

2 Getting to Know Our Minds Better

2A Lesson – Journals Improve Self-Awareness

For centuries, “knowing thyself” has been accepted as an important key in leading a successful, well-balanced life. The journaling questions listed in this lesson are designed to help you become more self-aware. Answering such questions can help to reduce frustrations and make your daily experiences more emotionally fulfilling.

They are among many self-observation questions to be explored in our program.

PLEASE NOTE: This lesson is the first of several that we offer to teach you how to apply your most valuable resource — located right BEHIND your very eyes — in ways that will build your emotional prosperity.

Journaling and other activities presented in Lesson 2 are designed to help you get to know your mind better in emotionally meaningful ways. To ensure that you’re working from the necessary educated standpoint, we suggest that you do the following:

1. Read through Lessons 2 A-B now, but wait to perform the recommended activities only after you have read Lesson 3 A-B of “Why We Need to Understand Our Minds Better”.
2. To orient yourself to our program, please be sure you have already read
3. Lesson 1, “How to Use This Program Guide” including the “Helpful Reminders to Learn Effectively”.
4. As you progress at your own pace, read the books and explore the on-line resources of Lesson 2 and 3.
5. It is best to complete Lessons 1-3, including exploring their resources list, before you begin Lesson 4. You will find that each lesson’s knowledge prepares you for the next.

Getting to Know Our Minds Better: Where to Begin

Trying to understand our minds better is an ambitious and honorable initiative. It’s also a most valuable one. With proper training, our efforts can contribute significantly toward improving our emotional well-being, as well as our relationship with the outside world.

The emotional intelligence movement began with the introduction of the groundbreaking book titled *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, by Daniel Goleman in 1995. In Goleman’s book, he highlights the research of psychologists Peter Salovey of Yale University and John D. Mayer of the University of New Hampshire.

In their research into the emotional dynamics of the mind, Salovey and Mayer confirmed that emotional growth occurs through our intellect. They also confirmed that certain dynamics are necessary to promote higher standards of emotional and intellectual behavior. Their findings distinguished the importance of identifying, understanding and managing emotions and thus, defined the term emotional intelligence. On page 43 of Goleman's book, Mayer and Salovey expanded their definition of emotional intelligence into five main domains:

1. Self-awareness of one's emotions- knowing our own emotions in action
2. Managing emotions- handling our feelings appropriately
3. Motivating oneself- effectively accomplishing healthy challenges
4. Recognizing emotions in others- empathetically attuned to other's emotional signals
5. Handling relationships- interacting smoothly with others

Self-awareness, listed as number 1 above, has been distinguished as the foundation upon which further emotional intelligence can most easily be built. The best way to begin understanding our own minds better, emotionally, and improve our EQ, is, thus, by learning more about self-awareness and participating in activities that help us become more self-aware of our emotions in action.

The importance of self-awareness, however, is not something new. It is a term we use today that has implied "knowing thyself". For centuries, it has been stressed as an important key to leading a successful, well-balanced life. Yet how many people over the centuries truly learned how to get to know themselves well and lead successful, well-balanced lives? Perhaps the problem has been that we just haven't learned enough about how to "get to know thyself better" to really get to know ourselves well?

Self-awareness, overall, is about earnestly paying close attention to the *quality* of our thoughts, communications, and behavior---and understanding how we really are, as individuals. To improve self-awareness involves objectively observing how well our minds are operating, in general, including observing our emotions in actions and recognizing how effectively we are managing them.

This is a tall order for anyone without specific guidance. Even though the most distinguishing characteristics we have to our existence are our qualities and our ineptitudes, not as many of them are naturally self-evident or as memorable to us as we might think—especially our ineptitudes.

The reason self-awareness is considered to be a foundation of emotional intelligence is because it helps us define what we need to know about ourselves to *improve* our lives, emotionally. With quality direction and genuine intention to try to understand ourselves, the more we can recognize how valuable "knowing thyself" is to our overall life journey.

By learning what to specifically look for to improve our self-awareness and how to exercise accumulating related data, it can provide us with a more empowering sense of rationale and direction than we can otherwise imagine.

This *directed* kind of self-observation can help us engineer our minds and our lives much more cautiously. It can have a profound influence on how well we deal with our emotions; as well as how meaningfully we affect other people and things around us.

Without understanding what to look for and how to accumulate data, we can (believe it or not) be far less accurate about how we perceive ourselves. We can too easily compose distorted perceptions—even to the point of structuring an overall inappropriate rating of how emotionally intelligent we are.

Structuring a collection of data in a way that provides a broader perspective, thus, requires a formulated monitoring process. Although, personally, it is rarely considered, such a process is required in just about every profession imaginable in one form or another.

A big part of the process involved in revealing an important overall EQ picture could be compared to the bookkeeping necessary to quantify a business' financial picture. Without knowing what details to measure and how to appropriately measure them—structuring an overall accurate rating of our EQ would be about as impossible as trying to quantify a company's financial status—without knowing how to structure a financial statement.

Investigating Important Criteria Daily: Meaningful Questions to Ask

The journaling questions outlined below are part of a formulated process that is designed to help you get to know your mind better. They help reveal more of the bigger picture of YOU and your life.

1. What were the highlights of my day? It's amazing how much more of a month's activities and experiences we can remember by noting brief reminders of them each day. In seven days, we suggest you transfer the best of your daily highlight's list to a list of weekly highlights; at month's end, keep the highlights you wish to remember and title this list as January, February, March, etc. By noting these brief "remembrances" monthly through the years, it becomes possible to build a more thorough and interesting memoir of one's life, similar to the value of keeping a memorable photo collection.

2. What frustrated, angered or bothered me today? Asking this question and reviewing our answers at the end of the week helps us to better discern what is worthy of frustration and complaints, as well as what is not worthy or as worthy as we thought. The time lapse helps us to recognize how our level of stress can be higher in the moment than it should be about our complaints and frustrations. From this daily reflection, we learn that sometimes it is a healthier approach to just try to take things in stride and deal with them more calmly. If you find from such daily notation that your mind is exaggerating bother, it can help to reduce such exaggerations in the future. This can be a real stress reducer!

3. What am I grateful for and encouraged about today? This question helps us keep our emotional balance, especially when things seem to go awry. When we think about it, there may be a lot more things to consider than we realize, to provide us with an answer to this question. See a starter list at end of lesson.

4. What did I do today that might have inconvenienced or offended another person? It's hard to find fault in our own actions toward others. This question forces us to reflect on the possibility that we may have said or done something offensive toward another person and not realized it without such reflection.

5. What did I tell others today that I would do? Noting answers to this question helps to ensure that we will remember to do what we said we would do.

6. What have I borrowed from someone today that I need to return? Noting answers to this question helps to ensure that we will remember to return what we borrow.

7. What did others tell me today that they would do or borrow from me today that I need to remember? By answering this question and reviewing it periodically, we ensure that others who need to follow up with us do so.

8. What did I learn about myself today that I didn't realize before? This question helps us keep track of the new things we're learning about ourselves and our minds. We can then review our answers regularly to monitor our growth in self-knowledge.

How many of us ask these kinds of questions of ourselves without such prompts?

To begin journaling, write or type each of the questions at the top of its own page. (Your journal can be on paper or on a computer file.) Throughout the day, note possible answers. At day's end, notate your brief answers on the prepared pages. Be sure to date each entry. As mentioned earlier, most answers, when combined with others, reveal accumulative ways we learn more about ourselves, not possible otherwise. Noting your answers and reviewing them frequently provides a healthy starting point to practice self-monitoring.

In our program, you will explore a number of simple activities such as this that are effective ways in which you can become more self-aware and improve your EQ. (This is the first of several groups of questions we will, from time to time, have you explore and note answers daily for at least a month.)

Assessing Your Answers

The questions listed here are about matters of emotional stability and respect for others. You will be surprised at the amount of insight gained from pondering these particular questions each day. You may find some questions worth continuing after the initial four weeks as they can help you feel a healthier sense of balance each day.

Documenting our lives through journaling is well understood as a valuable exercise. It helps us to connect with and record the important content of our daily lives we might otherwise forget or not even consider. Answering these particular questions is a more focused approach to journaling. It can be an extremely rewarding way to organize important thoughts that help improve our self-understanding and EQ.

As previously mentioned, these questions prompt us to examine experiences, feelings, and behavior that we otherwise might not reflect upon. By journaling our answers to these simple yet strategic questions every day for a month, we collect information about our minds and life experiences that help us quickly become more self-aware. By accumulating your answers and evaluating them periodically, you will gain a more complete picture of emotional aspects of your daily life that are important to be aware of.

Contemplating and answering these kinds of questions provide us with data that helps assess how well we are conducting and exerting our minds as well as how well we are treating others. However, they are only the beginning. As mentioned, a larger, more complex process is ahead of you in order to get a thorough emotionally meaningful picture.

In Conclusion: Reasons to Continue to Improve Self-Awareness

As this lesson has revealed, developing an acute sense of self-awareness involves examining a multitude of thoughts, communications, and behaviors, a few at a time over an extended period of time. When we create written notes like a journal of questions such as these, they can help us identify much more than is possible through even a high level of self-conscious observation alone. However, when we combine both daily questions with acute observation, it is possible to understand our minds better within a few months than can be grasped about it through loose observation for a much longer period of time, maybe even the span of a lifetime.

One of the few problems with becoming more self-aware is that certain weaknesses we learn of ourselves can be disheartening. To keep your commitment alive as you become further involved in the process, be sure to occasionally remind yourself of the meaningful reasons for continuing to monitor our thoughts, communications, and behavior listed on the next page.

Twelve Healthy Reasons to Monitor Ourselves

- 1.** Some behaviors and mind function problems can be improved as soon as we realize that problems exist and/or understand how to improve.
- 2.** What we don't know about our own minds and behavior can really hurt us.
- 3.** Self-awareness is a foundation of emotional intelligence.
- 4.** Becoming more self-aware is the fastest way to improve emotional intelligence.
- 5.** Self-awareness is important to our overall security, well being, and emotional stability.
- 6.** Self-awareness improves our relationships with others and the world around us.
- 7.** Discretion in our thoughts, communications, and behavior pays high dividends.
- 8.** Such observation helps us reduce self-centeredness.
- 9.** Without learning to monitor our minds and behavior, it is much more difficult to improve our emotional intelligence.
- 10.** We can be far less concerned about the quality of our thoughts and actions than we may realize, when we don't monitor them.
- 11.** Without scrutinizing how well our minds are operating, subtle distortions can remain undetected and continue to worsen.
- 12.** To combat irrational thinking and behavior requires awareness of their existence.

PLEASE NOTE: Remember at this point to continue reading through Lesson 3, if you haven't previously done so, before beginning the suggested activities.

LESSON QUIZ QUESTIONS

Lesson 2A Journals Improve Self-Awareness

Quiz questions are presented first, with answers just below them. This will allow you to study the quiz questions as much as necessary to learn the answers well. You can then take the final quiz, once you feel confident that you know the answers. The object of the quiz questions is to assist you in learning the most important aspects of each lesson. Please note also that the questions are presented in the order the information is provided in the lessons and that a final quiz, with answers separated, is located in the very last few pages of this lesson.

From this exercise, we would hope that in casual conversation you could at least explain the following:

Briefly, be able to give general reasons why it is important to understand our minds better.

Define emotional intelligence.

Describe one of the best ways to begin improving EI.

Tell how the EI concept has grown since 1995.

QUIZ (WITH ANSWERS)

1. With proper training, our efforts to understand our _____ better can contribute significantly toward _____ our emotional well-being, as well as our relationship with the outside world.

minds / improving

2. The emotional intelligence movement began in the year 19__ __ with the introduction of the groundbreaking book titled *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* written by _____.

95 / Daniel Goleman

3. The book “Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ” highlights the research of two psychologists, _____ of Yale University and _____ of the University of New Hampshire.

Peter Salovey/John Mayer

4. In their research into the emotional dynamics of the mind, these two psychologists confirmed that emotional *growth* occurs through our _____.

intellect

5. Emotional intelligence distinguished the importance of 1. _____
2. _____ and 3. _____ emotions.

identifying / understanding / managing

6. Name the five main domains of emotional intelligence:

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

- A. Self-awareness of one's emotions- knowing our own emotions in action
- B. Managing emotions- handling our feelings appropriately
- C. Motivating oneself- effectively accomplishing healthy challenges
- D. Recognizing emotions in others- empathetically attuned to emotional signals
- E. Handling relationships- interacting smoothly with others

7. Self-awareness has been distinguished as the _____ upon which further emotional intelligence can most easily be built.

foundation

8. Learning to objectively pay close attention to how well our minds are operating is about _____ the *quality* of our thoughts, communications, and behavior.

monitoring

9. Learning how we really are, as individuals, is about improving our _____.

self-awareness

10. Learning to observe our emotions in actions and recognize how effectively we are managing them is important to our _____.

well-being

11. The most distinguishing characteristics we have to our existence are our _____ and _____.

qualities and ineptitudes

12. Our efforts to become more _____ - _____ helps us define what we need to know about ourselves to improve our lives, emotionally.

self-aware

13. By learning what to specifically _____ to improve our self-awareness and how to accumulate _____, it can provide us with a more empowering sense of rationale and direction than we can otherwise imagine.

look for /related data

14. A healthfully *directed* kind of self-observation can have a profound influence on how well we deal with our _____ as well as how meaningfully we affect other _____ and things around us.

emotions / people

15. Although, self-monitoring is rarely considered, _____, such a process is required in just about every profession imaginable in one form or another.

personally

16. A big part of the process involved in revealing an important overall EQ picture could be compared to _____ necessary to quantify a business' _____ picture.

bookkeeping / financial.

17. Documenting our lives through _____ is well understood as a valuable exercise. It helps us to connect with and record the important content of our daily lives we might otherwise _____ or not even _____.

journaling /forget /consider

18. The eight questions listed in this lesson prompt us to examine our

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ that we otherwise might not reflect upon.

experiences/ feelings / behavior

19. One of the few problems with becoming more self-aware is that certain

_____ we learn of ourselves can be _____.

weaknesses/disheartening

20. When we combine both daily journaling _____ with acute _____, it is possible to understand our minds better within a few months than a much longer period of time, maybe even the span of a lifetime.

questions/observation

21. In the space below, name three of the twelve reasons to monitor ourselves that were listed at the end of this lesson:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

(see list in lesson)

1. With proper training, our efforts to understand our _____ better can contribute significantly toward _____ our emotional well-being, as well as our relationship with the outside world.
2. The emotional intelligence movement began in the year 19__ __ with the introduction of the groundbreaking book titled *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* written by _____.
3. The book “Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ” highlights the research of two psychologists, _____ of Yale University and _____ of the University of New Hampshire.
4. In their research into the emotional dynamics of the mind, these two psychologists confirmed that emotional *growth* occurs through our _____.
5. Emotional intelligence distinguished the importance of 1. _____
2. _____ and 3. _____ emotions.
6. Name the five main domains of emotional intelligence:
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____
7. Self-awareness has been distinguished as the _____ upon which further emotional intelligence can most easily be built.
8. Learning to objectively pay close attention to how well our minds are operating is about _____ the *quality* of our thoughts, communications, and behavior.
9. Learning how we really are, as individuals, is about improving our _____.
10. Learning to observe our emotions in actions and recognize how effectively we are managing them is important to our _____.
11. The most distinguishing characteristics we have to our existence are our _____ and _____.
12. Our efforts to become more _____ helps us define what

we need to know about ourselves to improve our lives, emotionally.

- 13.** By learning what to specifically _____ to improve our self-awareness and how to accumulate _____, it can provide us with a more empowering sense of rationale and direction than we can otherwise imagine.
- 14.** A healthfully *directed* kind of self-observation can have a profound influence on how well we deal with our _____ as well as how meaningfully we affect other _____ and things around us.
- 15.** Although, self-monitoring is rarely considered _____, such a process is required in just about every profession imaginable in one form or another.
- 16.** A big part of the process involved in revealing an important overall EQ picture could be compared to _____ necessary to quantify a business' _____ picture.
- 17.** Documenting our lives through _____ is well understood as a valuable exercise. It helps us to connect with and record the important content of our daily lives we might otherwise _____ or not even _____.
- 18.** The eight questions listed in this lesson prompt us to examine our
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
that we otherwise might not reflect upon.
- 19.** One of the few problems with becoming more self-aware is that certain _____ we learn of ourselves can be _____.
- 20.** When we combine both daily journaling _____ with acute _____ it is possible to understand our minds better within a few months than a much longer period of time, maybe even the span of a lifetime.
- 21.** In the space below, name three of the twelve reasons to monitor ourselves that were listed in this lesson:

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

(see list at end of lesson for answers)

FINAL QUIZ ANSWERS

1. minds / improving
2. 95 / Daniel Goleman
3. Peter Salovey/John Mayer
4. intellect
5. identifying / understanding / managing
6.
 - A. Self-awareness of one's emotions- knowing our own emotions in action
 - B. Managing emotions- handling our feelings appropriately
 - C. Motivating oneself- effectively accomplishing healthy challenges
 - D. Recognizing emotions in others- empathetically attuned to emotional signals
 - E. Handling relationships- interacting smoothly with others
7. foundation
8. monitoring
9. self-awareness
10. well-being
11. qualities and ineptitudes
12. Self-awareness
13. look for /related data
14. emotions / people
15. personally
16. bookkeeping /financial.
17. journaling /forget /consider
18. experiences/ feelings / behavior
19. weaknesses/disheartening
20. questions/observation
21. (see list at end of lesson)