



Positive Leadership Toolkit

An overview of Chapter 1: Self-Awareness

Pillar 1 – Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the conscious understanding of oneself, including our emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and impact on others. It is a cornerstone of effective leadership. In the public sector, where leaders navigate complex challenges and serve diverse, sometimes competing, internal and external communities, cultivating self-awareness is essential for fostering trust, making informed decisions, and leading with integrity.

There are two dimensions of self-awareness:

1. **Internal self-awareness:** how clearly we understand ourselves
2. **External self-awareness:** how accurately we can discern how others experience us

“The why”: Evidence of the importance of self-awareness

Benefits of self-awareness in leadership include:

- Better decision-making
- Creativity
- Higher emotional self-regulation
- Decreased stress
- Increased happiness
- Higher self-confidence
- Greater influence
- Improved communication
- Stronger relationships with others



Pause here: self-awareness is rare and can take time to cultivate. Be aware of this potential blind spot.

“The how”: Practical strategies to enhance self-awareness

- **Journaling** that combines thoughts and emotions

- **Stop asking “why?” and start asking “what?”**
- **Use assessment tools** that provide insight into how you show up in the world, communicate, and how other people may perceive you
- **Engage in a 360-degree feedback process** to assess leadership behaviours. To get the most out of the process, consider:
 - Including a self-assessment to identify hidden strengths
 - Spending extra time on tough feedback – when feedback does not align with self-perception, ask “what is right about this feedback?”
 - Partnering with a coach

To learn more about the benefits of self-awareness and the practical strategies to apply it, read **Chapter 1: Self-Awareness**, written by Dr. Craig Dowden, in [APEX's Positive Leadership Toolkit](#).