

*Foundations for
Success*

Unit 3

Chapter 1

Know Yourself– Socrates

Lesson 1

Self-Awareness



Key Terms

assessment
associate
cluster
differentiate
introspection

What You Will Learn to Do

- Determine your behavioral preferences

Linked Core Abilities

- Build your capacity for lifelong learning
- Treat self and others with respect

Skills and Knowledge You Will Learn Along the Way

- * Explain the four clusters of behavior in the Winning Colors® framework
- * Illustrate your behavioral preferences using the four Winning Colors®
- * Identify strengths for each behavior cluster
- * Express appreciation for your own uniqueness
- * Define the key words contained in this lesson

Chapter 1

Introduction

You may notice that some people behave or conduct themselves like you, and others behave quite differently. For example, one person may be very quiet and contemplative while another may be the life of the party. Identifying your own preferences and the preferences of others can be an important building block in the foundation for your success. This knowledge can help you to understand situations as they unfold, improve your communication with others, and influence people and situations to get the results you desire.

Natural Tendencies

Everyone has preferences. How these are developed in each of us is a complex combination of things. Whether you are born with them or learn them—nature or nurture—can be an interesting question to explore. It is also interesting to think about how much preferences guide our behavior.

Behaviors that feel comfortable can all be considered to be natural tendencies, or your personal preferences. You might simply identify these behaviors as “the way you do things.”

Being aware of personal preferences is an important step. Understanding others, being aware of what makes them tick, is another important interpersonal skill. You will learn more about that in the following lesson, “Appreciating Diversity through Winning Colors®.”

Learning to Grow

Self-awareness is just the beginning of a lifetime of growth and learning. After you understand what you prefer, what is comfortable for you, it is much easier to branch out of your comfort zone to learn new behaviors. You have options regarding how you behave in any situation, rather than reacting in whatever way feels natural to you. Those natural reactions might not be the best way to handle situations.

It is in these moments when you choose to be a bit uncomfortable that you have the most potential to learn and grow. This is especially true if you select the areas for development because you have a personal reason to do so. Motivation is a powerful influence on your success.

The Process of Self-Discovery

How do you discover more about your own natural tendencies, or preferences? The following are some ways you can enhance your self-knowledge:

- **Introspection**
- **Observation**
- **Feedback (giving and receiving)**
- **Assessment tools**

Introspection

You can pay attention and take note of your own experiences, actions, and reactions. Your own observations (**introspection**) are invaluable sources of information about who you are and what makes you tick. Paying attention to how you feel inside while you participate in a variety of activities can give you some insight into your own behavioral preferences. For example,

- **Do you feel happier when working in a group, or alone?**
- **Do you feel satisfaction when you accomplish a difficult task?**
- **Is it easy or difficult for you to tell others what to do?**

Your body language can also offer helpful clues. Paying attention to what is going on when you start to feel bored and tired—or lively and interested—is an indicator. If your body is responding positively to the situation, it is likely there are elements there that agree with your personal preferences.

Observation

In addition to what you see in yourself, the observations of others can also be helpful. Sometimes others see behaviors in us that we don't see, especially when we are too involved in activities to pay attention.

There are several key concepts to keep in mind if observation is to be a truly valuable self-discovery process.

Situation—What is going on? In terms of the situation, get a sense of the environment in which a behavior occurred. What are the significant factors? Who is involved? This context information offers additional perspective about the behavior.

Specific Behavior—What happened? For an observation to offer objective information rather than subjective, or merely an opinion, it needs to be specific. Vague comments are not as helpful as a concrete example.

Because behavior arises from complex factors, this protects us from being offensive or narrow in our interpretation, and allows for the processes of communicating our thoughts and asking questions to understand even more about others and ourselves. Jumping to conclusions often leads to errors or an incomplete picture.

Impact—What is the result? The impact also needs to be described in concrete terms when making an observation. Some results that could be observed include the following:

- **Change in body language**
- **Increased energy or animation**
- **Decreased energy or animation**
- **Focus changes**

Including impacts observed in reaction to specific behavior gives people a lot of information about not only what they are doing but how that influences people and situations.

Key Note Term

introspection – examination of one's own thoughts or feelings

Key Note Term

assessment – the act of evaluating or appraising a person's ability or potential to meet certain criteria or standards

Key Note Terms

associate – to group things together when they have common characteristics

differentiate – to make a distinction or state a difference between things so we can tell them apart

Feedback (Giving and Receiving)

Sharing observations with others is a responsibility and a privilege. This kind of information can be given in a helpful or a harmful way. Sharing an observation is an interpretation of reality. This is true whether you are observing your own behavior or that of others. So, be kind—and real—to yourself and to others when sharing your observations.

Feedback from others is simply their impression or opinion, particularly when a belief or value judgment is included. Try asking for specific examples when getting feedback from others, since observations are more reliable when they are based on fact. An opinion is more understandable when backed up with specific examples.

Assessment Tools

Putting some structure around observations, inner thoughts, feedback, and specific examples helps to make sense out of all this information. That's where **assessment** tools come in. They are valuable instruments that you can use in your quest for self-knowledge.

One set of extremely applicable tools is Winning Colors®. The Winning Colors® process supports self-discovery in a positive and affirming way. Winning Colors® is about what you can do, not what you can't.

You actually have more behavior options than you ever imagined, and the four categories make new behaviors easy to comprehend and put into practice.

Because people understand the categories and processes so quickly, you can expect to make some interesting self-discoveries using the Winning Colors® assessment tool. You can then use the information to make a positive difference in your communication and in your life.

Winning Colors®

Similar to other assessment tools, Winning Colors® groups human behavior into categories. Categories help us to understand complex information, by associating related data. To **associate** means to group things together when they have common characteristics. To **differentiate** means to make a distinction or state a difference between things so we can tell them apart.

Purpose and Process

Winning Colors® is a present time behavior indicator. It can be used to

- **Improve understanding of how to cooperate and communicate with others**
- **Provide clues to motivation**
- **Clarify learning styles**
- **Offer insight to conflict resolution style**
- **Uncover essential aspects of communication**

Behavior Clusters

Winning Colors® focuses on present behavior, a unique and very valuable characteristic of this tool. Four categories have been identified. Each of the four categories includes behaviors that have enough characteristics in common to form a group (**cluster**).

Each category is labeled in a way that helps you remember the behaviors that go in that group.

Builder Behaviors (Brown, Decide)

Do you have behaviors that tend toward taking over and being in charge? Do you like to know the “bottom line” and be in control of people or things? Do you like giving orders and being “top dog”?

If you have developed these behaviors, you are a strong BUILDER. You might use the color BROWN or compare these behaviors to the brown of the earth to describe this part of you.

Planner Behaviors (Green, Think)

Do you have behaviors that tend toward being quiet and contemplative? You like to devise and develop strategies. You act only after you have considered all the details, and you have many creative ideas.

If you have developed these behaviors, you are a strong PLANNER. You might use the color GREEN or compare these behaviors to the growing grass or leaves to describe this part of you.

Adventurer Behaviors (Red, Act)

Do you have behaviors that tend toward action? You are always on the go. You like to be on stage and take risks and chances whenever possible. You act on the spur of the moment. You know what to do in an emergency before anyone else.

If you have developed these behaviors, you are a strong ADVENTURER. You might use the color RED or compare these behaviors to fire to describe this part of you.

Relater Behaviors (Blue, Feel)

Do you have behaviors that tend toward showing feelings? You like to share your feelings with others and have them share theirs with you. You enjoy talking a lot.

If you have developed these behaviors, you are a strong RELATER. You might use the color BLUE or compare these behaviors to the wide expanse and depth of the ocean to describe this part of you.

Your Key to Success

The key to success is to be balanced. Note the gymnast in Figure 1.1.1; her success depends not only on physical balance but on mental balance as well. Think when it

Key Note Term

cluster – a number of similar things growing together, or of things or individuals collected or grouped closely together

Figure 1.1.1: Balance is one of the keys to a successful life.

Courtesy of Eli Reed/Magnum Photos.



is time to think (planner—green), decide and “bottom line it” (builder—brown), feel when it is time to feel (relater—blue), and take action when it is time to take action (adventurer—red).

It is crucial that you understand that you are capable of developing all four clusters, but you may presently be emotionally attached or locked into one cluster more than another. For whatever reason, certain behaviors have worked for you or felt more natural, so naturally you developed those more than the others.

Be forewarned—a single strength can get you into trouble. For example, if you favor acting quickly (adventurer), you may act without thinking (planner) or considering the feelings of others (relater). Or, if you have strong planner (green) but no adventurer behaviors (red), you may be unable to get up in front of a group of people and speak out clearly and confidently without being embarrassed. Everyone benefits from the ability to shift between behavioral styles as needed, depending on the situation.

Conclusion

It's true that you can significantly improve your life by acquiring new behaviors to attain your goals. Making decisions, particularly effective ones, and making them quickly, is a complex set of behaviors. Because behavior is learned and can be reinforced until it becomes a habit, you have the power to choose new behaviors, even if they feel unfamiliar and alien to you today.

Taking an active approach in discovering your strengths and enhancing behaviors you find desirable is a healthy lifestyle choice. This lesson presented some information to help guide you on the path to self-discovery. As Socrates said, "Know thyself." It is the beginning of wisdom.

The following lesson delves further into the Winning Colors® process and shows you how to develop your awareness of others so you can become sensitive to the differences and similarities among all people.

Lesson Review

1. Which behavior cluster do you see yourself in? List five reasons for this choice.
2. How can you use observation today to learn something new about yourself?
3. How can you use introspection to learn something new about a friend?
4. Choose one behavior cluster you feel you need to improve. Explain why.