



Self-Awareness Exercise: Taking Stock/Personal Inventory

Many years ago, I studied with a teacher who shared a story about how critical it is to take humble, honest stock of what you have - and what you *don't*, and to neither lie to yourself or others about it.

The story went like this:

Imagine you just bought a small neighborhood grocery store. The first thing you do is take stock and see what kind of inventory there is. There may be a lot of one item, for instance a lot of bread, or a lot of eggs - but there may be no milk or fresh fruits and veggies.

So if you try and pretend that there are a lot of tomatoes, and you deny the fact that there's a great deal of rye bread, when customers come in there's going to be a terrible problem because you'll say, "I'm sorry Mrs. Jones we're out of rye bread," and she'll see that there are a hundred loaves of it.

On the other hand, If you say, "Oh yes Mrs. Jones we have a lovely selection of tomatoes," and she'll go over and see there are none at all ... well this is how most people lead their lives - in self-delusion and non-ownership of what they have - and what they don't. They don't take an honest stock of themselves, and don't see and own their imperfections, mistakes, and biases, **or** they create

perfections and accomplishments in their own mind that don't match reality. On the flip side, many people often downplay the talents and skills they **do** have, whether they were born with them or have worked hard to attain them.

Assignment:

Answer each of these questions, preferably by writing them down in a journal, with complete and total honesty. Please don't pass this opportunity up and cheat yourself from gaining the awareness that tough questions can bring, just because they might make you feel *uncomfortable*.

- How **self-aware** am I? How **others-aware** am I?
- Am I leading by the **same example** in every area of my life: work, home, family, relationships, socially, in my faith and in my politics?
- What is the **impact I have** upon myself, and whomever my life comes into contact with, no matter where I find myself, in any given situation, interaction or moment? How much do I **care** about my impact?
- When facing the fog of challenging life situations, what are my **guiding principles**?
- Do I ever try to **get away with** behaviors that are unethical, illegal or knowingly harmful?
- Do I **humbly yet confidently** own the gifts, skills and talents I have worked to attain, or do I engage in false humility? Do I **brag** about gifts, skills and talents that I have - or *don't have*?
- How strong is my **character**? How **ethically intelligent** am I?
- What is the biggest lie I tell **myself**? What is the biggest lie I tell **others**?
- Where am I biased, elitist or hypocritical? Do I push aside my **blindspots** because I don't want to look at them?
- Do I criticize others for things I actually do **myself**?
- How do I **treat myself - and others** - when I am stressed?
- Do I have Work/Life **harmony**? Am I the **same person no matter where I am** - in any given situation or interaction? Do I **own my own mind** - or *does someone/something else*? Is my life all about "**me me me**" - or is it about "**we**"?

Fearfully clinging to the false sense of safety of your same old status quo - because it's what you **know even if you are miserable** - only keeps you locked in mediocrity, and prevents you from evolving and becoming the best version of yourself you can be. And although Einstein didn't actually

say this, it is true nonetheless – one definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results.

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