

PARALLEL LEADERS

OO2: KELLY STICKEL ON TEN QUALITIES OF A SELF AWARE LEADER

EPISODE NOTES

Self-awareness is understanding how your personality traits, habits and abilities affect your interactions with the people around you.

According to John Maxwell, a lack of self-awareness holds back more good teams and derails more leaders' careers than anything else.

Travis Bradbury and Jean Greaves, the authors of Emotional Intelligence, report the alarming impact a high self-awareness has on your performance. A study found that a high level of self-awareness was reflected in 83% of top performers, while only 2% of bottom performers displayed this trait. This indicates that self-awareness is crucial to your success as a leader.

"When we are foolish, we want to conquer the world. When we are wise, we want to conquer ourselves." ~John C. Maxwell

1. THEY ARE SELF REFLECTIVE.

You must reflect on your thoughts, words and actions as you communicate with others. "Why did I think that in this situation?" "Why did I say that?" "Why did I react this way?"

Reflecting on negative and positive outcomes ensures you capitalize on your experiences. "Why did I react this way?" might reveal that scheduling intense meetings in the afternoon when you are at your lowest energy level tends to yield poorer outcomes than if you had planned it earlier when you were fresh. Or perhaps you simply needed more sleep or should have eaten beforehand, so you weren't battling the "hangries."

2. THEY ARE OBERVANT.

Self-aware leaders pay attention to what's happening around them by following cues from their environment or the people around them. They are observant of moods and can respond to situations appropriately.

3. THEY ARE EMPATHETIC.

Empathy and sympathy are two very different things.

- Empathy means understanding the needs of others. With empathy, you can imagine or understand how someone might feel without necessarily having those feelings yourself.
- Sympathy (which comes from the Greek sym, meaning "together," and pathos, referring to feelings or emotions) is used when one person shares the feelings of another.

The self-aware leader is very empathetic and understands the needs of others. They push when their team is bored, support when their team is tired, encourage when their team is struggling or recast vision when they've lost their focus or passion.

4. THEY ARE PERCEPTIVE.

Based on observations of the environment and people around them, they can anticipate the effects of a situation and prepare for potential outcomes.

5. THEY ARE ACTIVE LISTENERS AND RESPONSIVE TO WHAT THEY HEAR.

Active listening is a communication skill that involves going beyond simply hearing the words and seeking to understand their meaning and intent. It's more than nodding your head at the appropriate times. They adapt based on the reaction of others. It's observing body language. It's paraphrasing and reflecting on what has been said and listening to understand rather than to respond.

6. THEY ARE SELF-DISCIPLINED.

Self-aware leaders can manage their own words, actions and reactions.

"Nothing so conclusively proves a man's ability to lead others as what he does from day to day to lead himself." ~Thomas J. Watson

7. THEY ARE DISCERNING.

When you are perceptive and read a situation or room effectively, discerning the reasons behind such actions or emotions, you can tailor your response appropriately.

Self-awareness comes from making wise choices about how you handle a situation. The more you can respond to situations wisely, self-reflect and evaluate the responses, the smarter you will be in the future.

8. THEY ARE ADAPTABLE.

Gone are the days of “my way or the highway.” The greatest leaders today are adaptable. They assess a situation and appropriately respond by changing their behaviours, systems, and teams. They evaluate and adapt to highlight team members' strengths and discover the best methods to move the organizational mission forward.

9. THEY SEEK ACCOUNTABILITY.

Accountability is the willingness to seek and accept advice and correction when needed. We all have blind spots. Attitudes, skills, strengths and weaknesses that we do not see accurately. Accountability ensures that we are accurately managing ourselves well, adjusting for our shortcomings, and capitalizing on our strengths.

10. THEY HAVE LEARNED FOLLOWERSHIP.

Followership is simply the ability to follow.

“Civilization is always in danger when those who have never learned to obey are given the right to command.” ~Bishop Fulton J. Sheen



RESOURCES + LINKS

- [Book: The Self-Aware Leader by John Maxwell](#)
- [Book: 5 Levels of Leadership by John Maxwell](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS + ACTION STEPS



Review the ten qualities and rate yourself quickly on a scale of 1-10. What areas are your strengths? Which do you need to work on? Establish a plan to work on ONE of your weaker traits.

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