

Do you see what we see?

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Most businesses have at least one toxic character in their midst – a vicious gossiper, a micromanaging boss, the cranky non-communicative chair thrower, the bottom lip dropper. I'm sure you know what I mean! How is it that most of us see this behaviour as unacceptable and untenable but the individuals themselves believe what they are doing is normal, OK and acceptable in a business environment?

At home, we only have to get along with one mate and maybe some kids – and that is insanely difficult to do some days! At work, we have to get on with dozens of unsuspecting people and that creates a real challenge for some people. Many people don't have any real appreciation about how their behaviour impacts on others – they just aren't self-aware.

So what do we mean by self-aware? **Self-Awareness** is having a clear perception of your personality, including strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivation, and emotions. Self-Awareness allows you to understand other people, how they perceive you, your attitude and your responses to them in the moment. Sounds easy doesn't it? But it continually amazes us how shocked some people are when given feedback about their lack of awareness or blind spots they are demonstrating in the workplace.

Toxic employees have low levels of self-awareness. However, what could you expect to see from someone who has high self-awareness? Here's an analogy - I think I know how my car starts - I put gas in the tank, put the key in the ignition, and turn the key. But, my mechanic knows a lot more about what's involved in getting my car started than I do - he knows what happens under the hood. My mechanic is able to start my car on the occasions when I'm not because he understands the internal processes. Similarly, a person with high emotional self-awareness understands the internal processes associated with emotional experiences and, therefore, has greater control over them.

Why would anyone want to develop their self-awareness? As you develop self-awareness you are able to manage yourself and make changes in the thoughts and interpretations you make in your mind. Changing those interpretations in your mind allows you to change your emotions. Self-awareness is an important factor in achieving success both at work and at home. Of further benefit is that if you have high levels of awareness of others the colleagues you work with will actually enjoy being in your company and you might not be ostracised from them! When we understand what makes us tick we can manage ourselves and others if need be – surely a benefit for productive workplaces!