecture, Lecture Number 23, we provided an introduction to the concept of emotional intelligence. Today, we will delve more specifically into one skill. Over the next few lectures, each session will cover one skill connected to emotional intelligence. In today's lecture, we will focus on self-awareness, which is a crucial skill of emotional intelligence.

Today's lecture will solely address one aspect of emotional intelligence. To briefly recap the last lecture, we discussed introductory aspects of emotional intelligence. We defined various prevailing definitions found in the literature and explored the differences between cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence, highlighting how they diverge. Additionally, we touched upon the historical evolution of emotional intelligence and how the concept has changed over time in relation to the perception of intelligence.

We also discussed various research findings that demonstrate the relevance and importance of emotional intelligence in various dimensions of human life, including leadership, mental health, and well-being, as well as in both professional and personal contexts. A considerable amount of research indicates that this concept is crucial and highly relevant to success and well-being in human life. It is deeply integrated into human well-being and performance, particularly in relationship aspects. Additionally, we explored various models of emotional intelligence, including the ability model, the trait model, and the mixed model, which were proposed based on differences in conceptualization.

Today, we will focus on one particular dimension or domain of emotional intelligence: self-awareness. We will discuss self-awareness and its various types, components, blind spots, and strategies for increasing it. These are the concepts we will cover in today's lecture. Let's begin today's session. As discussed in the previous lecture, self-awareness is an integral part of every model or conceptualization of emotional intelligence. Therefore, emotional intelligence cannot be separated from the aspect of self-awareness.

So, it is a very important and crucial aspect of emotional intelligence, often highlighted in almost every conceptualization and model of emotional intelligence. One way to define self-awareness is as the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviours, and how they influence oneself and others. It pertains to your awareness of your own emotions, your ability to recognize them, and how they influence your thoughts and behaviours. It encompasses your insights and your ability to become conscious of how emotions play a role in your dynamics and how they influence both yourself and others. This entire spectrum constitutes self-awareness. Essentially, it refers to how aware you are of certain aspects of your behaviour, particularly your emotional aspects, and how they influence your thoughts and behaviour.

Self-awareness is a critical component of emotional intelligence and has been extensively studied in the literature. It is considered the first step in emotional intelligence because it enables individuals to recognize their emotions and understand how they impact their behaviours and interactions with others. Without self-awareness, one cannot even begin to understand other aspects of emotional intelligence. Therefore, it is generally regarded as the initial step in developing emotional intelligence.

Research has shown that self-awareness is positively correlated with emotional intelligence in various aspects. Individuals who are more self-aware are better able to regulate their emotions, manage stress, and make sound decisions. Empirical literature clearly demonstrates the significant role of self-awareness in emotional intelligence.

In the literature, different types of self-awareness can be distinguished based on where the focus lies. Researcher Tasha Eurich classified two categories of self-awareness: internal self-awareness and external self-awareness. Internal self-awareness pertains to one's ability to observe their own thoughts, feelings, behaviours, strengths, and weaknesses in a distinct manner. It involves being aware of the various internal aspects of oneself, particularly feelings, thoughts, strengths, and weaknesses, and understanding how they are interconnected. This awareness can extend to understanding one's values, aspirations, passions, compatibility with the environment, and the impact of one's actions on others.

So, basically, these are all internal aspects—our values, aspirations, passions—all of which stem from our understanding of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours and are connected to values, aspirations, passions, and so on. All these aspects are linked to internal self-awareness. When we talk about internal self-awareness, it's about how well you know yourself. So, the question is: How well do you know yourself? Whatever answer you give will reflect your internal self-awareness.

Research has revealed that higher levels of internal self-awareness are associated with various other indicators such as job and relationship satisfaction, personal and social control, and happiness. Conversely, low levels of internal self-awareness are linked to anxiety, stress, and depression. One reason for this is that if you're unable to understand what lies within you, many unconscious patterns may keep recycling, leading to higher anxiety, stress, and depression.

External self-awareness, on the other hand, is about your ability to understand how others perceive us concerning our thoughts, feelings, behaviour, strengths, and weaknesses. It's still self-awareness, but it pertains to your understanding of how others see you. So, external self-awareness involves understanding how others perceive you, react to you, and view your different thoughts, feelings, behaviour, strengths, and weaknesses.

Individuals with higher external self-awareness are more likely to demonstrate empathy towards others. Understanding how others perceive you can lead to behaviour modification, improving the chances of building better relationships. Others also perceive them as effective individuals. Modulating behaviour according to the perceptions of others, where necessary, is crucial for effective social interactions and relationship-building.

Generally, one may assume that having a high level of one type of self-awareness would translate into high levels of another type. However, research has shown that this assumption may not always hold true. The correlation between internal and external self-awareness may not be very strong and positive. Internal self-awareness and external self-awareness are actually

distinct from each other, and individuals may not possess both simultaneously. Different patterns of behaviour have been identified based on varying levels of internal and external self-awareness.

Now, another combination is when people have high internal self-awareness, but we will discuss this at the end. Another possibility is when people have low internal self-awareness and low external self-awareness; both are low. In such cases, individuals are termed as self-ignorant. They have a limited understanding of themselves, lack awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, and depend on external assurance. They also have little understanding of how others perceive them.

Another possibility is when people have low internal self-awareness but high external self-awareness; their internal self-awareness is low, but external awareness is very high, indicating an outward focus. Such individuals are termed as amiable. They focus excessively on how others perceive them, lacking introspection and ready to compromise self-interest. Their behaviour is largely modulated by others' perceptions, often aiming to please others to an extent that may compromise their own needs.

The last possibility is when both internal and external awareness are high. Such individuals are termed as self-aware. They possess a good understanding of themselves and how others perceive them, are open to feedback, and engage in introspection. These qualities reflect typical self-awareness. These four possibilities categorize individuals based on their levels of internal and external self-awareness. People generally fall into one of these categories based on their self-awareness.

Professor Eurich also categorized leadership into four possibilities, which are similar to the discussed combinations. In the context of leadership, there are four archetypes of leaders based on their levels of internal and external self-awareness. For instance, leaders with high internal self-awareness but low external self-awareness are termed as introspections. They are internally aware but may overlook others' perspectives, limiting their success and harming relationships. Another category includes leaders with both low internal and external self-awareness, termed as seekers. They lack clarity about themselves and their team's perception, leading to frustration and stagnation in performance and relationships.

The third category comprises leaders with high external self-awareness but low internal self-awareness, termed as pleasers. They focus excessively on external appearances, potentially neglecting their own needs and values. They will constantly strive to please others and adjust their behaviour according to the environment or others' perceptions. Over time, they may make choices that do not serve their own success and fulfilment. While this approach may work in certain contexts where focusing solely on others' desires is sufficient, lacking personal clarity can impact one's own satisfaction and well-being. Thus, it has its limitations.

The third type of leader is the aware leader, possessing both high internal and external self-awareness. They excel in both dimensions, knowing themselves, their goals, and valuing others' opinions. These leaders actively seek feedback and incorporate it into their decision-making process, reaping the benefits of self-awareness. However, not everyone attains this level of self-awareness, as research findings indicate.

Now, let's delve into the possible components of self-awareness. Goldman's model, discussed in the previous lecture, outlines three crucial components: emotional awareness, accurate self-

assessment, and self-confidence. Emotional awareness involves recognizing and understanding one's emotions and their impact. Individuals with high emotional awareness can identify their emotions, comprehend their causes, and understand their influence on behaviour and performance. This understanding allows personal values to guide emotional responses, contributing to effective communication and well-being.

Accurate self-assessment refers to the ability to assess one's strengths, weaknesses, resources, and limitations. Accepting one's weaknesses and limitations can be challenging, especially in competitive environments, but it is essential for emotional intelligence and personal growth. Acknowledging weaknesses and limits enables individuals to work on improving themselves and leveraging their strengths. Those proficient in accurate self-assessment possess a comprehensive understanding of themselves, maintain a sense of humor about their limitations, and derive lessons from experiences while remaining open to feedback.

Self-confidence, the third component, naturally emerges from self-awareness. Accepting oneself, flaws and all, fosters a sense of self-worth and security, reducing the need for defensiveness. High self-confidence allows individuals to trust others, handle criticism positively, and navigate challenging circumstances with ease. Ultimately, self-awareness cultivates self-confidence, enabling individuals to embrace their authenticity and thrive in various environments.

So, that is another aspect of self-awareness. We have discussed different types of self-awareness and various components of self-awareness. Now, let us talk a bit more about blind spots in self-awareness because developing self-awareness is not easy; there are many blind spots. People may think they are self-aware, but in reality, they are not.

Let's explore the blind spots to self-awareness. Dr. Tashi Yurosh, who conducted extensive research on self-awareness, reported some significant findings. Firstly, self-awareness is a rare quality; not many people are actually self-aware. Despite many individuals perceiving themselves as possessing self-awareness, only a small portion, about 10 to 15 percent according to his research, actually meet this requirement. It's a very small percentage, indicating that true self-awareness is rare.

Secondly, it's a counterintuitive finding that people with extensive experience or in positions of power may have reduced self-awareness. While it may seem that more experience leads to greater awareness, research shows otherwise. Particularly in professional contexts and positions of authority, such as managerial roles, higher levels of experience and power can hinder self-awareness. Merely accumulating life experiences is insufficient to foster self-awareness. Some individuals remain oblivious to their ingrained behavioural patterns and fail to critically analyse them, often due to unconscious barriers.

Studies on managers have revealed that as experience increases, their ability to objectively evaluate their leadership effectiveness diminishes. They may overestimate their skills and capabilities, leading to a false sense of confidence that isn't supported by external perceptions or feedback. This phenomenon can be attributed to various factors, including a lack of honest feedback from superiors and subordinates and discomfort among subordinates in giving constructive feedback to those in power.

Moreover, experiencing more power can exacerbate these issues, as leaders become less willing to listen to feedback and may overvalue their own skills. Seeking feedback from diverse

sources, including superiors, peers, and subordinates, is crucial for increasing self-awareness and leadership effectiveness. Successful leaders actively seek feedback from multiple sources, regardless of hierarchical position, and are open to constructive criticism.

Improving external self-awareness often involves seeking feedback from trusted individuals who genuinely care about one's well-being. This feedback can help validate perceptions and avoid overreactions or incorrect assumptions. It's essential to discern authentic feedback from sources genuinely invested in one's growth, as feedback from other sources may not be reliable.

In summary, overcoming blind spots in self-awareness requires a willingness to seek and accept critical feedback from various sources, including caring critics, to enhance both internal and external self-awareness. This proactive approach is vital for personal and professional growth, especially in leadership roles.

So, that cannot increase one's self-awareness. Thus, it is very important. Accepting critical feedback is crucial, and understanding the right source of feedback is equally important. But one has to be willing to listen to it. That is how one can remove those blockages. Now, let's discuss how to increase self-awareness. We have already touched on the feedback part, so let's continue with that.

Feedback is a powerful tool for enhancing self-awareness, especially in organizational settings where 360-degree feedback is a common method. This involves gathering anonymous feedback from peers, subordinates, and superiors, providing valuable insights into one's performance and behaviour. However, receiving feedback can be challenging as it may challenge our self-image and deeply held

beliefs about ourselves. It takes courage to be open to feedback and consider it thoughtfully. Selecting the appropriate individuals to receive feedback from is crucial, as biased feedback may not contribute to higher self-awareness.

Seeking feedback from trustworthy individuals who genuinely care about our well-being is essential. Another way to enhance self-awareness is through introspection. Setting aside time for reflection on our thoughts, speech, and behaviour in a quiet and distraction-free environment can lead to insights into our actions and motivations. However, introspection can be uncomfortable and may require confronting unpleasant emotions. Some individuals may even seek distractions to avoid introspection altogether. Nonetheless, investing time and effort in the right kind of introspection is necessary for developing self-awareness.

Interestingly, research shows that not all types of introspection lead to increased self-awareness. Simply asking "why" questions during introspection may not be productive. This approach can lead to biased answers and negative rumination, hindering self-awareness rather than fostering it. Instead, asking "what" questions can be more effective. For example, asking "what triggered my behaviour?" rather than "why did I behave this way?" can lead to a better understanding of oneself and promote self-awareness.

In a study by psychologists Hickson and Swan, participants who introspected using "what" questions were more open to learning from negative feedback compared to those who used "why" questions. Similarly, in real-life situations, individuals who ask "what" questions during introspection may be more receptive to feedback and less defensive.

To illustrate, if John, a customer service leader, receives negative feedback from an employee, asking "what could be the possible reasons for this feedback?" rather than "why did you give me this negative feedback?" can lead to a more open and constructive reflection process.

In conclusion, enhancing self-awareness through feedback and introspection requires a thoughtful approach. Being open to feedback from trusted sources and asking constructive "what" questions during introspection can lead to deeper self-understanding and personal growth.

So, we are using the was John if he chooses to ask what steps can I take in the future to improve my performance, what could I take. So, I got negative feedback, so what can be done. So, then it could lead to a more productive approach in terms of dealing with it. The why question can create unproductive outcomes and may not help you much in that context. So, that is one example. Similarly, you know, different examples are there. Like another business owner, David, was faced with the reality that the business he had recently bought was no longer profitable. So, he started a business, and it is no longer working. He may ask, why was I not able to turn things around? So, asking this why question will not really solve anything; he will become more depressed, and maybe more anxiety will come because he will focus on all the negatives. Why did he fail? Why was he not able to turn it into profit?

So, he will focus on his own inabilities, own insecurities, and so on. But he realized that he needed to, in fact, instead of finding a solution, instead of dwelling on why he failed, he can ask what steps do I need to take to move forward. So, that is more productive and can lead to much better outcomes. So, it is a kind of shift in questions can lead to a shift in mind-set itself. To sum it up, we can conclude that individuals and leaders who prioritize developing their internal and external self-awareness, both the awareness's should be enhanced, seek candid feedback from trustworthy critics, seek feedback from trustworthy critics who are really neutral and have their best interests at heart, and use what instead of why questions to improve their self-perceptions and reap the benefits of increased self-knowledge.

So, these are the keys to increasing self-awareness, and this is the summary of the findings, all the findings that we have discussed. And at the end, obviously, mindfulness practice itself can enhance our self-awareness, which we have already discussed. Lecture number 22 was devoted to this whole thing, that this is a technique to enhance our self-awareness. Obviously, that takes time, and everybody may not be aware of it and may not be able to do it. But this practice can enhance a lot of deeper biases and deeper automatic unconscious patterns; it can expose, and one can become much more aware.

So, the practice of mindfulness can lead to a lot of benefits that we have already discussed in full lecture. So, that is obviously there. So, these are some of the things about self-awareness. It is one of the most fundamental components of emotional intelligence, and these are some of the important findings related to it. With increased self-awareness, our emotional intelligence will also increase. So, in the next lecture, we will talk about another component of emotional intelligence. So, like this, we will continue. So, with this, I will stop here. Thank you.