

## Increasing Self–Awareness: Exclusive Excerpt

**Susan Albers:** I recently had the pleasure of speaking with Travis Bradberry, coauthor of the bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. The book is a fantastic, easy to read, skill-based book that gives you specific tips for raising your emotional intelligence. One of my areas of interest is mindfulness, emotional intelligence and self-awareness. So, I couldn't resist learning more from Travis Bradberry, the author of this book. The first section of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* is about boosting your self-awareness, which is also a core skill of mindfulness.

**Susan Albers:** Does self-awareness come first because it is the most important skill or are the four strategies equally important? Also, what would be the first step you would recommend to someone who wants to become more self-aware?

**Travis Bradberry:** They are all important, but when you're lacking self-awareness it can really hold you back from picking up the other skills. The only way to genuinely understand your emotions so that you can manage them effectively is to spend enough time thinking through them to figure out where they come from and why they are there. Emotions always serve a purpose. Emotions always come from somewhere. They are reactions to the world around you. Many times emotions seem to arise out of thin air, and it's important to understand why something gets a reaction out of you. Self-awareness is not about discovering deep, dark secrets or unconscious motivations, but, rather, it comes from developing a straightforward and honest understanding of what makes you tick. People high in self-awareness are remarkably clear in their understanding of what they do well, what motivates and satisfies them, and which people and situations push their buttons.

To become self-aware, you need a great deal of high-quality, objective feedback on your emotions and your behavior. If you have people in your life that can do this constructively, that's great. It's also highly unusual. That's never an easy conversation to have. There's a much easier way to get the feedback you need and that's through an emotional intelligence test. The *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* book includes access to our Emotional Intelligence Appraisal test for this very purpose. The test gives you a clear picture of your emotional intelligence strengths and weaknesses, and this is something that you can do privately. Even though TalentSmart sells the test separately from the book for \$40, we decided to include a passcode to the test with each copy because getting tested is essential to increasing your self-awareness and increasing your self-awareness is essential to increasing your emotional intelligence. We have to walk our talk on this one, even if it means giving readers a really nice perk with the book.

**Susan Albers:** We often think about emotional intelligence in the context of business success. Briefly explain how it can help you in everyday life.

**Travis Bradberry:** The daily challenge of dealing effectively with emotions is critical because our brains are hard-wired to give emotions the upper hand. Since our brains are wired to make us emotional creatures, your first reaction to an event is always going to be an emotional one. You have no control over this part of the process. You do control the thoughts that follow an emotion, and you have a great deal of say in how you react to an emotion—as long as you are aware of it. Some experiences produce emotions that you are easily aware of; other times emotions may seem nonexistent. When

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something generates a prolonged emotional reaction in you, it's called a "trigger event." Your reactions to your triggers are shaped by your personal history, which includes your experience with similar situations. As your EQ skills grow, you learn to spot your triggers and practice productive ways of responding to them that will become habitual.

Over the last decade we've tested more than 500,000 people to explore the role emotions play in daily living. We've learned how people see themselves versus what others see in them, and we've observed how various choices affect quality of life. Despite the growing focus on emotional intelligence, a global deficit in understanding and managing emotions remains. Only 36 percent of the people we've tested are able to accurately identify their emotions as they happen. This means that two thirds of us are typically controlled by our emotions and are not yet skilled at spotting them and using them to our benefit. Emotional awareness and understanding are not taught in school. We enter adulthood knowing the three Rs, but too often we lack the skills to manage our emotions in the heat of the challenging problems that we face every day.

**Susan Albers:** One of your suggestions is to Watch EQ at the Movies. Are there any current movies that you think are a great example of EQ in action?

**Travis Bradberry:** The Descendants with George Clooney has some compelling examples of people who struggle between letting their emotions and their reason drive their behavior. In addition to the choices Clooney's character makes, there are some interesting interactions between him and his daughters that have strong emotional undercurrents that fly in the face of the obvious, rational reasons for how they respond to

each other. We licensed clips from some recent films that illustrate emotional intelligence beautifully, and included these in the e-Learning activities that come with the test that comes with the *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* book. There's a great scene with Jake Gyllenhaal from *October Sky*, Will and Jaden Smith from *The Pursuit of Happyness*, Julia Roberts from *Erin Brockovich*, and Paul Rudd and Elizabeth Banks from *Role Models*.



*Click on the image to view this clip.*

**Susan Albers:** Sometimes my clients and readers of my books feel skeptical that they can really change. When you hear this kind of skepticism, how do you respond?

**Travis Bradberry:** The Emotional Intelligence Appraisal test results pinpoint the strategies from the book that will increase your emotional intelligence the most. I send skeptics right to these strategies. They are so specific and so easy to implement that people have little to lose in trying them. Most of the strategies don't take any extra time out of your day, they just require responding to existing events differently. I find that people try the strategies and they are hooked right away because they

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see immediate improvement. So much of emotional intelligence comes down to your awareness and your perspective that change happens quickly once you see things properly.

**Susan Albers:** You mention four strategies--self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management. Is there one of these strategies that seems more difficult than the others for people to boost?

**Travis Bradberry:** Social awareness is a tough one for a lot of people to increase because to be socially aware, you have to spot and understand people's emotions while you're right there in the middle of it—a contributing, yet astutely aware, participant in the interaction.

Listening and observing are the most important elements of social awareness. To listen well and accurately observe what's going on around you, you have to stop bad habits. You have to stop talking, stop the monologue that's running through your mind, stop anticipating the point the other person is about to make, and stop thinking ahead to what you are going to say next.

Thank you Travis Bradberry for writing a useful, interesting book and teaching us about emotional intelligence! See [www.talentsmart.com](http://www.talentsmart.com) for more information.