BSBPEF302

DEVELOP SELF-AWARENESS

BSBPEF302
Develop self-awareness

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1

Aspire also has learning resources available in these areas:
· Foundation skills
· LLN and employability skills (non-competency)
· Community services
· Early Childhood Education and Care
· Allied health

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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBPEF302 Develop self-awareness*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at:

www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this Learner Guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples	These highlight key learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice Tasks	Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Summaries	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning Checkpoints	There is a Learning Checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which Learning Checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Learning	▪ Applies existing thinking and current practices to examine self-awareness ▪ Researches activities and articles on relevant topics
Writing	▪ Creates records on observations, experiences and thoughts ▪ Prepares documents to monitor and reflect on performance
Oral communication	▪ Participates in a verbal exchange of observations and elicits the view and opinions of others by listening and questioning
Teamwork	▪ Collaborates with others to test, strengthen and explore self-awareness and different ways of thinking

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome		Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Recognise your personal traits	1A	Identifying your values and attitudes	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1B	Recognising your strengths and weaknesses	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1C	Understanding what motivates you	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
Topic 2: Apply self-awareness at work	2A	Creating a personal development action plan	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2B	Practising self-awareness	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2C	Strategies for ongoing improvement	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident

Topic 1 | Recognise your personal traits

1A   Identifying your values and attitudes
1B   Recognising your strengths and weaknesses
1C   Understanding what motivates you

1A Identifying your values and attitudes

Your values and attitudes shape your life and your relationship with those around you.

Your values are the ideals or standards you believe in. Values can be abstract concepts, such as integrity, justice or compassion, or more concrete qualities, such as cleanliness or punctuality. A person's values are an expression of what they think is important in life, and act as guiding principles.

Your attitude towards something is the way you think or feel about it, often expressed through your behaviour. An attitude can be positive or negative. For example, one person may have a positive attitude towards constructive criticism, seeing it as helpful, while another may have a negative attitude towards it, regarding any form of criticism as a personal attack.

	Values	Attitudes
What impact do values and attitudes have on personal behaviour?	Your values are so deeply ingrained that you may not be consciously aware of them, but they underpin your beliefs and behaviour, affecting your interactions with others and your approach to your work.	Attitudes generally arise from values. You express your attitude through your general demeanour and your everyday actions, such as how you communicate with the people around you.
Do values and attitudes change over time?	Values are learned in childhood and are so powerfully embedded that they change extremely slowly, if they change at all. You may have similar values to your family because of the way you were brought up.	Attitudes are not as deeply rooted as values and can change and develop over time. They may shift as you experience new things and interact with others.

How values and attitudes affect your behaviour

Your values and attitudes influence how you view and respond to situations.

A person's values and attitudes affect the decisions they make and their behaviour towards others. Here are some examples of specific values, the attitudes they may give rise to, and how these attitudes might shape a person's behaviour:

Value	Attitude	Behaviour
Fairness	Recognition should be given where it is due	Making sure a colleague is given credit for their ideas
Honesty	It is better to speak up straightaway than be embarrassed when found out later	Admitting that you were responsible for a mistake
Respect	Everyone has the right to be heard	Allowing others to take turns speaking without interrupting

Finding a 'good fit'

Your personal values should align with those of the organisation you work for.

One purpose of a job interview is to allow both parties to establish how the interviewee might fit into the organisation's work culture. Shared values lead to better relationships and higher performance and productivity, while a mismatch can make it difficult for employees to work together towards common goals, negatively affecting morale, creativity, output and job satisfaction. For this reason, most employers actively seek to employ people who share the organisation's values and will be a 'good fit'. As an applicant, you should also be looking for a good fit; ideally, you want a position that will allow you to express your values through your work.

For example, a company that genuinely values honesty, openness and innovation will welcome frank feedback from staff. At such a company, a staff member who frequently suggests ways to improve products or services would be considered a team player and rewarded for their input. At a company that values tradition and respect for authority, this same staff member might be seen as negative or overly critical – someone who's never satisfied and always challenging the status quo.

Acknowledging others' values

Recognising others' values will help you to understand them.

It is natural to judge others according to your own values, but it can result in misunderstandings and miscommunication that may ultimately lead to conflict. Being aware of your own values is the first step in being able to recognise and appreciate the values of others. When you recognise that others have their own values and seek to understand them, you can begin to develop better relationships and work more cohesively together to accomplish common goals.

It is not necessary to change your own values to work well with others, but neither should you try to change their values. As long as both parties value respect, you can find a way to work together that accommodates your differences.

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Make a list of your top five values. Ask a family member to do the same and compare your list. Are your lists similar? If so, why do you think they are similar?

Question 2

Draw a line to match the beginning of each sentence to the correct ending.

» Values are ...	» The way you think or feel about something
» An attitude is ...	» The ideals or standards you believe in
» Values act as ...	» Your behaviours and the way you act
» Attitudes are expressed through ...	» Guiding principles

Question 3

Which of the following statements relate to values and attitudes? Tick all that apply.

○　　Attitudes don't change with time or experience

○　　Your values and attitudes influence how you view and respond to situations

○　　Understanding others' values helps you to work with them

○　　To work with others, it is necessary to put aside your values

○　　The way you do your job is influenced by your values and attitudes

Question 4

Why it is ideal for your values and attitudes to be aligned with those of your employer?

1B Recognising your strengths and weaknesses

When you are good at something and enjoy it, it is a true strength.

It's important to be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses. Take a moment to think about them now, and answer these questions:

- What do you do well?
- What could you do better?
- What do you struggle with?
- What's your greatest strength or best personality?
- What's your most challenging weakness?

It's important to give these questions some thought. If you can find a job that allows you to draw on your strengths and avoid or accommodate your weaknesses, you are more likely to find your work engaging, enjoy the challenges it presents and be motivated to do it well.

Personal strengths include knowledge, skills and talents. Anything that helps you to complete your tasks, work cooperatively with others and achieve your personal and work goals is a potential strength. But strengths are more than just what you know or what you can do. They can also be personal traits, such as patience or determination. Some strengths may be innate; others you can learn and become more proficient at over time.

Personal weaknesses include a lack of relevant knowledge or skills, and traits that make it harder to work with others and achieve your goals, such as impatience or overconfidence. Just as you can work to develop strengths, you can also work to overcome weaknesses, or find ways to acknowledge them and work around them.

You may be asked to identify your strengths or weaknesses during a job interview or performance review, so you have to be prepared to talk about them. Traits that employers value particularly highly include adaptability, flexibility, commitment and resilience. If you have these desirable traits, you should be ready to discuss situations in which you have demonstrated them. If you don't feel you have these traits, you can work on developing them.

Talking about your strengths and weaknesses

What are your strengths and weaknesses? This is a common question in formal interviews, and you need to be ready to answer it. The way you respond says a lot about your self-awareness and honesty – both of which are considered strengths in themselves.

It's not enough just to know your strengths and weaknesses, though – you have to be prepared to discuss them. That means having examples ready, such as situations in which you demonstrated your strengths or steps you have taken to overcome your weaknesses. If you're calm in a crisis, for example, don't expect the interviewer to take your word for it. Be ready to talk about a time when your cool head meant you could step in and sort out a problem when others were panicking. Or if you're good at building relationships, tell the interviewer about former customers or colleagues you are still in touch with, and how your strong network has helped you to succeed.

When you're asked about your weaknesses, it's tempting to say something like 'I tend to be a perfectionist,' or 'I work too hard,' hoping that the interviewer will see these traits as positives, not negatives. A better approach is to describe a genuine weakness and explain what you do to keep it in check. For example, you might say, 'I could be more organised, and in the past I've sometimes had trouble staying on top of my email. To cope with it, I've developed a system of checking my inbox twice every day at the same time, and I find it works really well.'

Example

Personal strengths

Tao works in administration for a university. He has been asked by his manager, Brian, to lead a small team to implement a new process for managing student accounts.

In his last performance review, Tao said that he wanted to develop his leadership skills and take on more responsibility. Brian has offered Tao this project leader role as an opportunity to develop his skills in these areas. Brian will guide and mentor Tao by meeting with him weekly to discuss and monitor the project, so Tao can get the best possible performance from the project team.

The team is made up of five employees from different departments who have not worked together before. At the first team meeting, Tao outlines the project's goals so everyone knows what they are working towards. With clear aims and a shared understanding of what they're trying to achieve, the team will be better able to work cooperatively and feel a collective sense of pride in reaching their goals.

At the weekly meeting with his manager, Tao discusses the best way to allocate tasks to individual team members. Brian suggests that he gets each member to nominate their personal strengths and share them with the group. Tao can see how this will motivate the team: the individual members will recognise the importance of what they can contribute personally, and they will also start to think about how their strengths complement those of the other team members, helping everyone to contribute.

Adaptability and flexibility

Adaptability and flexibility are two personality traits that are highly regarded by employers.

Being adaptable and being flexible are very similar: the terms are often used interchangeably. If you're adaptable, you easily adjust to new conditions; being flexible means you do so willingly.

A flexible person usually has an open mind; they will listen to alternative ideas and try different approaches. Flexible people may enjoy change, seeing it as a novelty, an opportunity or a challenge, and can adjust to it easily.

If you're flexible, you are more likely to be able to:

- Adjust your attitude or actions to meet the demands of your current task
- Switch easily from one project or task to another
- Learn new practices, procedures and technology quickly
- Find creative, innovative solutions to problems
- Plan for and/or cope with contingencies
- Discard a current plan if it's not working and adopt a new one
- Take on jobs that require you to learn new skills
- Move into different roles as required, such as when someone is on leave
- Cope with changes to personnel and reporting structures

If you don't cope well with change, it's important to ask yourself why. Greater self-awareness can help you to manage your attitude towards change, so you can learn to adapt to new situations.

Fear of change

Change isn't always a positive, but if you resist it automatically without considering its merits first, you may be passing up opportunities for growth.

Some people like to start work every day with a list of specific tasks that they need to achieve and take comfort from its predictability. There is nothing wrong with that – but when an employee refuses to tolerate any changes to their routine or seeks to impose their way of doing things on others, causing conflict, there may be some deeper cause.

If someone resists change at work, they may be feeling:

- A lack of self-confidence
- Fear of failure, and a desire to protect themselves
- Fear of taking on greater responsibility
- Discontent with their job, co-workers or management

If you're reluctant to accept change, reflecting on the cause of your reluctance will help you to become more self-aware; it may also open you up to new ideas and experiences. It's often in our best interests to adapt to change rather than resisting it.

Learning to adapt and be flexible

Developing adaptability and flexibility can help you to cope with change.

If you know you have a tendency to be rigid or 'set in your ways', and you want to develop a more flexible attitude, these are strategies you can try:

Prepare yourself

Get ready for an upcoming change by asking questions, gathering information, thinking it through and then doing what you can to prepare.

Observe others who are good at adapting to new circumstances

Some of your co-workers may not be fazed by change. Try to see things through their eyes and watch what they do. What positives do they see in this change? What are they doing to prepare for it?

Evaluate your habits and routines

We develop habits and routines because they help us cope, but sometimes we hang on to them even when they're no longer helpful. Are your habits and routines still helping you, or are they hindering you?

Adjust your attitude to change

You can't always control your circumstances, but you can control your response to them. Replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts: instead of thinking 'I can't do this,' tell yourself 'I can do this.'

Break big challenges down into smaller, more manageable tasks

Achieving smaller goals can help to build your confidence. For example, you can learn to use a new database's functions one at a time, as you need them, rather than learning them all at once.

Commitment

The stronger your commitment, the more likely you are to stay with an organisation.

When employers say they value commitment, they are usually talking about an employee's attitude and performance. Your employer is likely to judge your commitment by looking at your productivity, the quality of your of work and your contribution to a positive workplace culture. If you share the organisation's values, believe in its goals and derive a sense of purpose from what you do, others will likely see you as a committed worker.

The benefits of this kind of commitment include greater engagement and higher satisfaction with your work. When you can see a link between what you do and the outcomes of your efforts, you find your work more rewarding.

Psychologists John Meyer and Natalie Allen describe this as 'affective commitment' – staying with your employer or remaining in your role because you want to. Meyer and Allen also identify two other kinds of commitment: 'continuance commitment' and 'normative commitment'. Continuance commitment is staying where you are because you fear what you might lose by making a change, while normative commitment is staying because you feel obliged to. Many people experience a mix of these three feelings; it is a combination of factors that keep them in their current position, organisation or industry.

You can read more information on Meyer and Allen's original publication available at: aspirelr.link/sage-commitment-workplace.

The different kinds of commitment are described in more detail below. Which kind do you think best reflects your attitude to your work?

Affective commitment Staying because you want to	Affective commitment is emotional commitment – it's based on how an employee feels about their employer or their work. An employee who identifies strongly with an organisation and supports its objectives is more likely to be loyal and less likely to leave. The attitude of such an employee might be: 'I'm passionate about my work, and we have a great team – I'm happy where I am.'
Continuance commitment Staying because of personal benefit	Some employees continue on with an organisation because of the benefits they retain by staying. For example, after many years, an employee may have been promoted to a senior position with a good salary and built up substantial leave entitlements – benefits they might lose by seeking employment elsewhere. The attitude of such an employee might be: 'I've weighed up the pros and cons, and I'm better off staying where I am.'

Normative commitment Staying because you feel you should	Normative commitment comes from a feeling of obligation. You may worry that you'd be letting your team down by leaving, for example, or you might feel a sense of gratitude or indebtedness to your employer for your initial training or other opportunities you've been given.
	The attitude of such an employee might be: 'I can't leave, because people are depending on me.'

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to rebound from challenges and recover from stress.

Everyone experiences stress, and we all experience setbacks and disappointments, too. It is how we react to them that is important – how ready we are to bounce back and keep going.

Being resilient means:

- Being optimistic
- Having confidence in your strengths and abilities
- Making realistic plans
- Adapting to changes
- Honing your problem-solving skills
- Learning from mistakes
- Using positive, encouraging self-talk, rather than criticism
- Managing strong feelings and impulses

Resilience isn't something we are born with; it has to be learned. Like any habit, it is reinforced through awareness and practice. After a stressful or difficult experience, you should always take time to examine your reactions, including your thoughts and behaviour. Did they make it easier for you to recover, or harder? How could you have thought differently about your situation? How might you have acted differently? Monitoring yourself in this way will help you to manage your emotions, and perhaps to find a more productive or helpful way to react in the future.

Taking care of yourself is an important part of building resilience. It's much easier to stay calm and focused when you've had enough sleep, and when you are eating well and getting regular exercise. Social contact with friends and family is also important. It's easy when we're under pressure to neglect our basic needs, but taking time out for them will actually make you more productive, or at least help you to deal with the stress a little better.

Being resilient in times of stress

Violet is worried about her job security; she has heard rumours of a merger with another company. When her manager confirms at a staff meeting that the rumours are true, Violet becomes visibly angry and raises her voice when asking questions. After the meeting, her manager takes her aside and suggests that she go home early, as she's still upset.

By the following day, Violet has had time to reflect. She is embarrassed that she shouted at the meeting, reacting spontaneously without giving herself time to think. When she arrives at work, she thanks her manager for being understanding and asks if they can talk later that day, as she'd like to ask a few questions. Her manager agrees and Violet gets on with her work as usual, as falling behind would only make her feel more stressed.

Before she sits down with her manager that afternoon, Violet reminds herself that if she starts to feel upset, she should pause, take a deep breath and physically relax her body. Though she is still worried about the future, she realises that an emotional outburst won't help her to find out what she needs to know.

Practice Task 2

Part A

Read the following statements about personal strengths and weaknesses and decide whether they are true or false.

Question 1

| You are adaptable if you can quickly change tasks when there are urgent jobs that require your attention. | » True | » False |

Question 2

| Tony often changes his hours to suit the workload of his department. That means he is flexible. | » True | » False |

Question 3

Resilience is a trait that you are born with. It can't be learned or developed.

» True   » False

Part B

Question 1

Draw a line to match the beginning of each sentence to the correct ending.

» A lack of self-confidence may mean that ...

» A low level of commitment to your job means that ...

» Being adaptable and flexible means that ...

» Being resilient means that ...

» You can adapt to changing situations and expectations.

» You are unwilling to adapt or be flexible, because you fear change.

» You are less likely to remain with your employer.

» You can manage strong feelings and impulses.

Question 2

What are two benefits to your employer of your high level of commitment to your job?

Question 3

How can understanding your personal strengths and weaknesses improve your performance at work?

1C Understanding what motivates you

People who are motivated find a reason to complete a task, even when it is challenging.

Motivation is the drive to achieve goals and improve your performance. If you are motivated, you will work until you feel that a task is complete, even if you find it boring or difficult. Motivation can come from a range of different sources, both internal and external. Some people are motivated by a desire to improve their skills or simply for the personal satisfaction of doing a good job, while some are driven by long-term career goals. Others are motivated by the recognition they receive from a manager or colleagues.

Some people are self-motivated, driven by internal goals. Others work better when driven by external goals, such as monthly sales targets or project deadlines. If an employee seems unmotivated, it may be that their work isn't challenging enough – or that it's so challenging that it seems overwhelming. Employers need to be aware of this, and work to keep their staff motivated, making sure that responsibilities are shared evenly and that everyone is given an opportunity to develop their skills. Good communication also helps to improve motivation and overall morale. You may have noticed how being listened to or asked your opinion and given encouragement can make you feel more engaged and enthusiastic.

Here are some ways that employers can help to improve employees' motivation. Consider how each of these strategies would affect you – which would make you feel more motivated to do your job?

Job enhancement

Employees may benefit from opportunities, both formal and informal, to develop their knowledge and skills through training or mentoring. Demonstrating new or improved skills builds self-confidence and can lead to personal growth and increased productivity, too.

Job enrichment

Giving employees more complex tasks or higher responsibilities from time to time provides them with intellectual stimulation. It also shows that you recognise their knowledge or skills and trust them to take on more responsibility, which can increase motivation and build self-confidence.

Job rotation

Periodically moving employees from one role or task to another offers them novelty, variety and intellectual stimulation. Asking an employee to cover for an absent colleague or to 'act up' in a supervisor's role can be a good way to give them more experience, preparing them to step into other roles in the organisation at some future point.

Communication and recognition

Taking the time to speak to employees regularly and to thank them personally for doing a good job is considerate and courteous, and shows respect. If you show employees that you recognise and value their work, it is likely they'll continue to perform well in the future.

Positive work environment

Employees work best in a positive, supportive environment in which respect, trust and new ideas are encouraged. Providing a supportive environment may include scheduling regular team-building meetings and activities aimed at boosting morale.

Acknowledging and celebrating success

When employees are recognised, rewarded and promoted for good performance, they will be motivated to do well. A workplace culture that acknowledges the contribution of all employees, teams and departments and celebrates their success encourages employees to do their best work.

Finding motivation

Understanding what drives you will help you to find motivation when you need it.

To find out what motivates you, you can ask yourself questions such as 'What's my goal here?' or 'Why am I doing this?' or 'What do I really want?'

People have many different motivations for working, including:

- Financial reward
- Social approval
- Personal satisfaction
- A desire to help others
- The need for a creative outlet

If you're struggling to find motivation, there are strategies you can try, including consciously adjusting your attitude, avoiding comparisons with others, and paying attention to your own thoughts.

Strategies for finding motivation	
Adjust your attitude	If you have a negative attitude towards work, this is likely to affect your motivation and performance. Make a conscious decision to change your attitude and set your mind on your goals.
Avoid comparison with others	Measuring yourself against others can be discouraging – try to achieve your own 'personal best', rather than comparing your achievements to others' successes.
Pay attention to your thoughts	Action is preceded by thought, and positive self-talk is far more energising than self-criticism. Asking yourself 'Why haven't you done this?' will make you feel bad – instead, try telling yourself 'You can do this!'

Example

Understanding what motivates you

Luke has always wanted to work in marketing and is thrilled to be given a market research role in a large manufacturing company. Much of his role involves time-consuming administrative tasks, but he is excited about the future and the opportunities it will bring, and has no trouble motivating himself to get his work done every day.

After 18 months, Luke's enthusiasm has started to wane. He thinks about how excited he was to go to work when he first got the job and reflects on what motivated him then. He realises that he expected to be given more hands-on marketing tasks as he gained in experience, but so far that hasn't happened.

Luke feels that he has proved himself to be trusted with greater responsibility, so he speaks to his manager about how he's feeling and asks for more challenging work. His manager agrees that Luke is a valuable worker and has demonstrated his ability and willingness to take on more complex tasks, so he puts Luke on a team working on a marketing campaign for a valued customer. Luke now finds it easier to do his administrative tasks because they are balanced with more challenging work.

Practice Task 3

Question 1

Give two examples of what motivates you at work.

Question 2

Identify two things that your employer or supervisor could do that would increase your motivation at work.

Summary

- Self-awareness is the capacity to reflect on your own thoughts and behaviours and learn from them
- Your values are the ideals or standards you believe in
- Shared values lead to better relationships and higher performance and productivity
- Your attitude towards something is the way you think or feel about it
- Your attitudes are often expressed through your behaviour
- Personal strengths are knowledge, skills, talents and traits that help you to perform well
- Strengths can be innate or learned and developed over time
- Personal weaknesses can include a lack of relevant knowledge or skills, and traits that make it harder for you to perform well
- You can work to overcome weaknesses, or find ways to acknowledge them and work around them
- Strengths that employers value include adaptability, flexibility, commitment and resilience
- Being adaptable means you easily adjust to new conditions; being flexible means you do so willingly
- When employers say they value commitment, they are usually talking about an employee's attitude and performance
- Resilience is the ability to rebound from challenges and recover from stress
- Motivation is the drive to achieve goals and improve your performance
- Understanding what motivates you will help you to perform well at work

Learning Checkpoint 1
Recognise your personal traits

1. Explain how your values and attitudes can affect your work.

2. Explain how an awareness of your own values can influence the way you work with others.
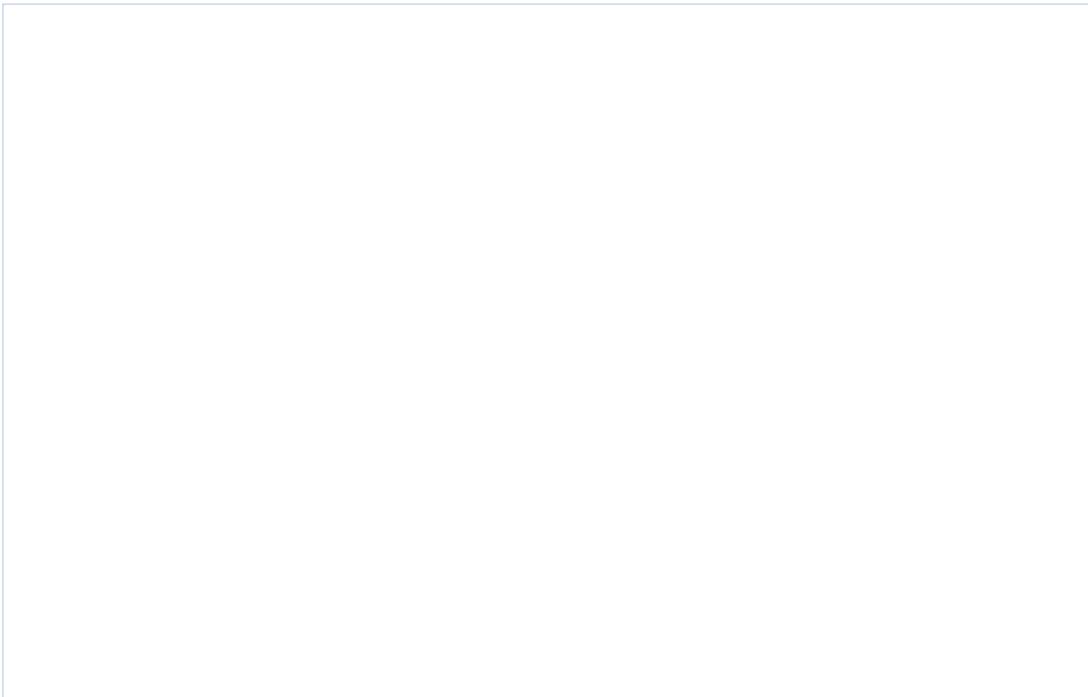
3. Explain how each of the following strengths can enhance your work performance:

   a) Flexibility/adaptability

   Commitment

   b) Resilience

   c) Motivation

Topic 2 | Apply self-awareness at work

2A   Creating a personal development action plan

2B   Practising self-awareness

2C   Strategies for ongoing improvement

2A Creating a personal development action plan

An action plan helps you to define your goals and then achieve them.

The first step in creating a personal development action plan is to evaluate yourself, reviewing your strengths and weaknesses. What are you doing well? And what could you do better? You might find it helpful to seek feedback from colleagues as you think about these questions.

Once you feel you understand your strengths and weaknesses, you can decide what your goals are and put together a plan. The next step is to communicate your plan to others, who can help you put it into action and stay on track.

Evaluating yourself

Greater self-awareness can help you improve your performance at work.

Regular self-evaluation is an important part of developing greater self-awareness. In topic 1, you identified your values and attitudes, as well as your strengths and weaknesses. You also asked yourself what motivates you. Now it's time to think about how these things affect your performance at work and your relationships with colleagues. What improvements could you make?

Self-evaluation can be an informal, everyday process and can occur at any time. For example, if you pause after completing a task or speaking with a client and think about how you could handle things better next time, that's informal self-evaluation. Some people like to make notes or record observations in a journal or log they can look back on, so they can track their progress and identify recurring issues.

Self-evaluation can also be a formal, structured process. For example, when your performance review is coming up, your manager may ask you to fill in a form rating your performance over the past year. Rating your own performance is a way of formally evaluating yourself. Such reviews are often wide-ranging, inviting you to consider the skills you've developed, your productivity, your relationships with colleagues and clients and numerous other factors, all of which contribute to your overall performance.

Example

Conducting a self-evaluation

Bill works for a busy transport company and is responsible for making sure invoices are ready before goods are loaded onto the truck for delivery.

One morning the truck arrives early, and Bill's manager asks him to print the invoices in a hurry, so the driver can leave ahead of schedule. There is only one printer in the office, though, and while Bill is preparing the invoices, one of his colleagues, Gaye, starts printing out the company's annual report, which will tie up the printer for at least half an hour.

Bill shows his displeasure and irritation by standing next to the printer with his arms crossed, tapping his foot, then starts pacing back and forth from his desk to the printer huffing and puffing with annoyance. This gets everyone's attention and distracts them from their work. Gaye realises that Bill is upset and offers to pause her print job while he prints out the invoices. Bill had no idea a print job could be paused and thought he would have to wait until the annual report had finished printing. He accepts Gaye's offer but is embarrassed and gruff as he thanks her.

He reflects on his behaviour later in the day by asking himself some questions:

What went wrong?

> I did not communicate my needs clearly – I just assumed people would know not to use the printer when the invoices had to go out.

How did I feel?

> I felt stressed, as I couldn't fulfil my boss's urgent request. I was worried that she would think I was incompetent because I couldn't do what I was asked to do. I thought this would reflect badly on me.
>
> I also felt frustrated, impatient and angry with Gaye for not checking with me before sending such a large job to the printer, preventing me from doing my work. I wanted her and others in the office to know how I was feeling.

What have I learned about myself?

> I need to communicate better – I can't expect others to read my mind and know what I want without explaining it to them.
>
> I also need to find a way to cope with stress more effectively. Instead of getting angry, I could have told my boss that I needed a little more time as I'd have to wait for the printer.

Seeking feedback

Feedback from others can help you to become more self-aware.

Seeking honest feedback from co-workers is an excellent, if sometimes uncomfortable, way to learn more about yourself. Understanding how others see you can help you to see yourself more objectively.

Feedback should ideally be constructive, suggesting how you can improve your performance and grow both personally and professionally. Negative feedback can be hard to hear, but there is still value in it. If your supervisor or colleagues make negative comments about your performance, attitude or behaviour, try not to be defensive or reactive. Instead, try to be open to their criticism. You don't need to respond immediately – just thank them for their comments and say that you'll give them some thought. See it as an opportunity to reflect, and ask yourself if there is any truth to what they say.

Things to consider when asking for feedback	Things to consider when receiving feedback
▪ Co-workers who see you do only one part of your job may not be able to offer feedback about your overall performance ▪ Some people may not be completely honest and may try to hide the truth if they feel it will be hurtful	▪ Don't just listen to what others have to say – pay attention to their facial expressions, tone and body language too ▪ We all have blind spots, so don't be surprised if others comment on strengths or weaknesses that you are unable to see yourself

Writing your personal development action plan

Once you've reviewed your strengths and weaknesses and asked for feedback from others, you're ready to start thinking about improvements or changes you'd like to make. A good way to do this is to draw up a personal development action plan.

Drawing up a plan will help you to:

- Define your goals
- Identify the steps you need to take to reach these goals

For example, imagine that you have realised, after reflecting on your strengths and weaknesses at work, that you are always stressed and anxious in the week before a project deadline. You worry that you'll be late in submitting your work and that your co-workers aren't sure they can rely on you. When you ask them for feedback, you find out that the way they see you is very different to the way you see yourself. Your personal development plan might look something like this:

Self-evaluation	Feedback from others	Goal	Action required
In the week before a project deadline, I always get stressed and anxious. I feel like others pick up on that and start to worry too, thinking that they can't rely on me.	▪ Frank says that I am always reliable and commented that I have never missed a deadline. He also says that my work is of a consistently high quality. ▪ Georgia says that I need to learn to ask for help when I'm feeling stressed. She is always willing to help me out and I only have to ask. She pointed out that she often relies on me to help her when she is under pressure.	To keep my stress and anxiety under control and be more relaxed at work	▪ Remind myself to pause and take a deep breath when I feel stress building ▪ Ask for help when I'm under pressure ▪ Stop taking work home; instead, use my time at home to relax ▪ Get more exercise, to counteract anxiety

There are benefits in writing down your plan. It's a concrete way to demonstrate your commitment to your goals – not just to yourself but also to others, if you decide to share it. Some people find that it helps to keep the plan where you'll see it often – on a noticeboard, on your desktop, or somewhere else obvious – as a way to motivate yourself.

Communicate your action plan

If you share your plan with others, they can support you as you work towards your goals.

Sharing your plan with others, such as your co-workers, your manager or HR personnel, is another chance to get feedback, which can help you refine your goals and think of different ways to reach them. Your co-workers may have ideas or suggestions you haven't yet considered.

It is also a chance to show your colleagues that you are committed to your job and want to improve your performance, and to seek their support. In some cases you may also need to seek formal approval from your team leader, supervisor, manager or HR personnel, to be sure that any actions you plan to take are in line with the organisation's policies and procedures.

For example, if your goal is to apply for a more challenging position in another department, you might want to research other roles in the organisation by shadowing co-workers in different departments. This would require permission and planning, as your manager would need to make sure that other staff consented to being shadowed.

Many organisations conduct regular performance reviews, which are an ideal opportunity to discuss your action plan with your manager, but such conversations don't have to be formal. If you want to put a plan into action and your performance review is months away, you could just raise the questions with your team leader or supervisor the next time you catch up, or email them to arrange a meeting.

Practice Task 4

Part A

Read each statement about actions you can take to improve your self-awareness and select true or false in relation to each one.

Question 1

Only your personal weaknesses are discussed at a performance review.　　≫ True　　≫ False

Question 2

If you receive negative feedback about your work, you should defend yourself and say that the other person is wrong.　　≫ True　　≫ False

Part B

Question 1

Which of the following statements about feedback is correct? Tick all that apply.

○　Understanding how others see you can help you to see yourself more objectively.

○　You should always react to negative feedback immediately.

○　People are always honest when you ask them for feedback.

○　Others may see strengths or weaknesses in us that we are unable to see in ourselves.

Question 2

Which of the following statements is correct? Tick all that apply.

○ Drawing up a personal development action plan will help you to define your goals and identify the steps you need to take to reach them.

○ Writing down your plan and keeping it where you'll see it often is a good way to motivate yourself.

○ There is no benefit in sharing your plan with others.

○ Your performance review is an ideal opportunity to discuss your action plan with your manager.

2B Practising self-awareness

Developing self-awareness isn't a one-off exercise – it's an ongoing process.

Most of the time, we operate on 'autopilot', thinking and reacting automatically. It's only when you make the conscious decision to observe and reflect on your thoughts and actions and make this a regular habit that you will start to notice patterns in your thinking and behaviour. Greater awareness of your own emotional and behavioural responses allows you to question why you react or respond the way you do, and to consider whether these patterns should be changed.

Greater self-awareness can also help you to identify 'triggers' that make you respond to a situation in a certain way. When you recognise a trigger, you can remind yourself to pause or think differently about what is happening before reacting. You can take a moment to examine your emotions, thoughts and feelings, and to decide on the best course of action. For example, instead of being immediately defensive when you are accused of a mistake you didn't make, you can pause to take a breath and respond calmly with a statement of the facts.

Improving your work performance

There are a number of ways you can apply self-awareness to improve your work performance.

To make sure self-awareness exercises are meaningful, you must always be honest and open in your assessment of yourself. Ask yourself how well you do the following at work. Are there areas in which you feel you could improve?

Self-management

- Setting personal goals
- Maintaining motivation
- Measuring your performance
- Managing time efficiently
- Identifying better or more efficient ways to work
- Seeking opportunities for personal development, supervision and mentoring
- Asking for, analysing and interpreting feedback
- Adapting to change

Social awareness

- Being aware of how others are feeling
- Being open to other points of view
- Showing respect and sensitivity
- Managing conflict appropriately

Relationship management

- Communicating
- Building trust
- Negotiating
- Developing and maintaining professional networks
- Maintaining professional boundaries

Emotional regulation

- Recognising and managing your feelings
- Dealing with stress
- Remaining calm under pressure
- Being patient with others
- Not reacting too quickly

Identifying 'triggers'

Being aware of potential triggers gives you more control over your response to them.

A situation you find highly stressful may not affect your co-workers, and vice versa. The way we respond to difficult situations is personal, and often relates to experiences we've had in the past. If you are able to identify the 'triggers' that cause you to feel stressed, angry or upset, you can work on your response to them and put strategies in place to help you cope.

Problems and crises can be learning experiences. After a stressful or unpleasant incident at work, ask yourself:

- What specific thing did someone say or do that caused me to respond emotionally?
- What past experiences or situations might have influenced my reaction?
- Are there any similarities or patterns in the situations that tend to trigger me?
- How do my emotional responses make the situation worse?
- How can I respond in a way that allows me to maintain my composure?

Personal attributes

As you become more self-aware, you will start to notice how often you draw on your strengths.

You need certain personal skills or attributes in order to complete tasks, make decisions and communicate effectively with others. Leading a team requires these skills and more.

Personal attribute	Description	Example
Self-reliance	• Relying on your own efforts and abilities	Sylvie has phoned a customer and confirmed the delivery details for an important order. She has spoken to the dispatch department and updated them with the new delivery address details, and updated the database with the correct address and contact information. She sends an email to her boss outlining what she has done. He replies, thanking her for making sure the order will arrive as it should.
Self-confidence	• Believing that you can successfully face day-to-day challenges and demands	Marcel has been working on an important report for the past week. It is now edited and formatted, and he is very pleased with the final document. He completed all the work himself, including the cover and binding. Marcel is looking forward to handing it to his manager, as he knows she will be happy with his work.
Self-esteem	• Liking and respecting yourself, and recognising your achievements	Jenny is a customer service officer. She can see that the new process used for recording customer feedback takes too long. She feels it would be more productive to spend this time on the phone with customers. She decides to discuss how she feels with her boss. She has a few suggestions for ways to improve the process.

Review your personal strengths and weaknesses

Start practising self-awareness to identify your strengths and weaknesses.

Think about what traits or characteristics you have that are your strengths. Look at what work tasks provide you with satisfaction and pleasure. Now examine the habits that you deem to be your weaknesses. Observe yourself and monitor your emotions in different situations. Your reactions to different circumstances will tell you a lot about yourself. For example, consider the following:

- How do you behave under certain situations?
- How do you react to others in specific circumstances? Does your behaviour change according to who you are speaking to?
- How do other people react to you? Watch their reactions and responses in your conversations at work.

Keep a record of these observations as part of your action plan. Include examples from your observations to see where and under what circumstances you reacted the way you did.

Personal strengths	How is this evident in your work?
Adaptable/flexible	You like change. You always put your hand up to change or swap tasks as different priorities arise. You like to be challenged with new tasks that extend your knowledge. You have told your manager he should speak to you if he wants something done. You enjoy additional responsibilities and working in a variety of areas where you can interact with teams from different areas of the business.
Resilient	You don't get emotional when you're given critical feedback, unlike others in your team. You always look on the positive side. You like getting feedback – whether it is positive or negative – because it helps you to improve your work. You often look for ways to improve yourself.
Committed	You love your job and look forward to coming to work to see your colleagues. You have a high work output and like the feeling of finishing a task or project. Your manager often compliments you on your ability to do your job well, and this only makes you work harder.

Personal weaknesses	How is this evident in your work?
Impatient	You get frustrated with colleagues who perform too slowly. You don't like mistakes and you often find yourself wanting to correct people. Your team often tells you that you're impatient, because it's obvious in your body language.
Unmotivated	You become unmotivated and lose interest in your work when you get bored. When things are quiet, you find it hard to stay focused on tasks. You like to work towards a specific goal such as a deadline, where something has to be completed by a certain date. When you're unmotivated, you're not as productive.
Domineering	You like asking questions. You have been told you have an enquiring mind. You believe it is one of your strengths, but some people don't like this trait in you. You have been told that you ask too many questions and people feel like you are interrogating or cross-examining them. Your teammates don't like you asking too many questions during meetings. Some even say you dominate meetings.

Example

Observing and reflecting on your feelings

Clarence and Thomas are both employed as marketing assistants at Brilliant Brothers, a medium-sized furniture retailer. Clarence has only been employed in this role for five months, while Thomas has been with the company for several years. One of their jobs is to manage and maintain the company's social media marketing campaigns. This requires putting up posts that engage and inform their customers, as well as screening and monitoring posts from the public.

Thomas loves his job and enjoys the challenges he faces every day, but recently he has been stressed. Clarence is inexperienced and makes frequent mistakes that Thomas has to help him fix. Thomas has snapped at Clarence a few times and then regretted it afterwards. He has been thinking that he needs to be more professional and maintain control of his emotions, even when he's feeling frustrated.

On Monday afternoon, Clarence and Thomas discuss a social media campaign they are planning to launch on Wednesday. Thomas plans to check with their manager before launching the campaign. On Tuesday he is absent from work attending a funeral, so Clarence decides to make a head start on the campaign, launching it a day early. He puts up a post on Facebook asking for the public to finish the following sentence for a chance to win a $50 voucher: 'I prefer Brilliant Brothers furniture because ...'

When they arrive at work on Wednesday morning, they both find a curt email from the marketing manager waiting for them, requesting they immediately remove the post. A customer who recently had a bad experience with the company had posted sarcastic comments, prompting amused reactions from several other followers.

Thomas is initially shocked when he reads the email from his manager. He can feel himself getting angry with Clarence. The feeling is familiar, though, and when he recognises it, he stops to reflect and decide how best to react.

When he's feeling calm again, Thomas asks Clarence to remove the post, making sure that his tone is friendly. Then he suggests that they both speak with their manager to decide how to counter the negative publicity generated as a result of the sarcastic post.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

Which of the following statements about applying self-awareness is correct? Tick all that apply.

○ Most of the time, we operate on 'autopilot', thinking and reacting automatically.

○ If you question your patterns of thinking and behaving, you can work towards changing them.

○ At times of stress, you should always pause before responding.

○ Everyone responds to difficult situations in exactly the same way.

Question 2

Draw a line to match each personal attribute with the correct definition.

» Self-confidence   » Relying on your own efforts and abilities

» Self-reliance   » Believing that you can successfully face day-to-day challenges and demands

» Self-esteem   » Liking and respecting yourself, and recognising your achievements

Question 3

Give an example showing how each of the following strengths and weaknesses might be evident in a person's behaviour.

a) Adaptability

b) Respect for others

c) Shyness

d) Perfectionism

2C Strategies for ongoing improvement

People are motivated by making progress and achieving goals.

Monitoring your progress regularly will help you to keep your goals in sight. As your self-awareness grows, the areas you identified as needing improvement will become clearer and more precise. Reflecting on your progress and discussing it with your supervisor or manager may be helpful: someone with more experience is often well placed to suggest strategies and alert you to opportunities for ongoing personal development. Discussing your progress with others will also help you to revise and refine your plan as new issues arise or your goals change.

Monitoring your progress

Regularly reviewing your progress is an important part of achieving your goals.

Your personal development action plan is a record of your starting point, and is therefore a useful tool in monitoring and evaluating your progress as your self-awareness grows. If you review your plan once a week or once a month and make a note of your answers, you'll have a record of what you've achieved and what you still need to work on.

Questions you could ask yourself include:

- What have I achieved recently?
- What areas have I improved in?
- What benefits have I experienced as a result?
- How has the organisation benefited?
- What personal strengths can I develop further?
- How have my weaknesses made it harder to achieve my goals?
- What areas do I need to do more work on?
- How did I handle unforeseen difficulties and challenges?
- What feedback have I received from others, both positive and negative?
- How did I react to negative feedback?
- Have I found a way to implement what I've learned from others' criticisms?
- How can I continue to develop my self-awareness?
- How can others help me to achieve my goals?
- Do I need to revise or change my personal development action plan?

Seeking feedback and support from a mentor

A mentor can help you to identify further opportunities for growth.

A mentor is usually a more experienced staff member, such as your team leader, supervisor or manager. Ideally, a mentor should be someone you trust and whose opinion and experience you respect. Discussing your progress with a mentor is a good way to explore possibilities and seek advice. These discussions will help you to stay focused and motivated to improve.

Your mentor may have valuable suggestions about how you can continue to develop both your personal and professional skills at work.

For example, they might recommend:
- A session with an in-house specialist or expert, such as a HR professional trained in communication or other areas of personal and professional development
- Attending a conference
- Completing an online training module

You can, of course, take part in professional development activities in your own time, covering the fees yourself, but it's easier to participate in such activities with the support of your organisation. Your manager will need to consider your availability and the cost of any professional development activities you want to participate in, so you may need to outline the purpose of the activity and how the organisation will benefit from you taking part. Be ready to explain how you'll implement what you've learned in the workplace. You may also be required to share what you've learned at a team meeting or by writing a report.

> ## Example
>
> ### Reviewing progress with a mentor
>
> Max is looking forward to meeting with his manager to reflect on his first year of work. He has loved every minute of it and is excited to share some of his successes and talk about what challenges may come up next. He has already filled in a review questionnaire giving examples of how he believes he has performed, using the performance indicators in his job description and the values statement of the organisation as a benchmark.
>
> When they meet, Max is pleased to discover that his manager has given him a very similar evaluation for most areas of competency. Together they discuss what Max has achieved and talk about some professional development opportunities that may be useful. His manager suggests further training in business writing to help Max develop his report-writing ability. This is one area where they both agree that Max could improve.
>
> His manager compliments Max on his frank, open approach to his review and his willingness to accept constructive criticism. He says that with Max's commitment to increasing his skills and knowledge, he is sure to have long and rewarding career ahead of him.

Revising your action plan

An action plan is most effective when it is regularly revised as things change or new challenges arise. You should set aside some time in your work schedule every now and then to look back over your plan and make any changes you need to. Perhaps you've achieved one of your goals and feel it's time to add a new one, or maybe your role at work has changed and some of your original goals are no longer relevant. Setting new goals will help you to stay engaged and motivated.

Ongoing strategies

Here are some practical examples of things you can do to continuously improve your self-awareness.

Take initiative

> Show initiative by finding out about training activities or undertaking professional reading or learning tasks. Ask questions of others and try to remember what you have learned.

Show enthusiasm

> An enthusiastic approach to learning shows others that you are committed to improving your skills and build your career.

Have a can-do attitude

> Look for chances to say 'I can' or 'I will' rather than responding negatively to problems or issues at work. A positive attitude is a useful attribute.

Associate with positive, supportive people

> Associate with others who have a positive attitude to learning. Look for people who you think are going places in your organisation and associate with them.

Look for and create opportunities

> Opportunities don't just happen – sometimes you need to make them happen. Find out what opportunities exist to build your skills and make the most of them.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

Give two examples of professional development activities that could help with skills development.

Question 2

Which of the following are things you can do to improve your self-awareness?
Tick all that apply.

○ Take initiative

○ Show enthusiasm

○ Have a can-do attitude

○ Associate with positive, supportive people

○ Ask to go to conferences and other activities to get out of work tasks.

Summary

- Developing self-awareness is an ongoing process
- A personal development action plan can help you to define your goals and then achieve them
- The first steps in creating a personal development plan are to evaluate yourself, reviewing your strengths and weaknesses, and then seek feedback from colleagues
- After seeking feedback, the next step is to decide on your goals and what you need to do to reach them
- Writing down your plan is a way to demonstrate your commitment to your goals and motivate yourself
- Communicating your plan to others will help you to put it into action and stay on track
- When you reflect regularly on your thoughts and actions, you will start to notice patterns in your thinking and behaviour
- Being aware of your own emotional and behavioural responses allows you to question why you react or respond the way you do
- Greater self-awareness can also help you to identify 'triggers' that make you respond to events or situations in a certain way
- Being aware of your triggers gives you more control over your response to them
- Monitoring your progress regularly will help you to keep your goals in sight
- A mentor can help you to identify further opportunities for growth
- An action plan is most effective when it is regularly revised

Learning Checkpoint 2

Apply self-awareness at work

Part A

1. Give two examples of how developing self-awareness can help you to improve your work.

2. How can a personal development action plan help you to become more self-aware?

3. Why is it a good idea to share your action plan with your supervisor or manager and then review your progress together?

4. Give two examples of activities you could do to improve your ongoing personal development.

Part B

Read the case study and then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

A manager, Sally, meets with one of her team members, Leon. Here is the discussion that takes place.

Sally: 'Leon, I've noticed that you're not getting along too well with Xiang. This is causing problems within the team.'

Leon: 'Why are you blaming me? What about Xiang?'

Sally: 'I'm not blaming either of you. I want to talk openly about this and find out what's causing the problem between you.'

Leon: 'I don't feel like the rest of the team trust me – particularly Xiang. I don't trust him either.'

Sally: 'The distrust needs to stop. I want to see mutual respect between all members of our team.'

Leon: 'I want that too, but I don't know how to make the others trust me.'

Sally: 'It's part of my role to help you. So let's meet tomorrow and get started.'

1. What is causing problems among the members of Sally's team?

2. What advice could Sally give Leon to help him be more self-aware and find a solution to his problem?

3. Why is it important that Sally is involved in this interaction? What does she hope to achieve, and why?

4. Suggest two strategies Sally could offer Leon to help him become more self-aware.