

How SELF-AWARE are you?

How self-reflection is the foundation for managing unpredictability.

It has been long understood that a critical component of successful leadership lies in a leader's ability to be self-aware. For decades, emotional quotient (EQ) has been known to be as, or in some cases, more important than our cognitive abilities. Historically, demonstrating a basic level of self-awareness appeared as enough and leaders generally missed that this is an ongoing journey.

Developing self-awareness is a process that evolves over time; depth and acceptance of what is discovered, plus actioning on it looks different throughout a leader's career. As a result, the seemingly linear path towards a practice of self-reflection and the ability to self-manage isn't so linear. Maintaining a sense of self-awareness throughout this process is a lot easier to accomplish in stable and predictable environments and today's world is anything but that for leaders.

SELF-AWARENESS VS SELF-REFLECTION

It is imperative to understand the distinction between self-awareness and self-reflection, and how both are required for one to be an effective leader. Self-awareness is the salient observation of one's behavior and how it affects people and situations. Self-reflection is an essential leadership behavior that, when done properly, will drive a series of outcomes that extend the benefit of this activity to a wider audience. Building and integrating a consistent habit of self-reflection allows you to develop a stronger sense of resilience, self-awareness broadening toward social awareness, greater demonstrations of empathy toward others, and the ability to self-manage and understand one's impact on others.

Self-reflection takes self-awareness to the next level. It is the exploration of the observed behaviors stemming from beliefs and perspectives acquired over time. It is also understanding the implications of both on one's ability to lead fairly and successfully, and how to close gaps that impede that ability. So, how exactly does one build the muscle of self-reflection?

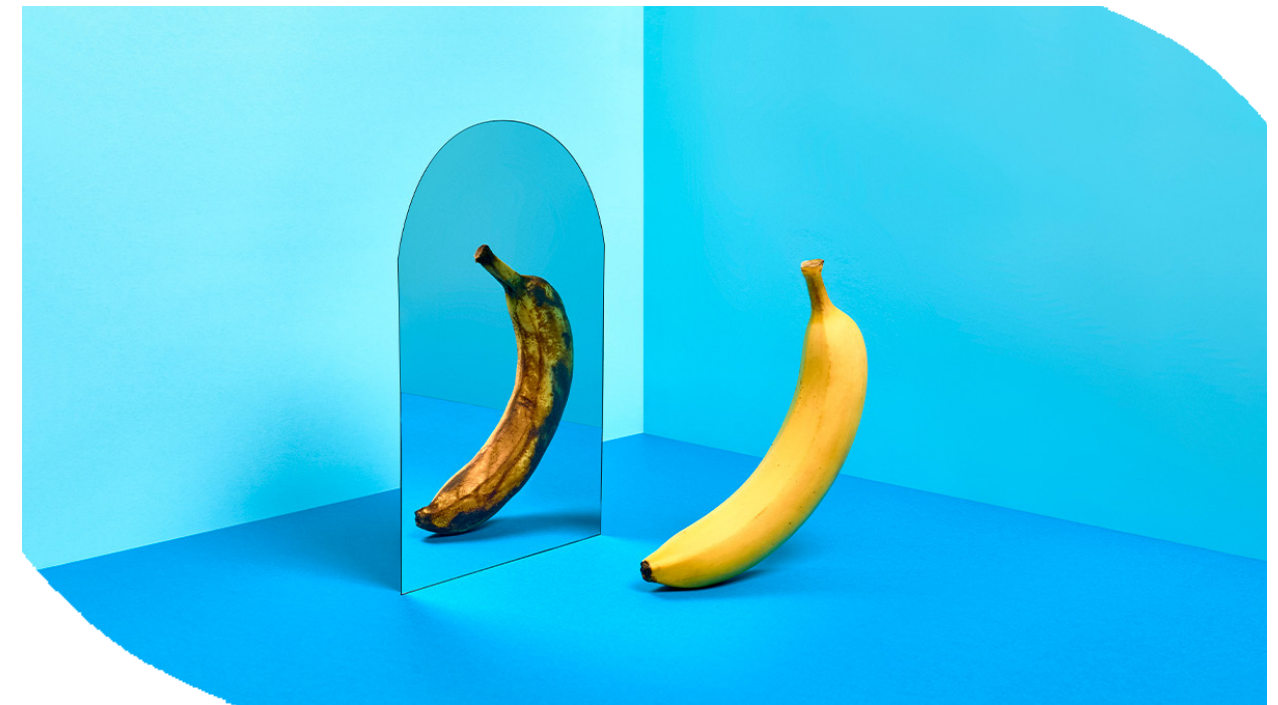


FROM THE US

BY CRISTINA JIMENEZ

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- **EXPLORE YOUR IDENTITY:** "Who are you?" Which social identities do you live into most? How does this influence the way you perceive people and situations?
- Identify what needs to be unlearned and then learned: Which of these perceptions and beliefs are outdated and no longer serve you? How can I continue to discover what helps shape new perspectives that now inform my thinking and decision-making?
- **LEAN INTO PARADOX:** Competing beliefs and emotions most likely exist and that is common. After identifying conflicting feelings and ideas, instead of trying to ignore or not lean into one, attend to them by identifying the positives and negatives of each then working to make the best ones stronger and accept that multiple truths can exist. Where can you be flexible when it matters most, not just to you as a leader but for the broader population within your organization?
- **EMBRACE CURIOSITY ABOUT SELF AND**



OTHERS: Continue to take time to reflect on new information that you're absorbing in your day-to-day that may inform you about yourself. Recognizing and knowing yourself, helps you recognize and learn about others.

Furthermore, organizations also need to do the following:

- Create a safe and trusting culture where people can provide feedback and their observations. Making anonymous forums available to employees will allow them to feel like they can safely and freely share their experiences and tell leadership what they need to know.
- Leverage consistent assessment processes that provide objective data around the culture, leadership, and the impact on employee experiences. This data will bring awareness to the unique needs of a diverse employee population.
- Provide development resources that emphasize self-reflection. These resources, in conjunction with needs-based ones, helps build resilience and social awareness.
- Be intentional around carving out time for connection and building community. Slow down; remember we are human. Learn to balance "rest and restore" with "compete and win." Both have their individual times where they will be most critical.

Self-awareness surfaces information that requires further examination about us. Consistently devoting time to exploring what is discovered, supports leaders in their efforts to navigate the complexity and ambiguity of today's world. This exploration, or curiosity, prepares them with what they need to know about themselves and the broader ecosystem in which they operate. As such, it is imperative that leaders spend ample time engaging in this exercise. This helps to ensure that they lead fairly while managing the unknown. After all, what better way to equip themselves than with what stares back in their time of self-reflection? ■

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