



Awareness of Self:
Understand your
identity, values, and
mindset the foundation for
personal growth and
academic success.

**Directorate: Counselling and
Career Development**
October 2025

Define tomorrow.

UNISA



Our focus:

- What is self awareness and why it is important?
- Self awareness theory
- Internal and external self awareness
- Self awareness archetypes
- Elements of self awareness
- Stages of self awareness
- Ways to cultivate self awareness
- Benefits of self awareness



What is self-awareness?



- The ability to understand & reflect on one's thoughts, emotions, strengths, weaknesses, & behaviors, enhancing personal growth & decision-making.
- The capacity to open-mindedly and realistically assess your strengths and weaknesses while maintaining your confidence, drive, and desire to grow.
- The ability to see yourself clearly and objectively through reflection and introspection.
- Objective evaluation of your inner and outer worlds, allows for:
 - better emotional management,
 - informed decision-making, and
 - growth in personal and academic/ professional life
- Developing self-awareness involves mindfulness practices, seeking feedback & reflecting on past experiences to gain deeper insights.
- Increased self-awareness leads to improved emotional intelligence, fostering better relationships & enhancing overall wellbeing.

What is self-awareness theory?



Self awareness theory is based on the idea that you are not your **thoughts**, but the entity observing your thoughts; you are the thinker, separate and apart from your thoughts (Duval & Wicklund, 1972).



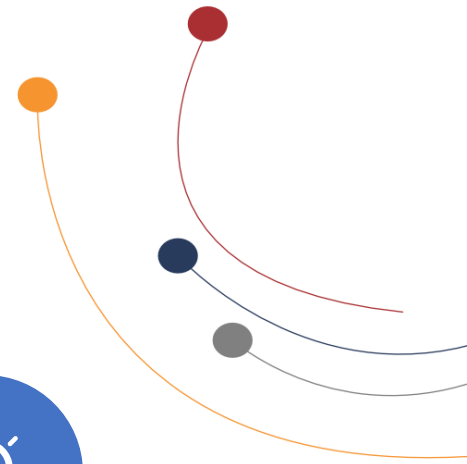
We can go about our day without giving our inner self any extra thought, merely thinking and feeling and acting as we will; however, we also can focus our attention on that inner self, an ability that Duval and Wicklund (1972) termed “**self-evaluation**.”



When we engage in self-evaluation, we can give some thought to whether we are thinking and **feeling** and acting as we “should” or following our standards and **values**.



Using these standards is a major component of practicing self-control, as we evaluate and determine whether we are making the right **choices** to achieve our **goals**.





Internal vs. External self-awareness

1.Internal Self-Awareness:

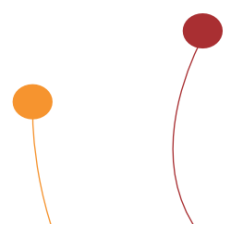
This is your understanding of your inner world, including your personal values, strengths, weaknesses, needs, hopes, and dreams (intrapersonal relationship)

2.External Self-Awareness:

This is your understanding of how other people perceive you (interpersonal relationships)

The Four Self-Awareness Archetypes

This 2x2 maps internal self-awareness (how well you know yourself) against external self-awareness (how well you understand how other see you).



	Low external self-awareness	High external self-awareness
High internal self-awareness	INTROSPECTORS They're clear on who they are but don't challenge their own views or search for blind spots by getting feedback from others. This can harm their relationships and limit their success.	AWARE They know who they are, what they want to accomplish, and seek out and value others' opinions. This is where leaders begin to fully realize the true benefits of self-awareness.
Low internal self-awareness	SEEKERS They don't yet know who they are, what they stand for, or how their teams see them. As a result, they might feel stuck or frustrated with their performance and relationships.	PLEASERS They can be so focused on appearing a certain way to others that they could be overlooking what matters to them. Over time, they tend to make choices that aren't in service of their own success and fulfillment.

SOURCE DR. TASHA EURICH

© HBR.ORG

What does self-awareness look like?

Identify your emotions. You need to be able to identify your feelings.

Learning the difference between frustration and anger will help you navigate your emotions.

By recognising the link between their feelings, thoughts, and actions, you can then address these feelings and react to them appropriately.

See yourself honestly. You need to learn to look at yourself honestly can help you respond to compliments, feedback, and criticism openly and earnestly.

This sense of self will teach you to see and acknowledge both the positive and negative things in their nature.

Recognise your strengths and weaknesses. You need to have ability to see yourself, acknowledge your shortcomings, and embrace your strengths.

Knowing that it's okay to admit you're wrong or don't understand something sets you up for growth. Acknowledging aptitude also builds confidence.

Work toward growth. All of these skills lead to self-efficacy and understand that self-work and growth are positive activities that result in healthy, happy people with a drive to achieve.

Four elements of self- awareness

1) Self-Perception:
Knowing yourself

2) Your thoughts: The
stories you tell yourself.

3) Emotions: The
internal currents.

4) Body Language: The
silent signals.

The importance of a healthy self- awareness

Having a healthy self-awareness promotes emotional wellness and self-esteem.

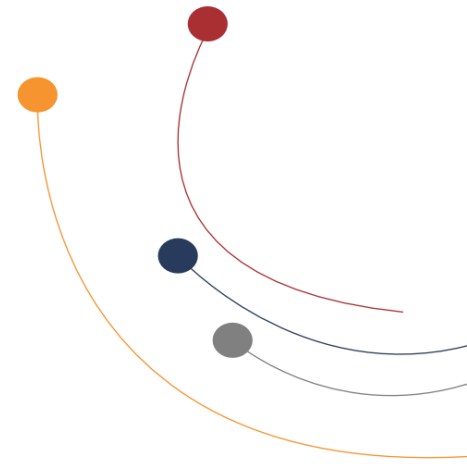
It provides you with insight into who you are, why you react as you do,

Gives you a direction for self-improvement.

Self-awareness is crucial for success.

Self-aware people have a fundamental belief in their ability to achieve a goal, and this trait helps you thrive in everything you do.

4 Stages of Awareness



Stage 1: Physiological awareness

At the very core of our being lies the awareness of our physiological needs.

It is the foundation upon which the entire structure of our well-being is built.



Stage 2:

Safety awareness

Once our basic physical needs—like food, rest, and shelter—are met, our attention naturally shifts to safety and security.

At this stage, we start to notice how important it is to feel physically safe, financially stable, and to have some predictability in our lives.

For students, this might mean worrying about money, adjusting to new routines, or finding a stable environment where you can focus and feel supported. Developing self-awareness here involves recognising what helps you feel safe and what might be making you feel unsettled.

But safety isn't only about the physical—it's also about emotional safety. We all need relationships where we feel we can trust others and express ourselves without fear of judgment.

Counsellors and support staff can help you explore these areas—by building emotional resilience, creating healthier routines, and strengthening your support network.

When we feel safe, both physically and emotionally, we create the foundation for deeper self-awareness and personal growth.

Stage 3:

Social and emotional awareness

As you ascend the hierarchy, you enter the realm of social and emotional awareness.

Here, individuals yearn for connections, seek meaningful relationships, and explore their emotional well-being.

Counsellors may in this stage support you on a journey of self-discovery, empowering and supporting you to understand your emotional landscape and navigate the intricacies of human interactions.

You may explore your values, beliefs, and aspirations, as well as develop a profound understanding of your own emotions and those of others.



Stage 4: Self-actualisation and self-transcendence awareness



You may strive for personal growth, self-fulfilment, and a connection to something greater than themselves.

Self-actualization involves the realisation of one's potential, talents, and passions.

Counsellors may assist in facilitating to set and achieve meaningful goals, fostering creativity, and nurturing a sense of purpose.

This stage also encompasses self-transcendence, where you may explore a sense of connection to a higher purpose or spirituality.

Counsellors may facilitate your quest for transcendent experiences and a deeper understanding of your role in the broader world.

The interplay of stages

The journey of awareness is often more complex.

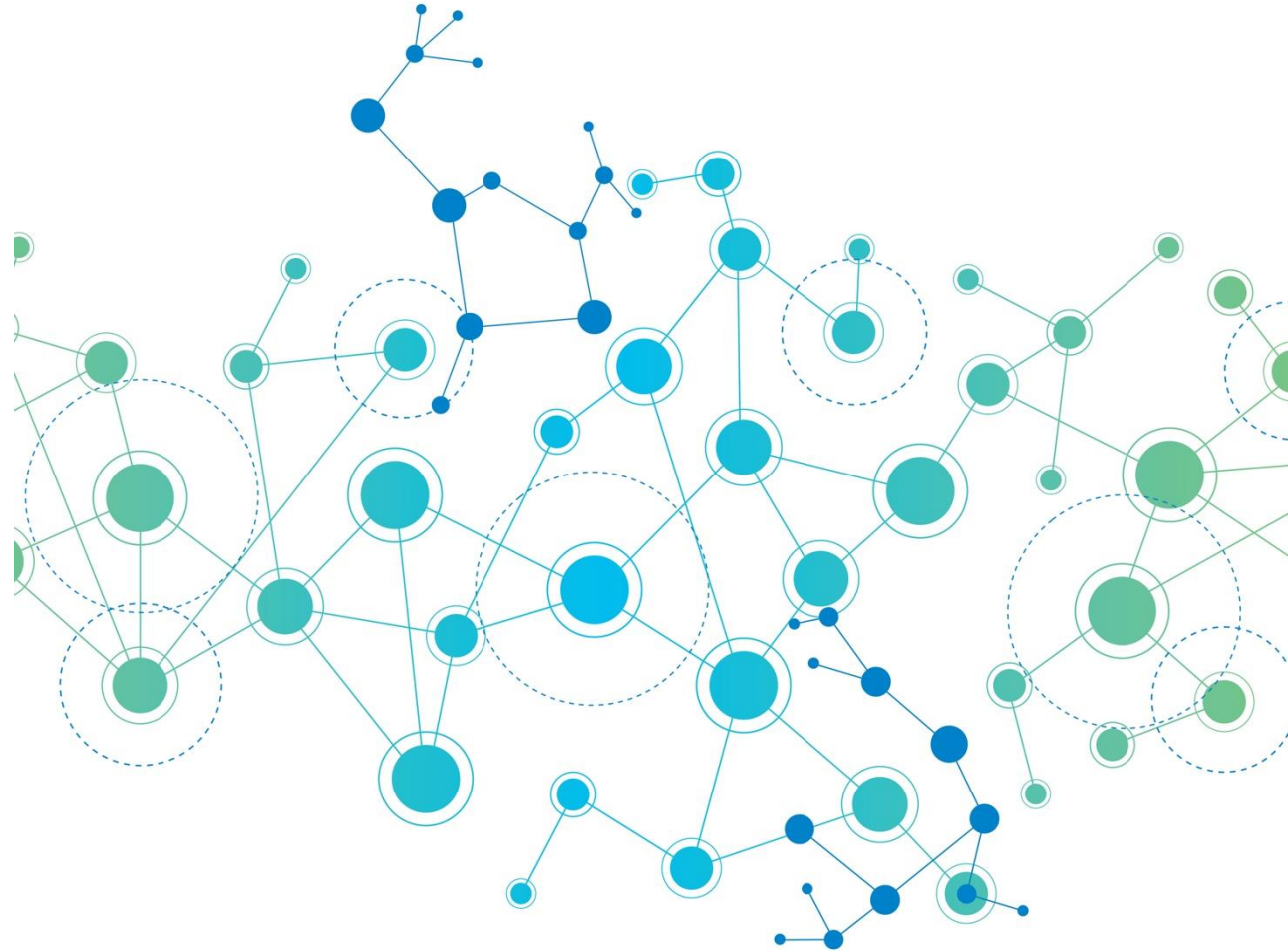
You may find yourself concurrently in multiple stages, each one influencing the other.

For example, you may be in the process of self-actualisation (Stage 4) while still grappling with elements of emotional awareness (Stage 3). We need to understand that growth is not always a linear progression.

The interplay of these stages highlights the holistic nature of personal development.

An individual may reach a level of self-actualisation, but external factors or challenges may temporarily regress them to safety or even physiological awareness.

One must remain adaptable, empathetic, and non-judgmental, creating a safe space to explore their awareness at any stage.



The background features a complex network diagram. It consists of numerous circular nodes of varying sizes, colored in shades of blue, teal, and green. These nodes are interconnected by thin, light-colored lines, creating a web-like structure. Some nodes are highlighted with dashed circles. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, suggesting a theme of connectivity or growth.

**The four stages form the foundation of
personal growth and self-fulfilment.**

Ways to cultivate self awareness



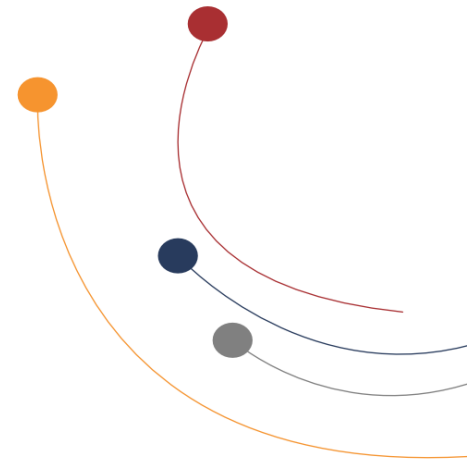
Create space and
time



Connect with
yourself daily



Avoid digital
distraction



More tips

Practice mindfulness

- Connect with inner state
- Mindful walking and listening to self
- Mindfulness refers to being present in the moment and paying attention to yourself and your surroundings rather than getting lost in thought or ruminating or daydreaming.
- Meditation is the practice of focusing your attention on one thing, such as your breath, a mantra, or a feeling, and letting your thoughts drift by instead of holding on to them.
- Both practices can help you become more aware of your internal state and your reactions to things.
- They can also help you identify your thoughts and feelings and keep from getting so caught up in them that you lose your hold on your “self.”



More tips

Practice yoga

- Yoga is a physical practice, but it's just as much a mental practice.
- While your body is stretching and bending and flexing, your mind is learning discipline, self acceptance, and awareness.
- You become more aware of your body and all the feelings that manifest.
- You become more aware of your mind and the thoughts that crop up.
- You can even pair yoga with mindfulness or meditation to boost your self-awareness.



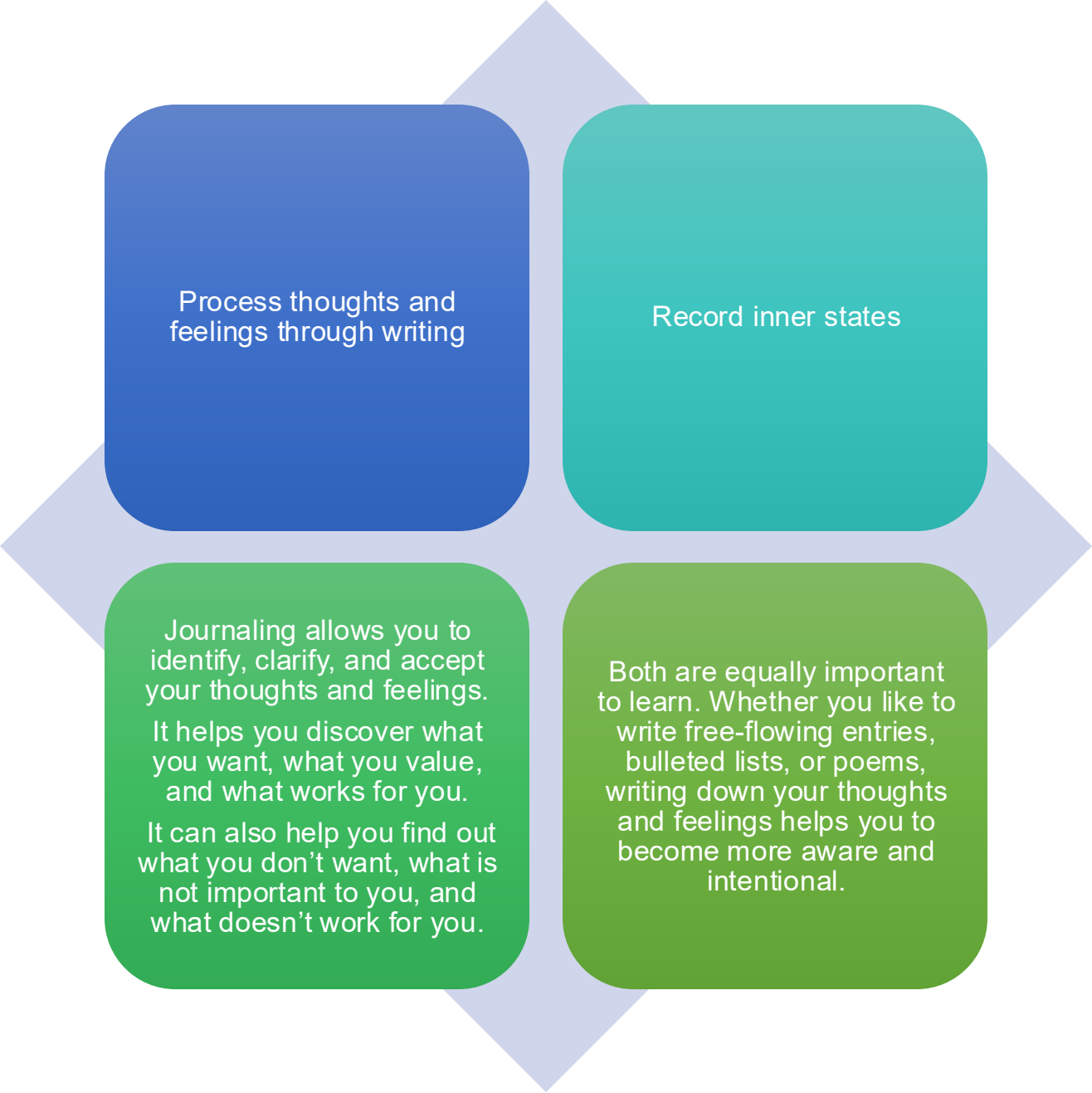
Make time to reflect

Reflecting can be done in multiple ways (including journaling; see the next tip) and is customisable to the person reflecting, but the important thing is to go over your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours to see where you met your standards, where you failed them, and where you could improve.

You can also reflect on your standards themselves to see if they are good ones for you to hold yourself to. You can try writing in a journal, talking out loud, or simply sitting quietly and thinking, whatever helps you to reflect on yourself.

More tips

Journal your awareness



Process thoughts and feelings through writing

Record inner states

Journaling allows you to identify, clarify, and accept your thoughts and feelings. It helps you discover what you want, what you value, and what works for you. It can also help you find out what you don't want, what is not important to you, and what doesn't work for you.

Both are equally important to learn. Whether you like to write free-flowing entries, bulleted lists, or poems, writing down your thoughts and feelings helps you to become more aware and intentional.

More tips

Gain a different perspective

Ask the people you love

This is important feedback for you



It's vital to feel we know ourselves from the inside, but external feedback helps too.

Ask your family and close friends about what they think about you. Have them describe you and see what rings true with you and what surprises you.



Carefully consider what they say and think about it when you journal or otherwise reflect.

Of course, don't take any one person's word as gospel; you need to talk to a variety of people to get a comprehensive view of yourself.



And remember that at the end of the day, it's your self beliefs and feelings that matter the most to you!

Benefits of self-awareness

Emotional Intelligence:

- It's a fundamental component of emotional intelligence, leading to better relationships, improved communication, and enhanced empathy.

Better Decision-Making:

- Knowing yourself allows you to make more informed choices that align with your values and goals.

Personal Growth:

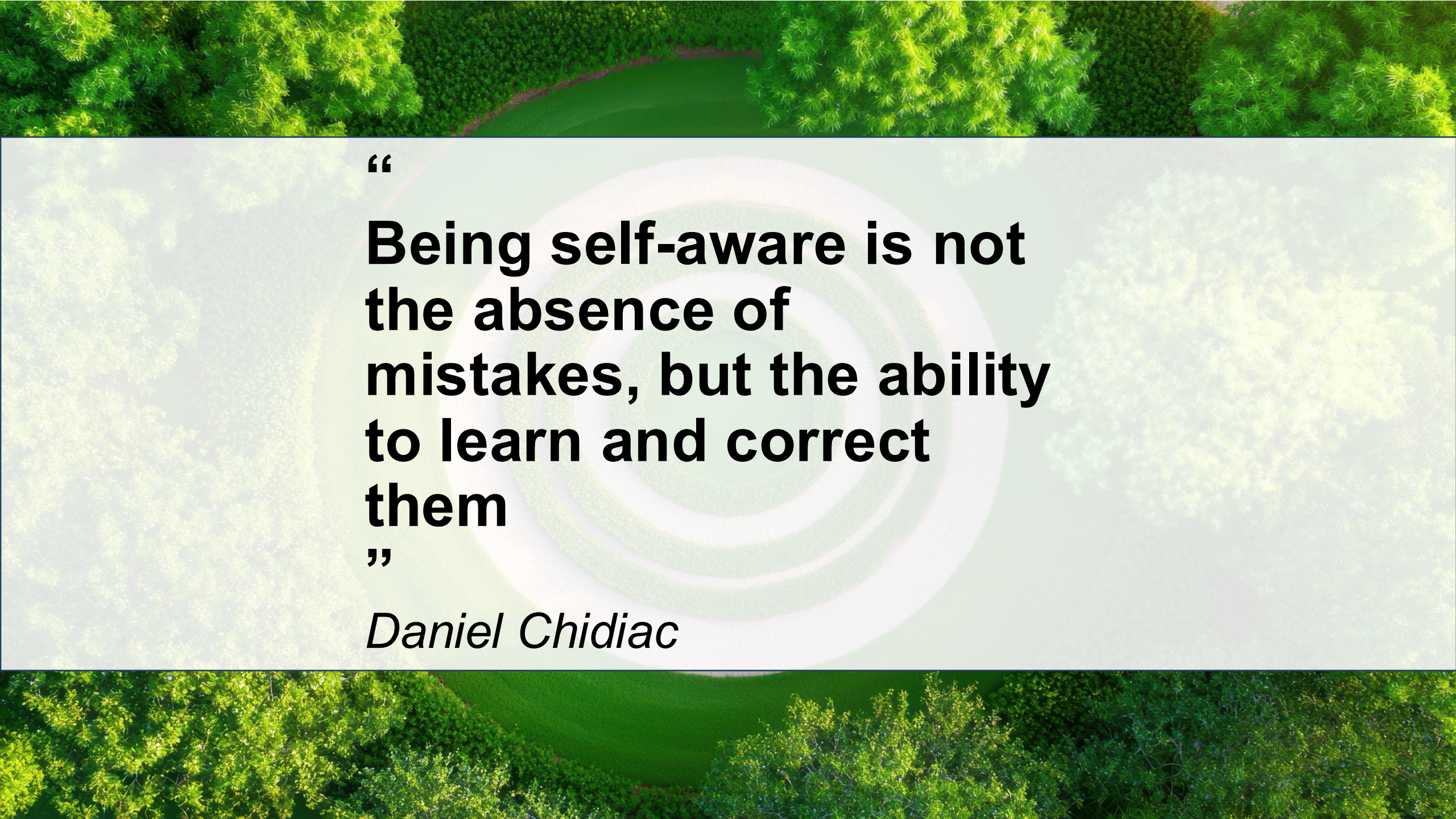
- It fosters self-acceptance and encourages positive development and self-improvement.

Improved Performance:

- Being self-aware can enhance focus, productivity, and effectiveness in work and learning.

Stronger Relationships:

- Understanding yourself helps you to build trust and maintain strong connections with others.



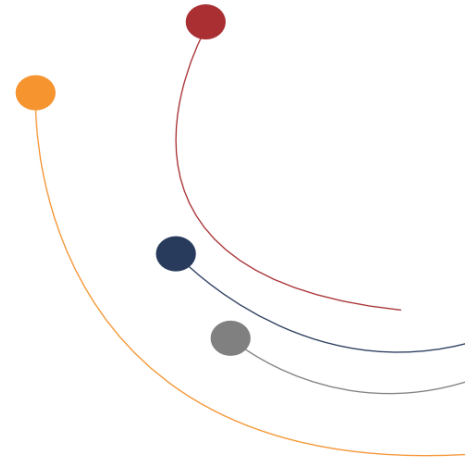
“

**Being self-aware is not
the absence of
mistakes, but the ability
to learn and correct
them**

”

Daniel Chidiac

Contact us



- **E-mail** to counselling@unisa.ac.za
- **Online appointments** on Steams:
<https://bit.ly/DCCDbook>
- **Contact a counsellor at a regional office** to make an appointment for counselling in person:
<https://bit.ly/contactdccd>
- **Website:** www.unisa.ac.za/counselling
- **YouTube channel:** www.youtube.com/unisacareers