

# self awareness

**conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives, desires, and skills**



The people who are happiest in their jobs — or become millionaires before they retire — aren't all confident, organized or excellent problem-solvers.

Instead, there's a different skill that gives successful people a competitive edge in the workplace, says Juliette Han, a Harvard-trained neuroscientist: **Self-awareness.**

Being self-aware means reflecting on your strengths and mapping them to your goals, she adds. Research suggests that developing self-awareness helps us be more creative, make sounder decisions, communicate better and build stronger relationships. According to Han, it's "the most underrated skill" successful people use to get ahead in their careers.

## **HERE ARE THREE TIPS TO IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS AND CULTIVATE GREATER SELF-AWARENESS:**

**Reflect on your interests and skills** What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing? These are two of the most important questions you should be asking yourself at work, whether you're starting a new job or crashing from burnout.

"For example: Do you enjoy leading a team, or analyzing data?" she says. "The answers to these questions can help you identify the tasks you don't mind doing over and over again."

Once you have a good understanding of your strengths and the job responsibilities you'd enjoy, you can develop a plan to improve your skills and focus on the projects and tasks that excite you.

**Ask for feedback from your manager and co-workers** Next time you're meeting with your boss, or out for coffee with a co-worker, ask them this: "Can you tell me a time when I was helpful to your work, and can you be specific?"

Whatever their answer is will "help you glean something about yourself, the impact you have on those you work with and how others view you," Han explains.

These conversations can also help you pinpoint which skills you could work on. For example: If a co-worker mentions a time your ability to multi-task came in clutch on an important project, and this isn't a skill you use often, you might want to consider practicing that skill more.

Han asked her close friends how they would describe her in three words, and "funny" popped up in almost every response. She realized that her humor not only made her a good friend, according to the people she loved — it could also make help her be a more empathetic, friendly manager.

"Sometimes, you don't realize what your strengths are until you see them through someone else's eyes," Han adds.

**Set goals and track your progress** Once you know which skills you want to improve or incorporate more into your work, you should set goals and track your progress, which can help you stay motivated and work more efficiently.

Han says **it can take time to see tangible improvements in self-awareness, but the skill pays off in dividends.** Says Han: "You can have all the technical skills and charisma in the world, but if you're completely oblivious of yourself, how you come across and interact in the world, it's a lot harder to build strong relationships, interact with your boss and co-workers and deepen the friendships you need to truly succeed."