



Human Optimization

Pod Club Discussion Questions



E29 Self-Awareness: The First Step in Improving Your Emotional Intelligence

Guest: Kimberly D. Collins M.A., ACC, Owner/Founder, Executive Coach, Enneagram Consultant | Enneagram Reflections

The three big questions explored in the podcast:

Question 1

What is Self-Awareness, and how does it fit into the bigger picture of "Emotional Intelligence"?

Question 2

Why is true Self-Awareness rare, and what modern traps keep us from understanding ourselves?

Question 3

What steps can one take to start improving their Self-Awareness in a meaningful way?

Discussion Questions:

1. Kimberly Collins defines self-awareness as "conscious knowledge of our inner workings for the purpose of managing ourselves better and understanding ourselves better." How did you think about self-awareness before listening to this episode? How do you think about it now? What specific "inner workings" (fears, desires, values, emotions) do you feel you understand well, and which would you like to better understand?
2. The podcast emphasizes that self-awareness is the foundational cornerstone for all other aspects of emotional intelligence. How do you see a lack of self-awareness potentially hindering your self-management, social awareness, or social management in your daily life?
3. Kimberly highlights that only 36% of people worldwide are considered "highly emotionally intelligent." Does this statistic surprise you? What are some strategies you want to use to strengthen your own emotional intelligence?
4. The discussion identifies emotional triggers as "hotbeds of fantastic information" about ourselves, often linked to core fears (e.g., not feeling loved, belonging, or safe). Reflect for a moment: identify one of your emotional triggers. What core fear might it be protecting you from?
5. The podcast explores cognitive biases like the fundamental attribution error ("if I mess up, it's your fault") and the Dunning-Kruger effect (overestimating our own abilities). How might these biases be subtly impacting your self-perception?
6. Kimberly suggests that "time scarcity" is often a perceived barrier, and that self-awareness primarily requires "intention, not necessarily time." What is one small, intentional moment in

your day (e.g., commute, a few minutes before a meeting) where you could practice pausing and noticing your inner state?

7. The episode discusses the ego's role in distracting us from self-awareness through defensiveness, denial, or comparison. How do you observe your ego playing these "games" in your own life? With your group, identify one or two strategies to compassionately acknowledge these inner thoughts without letting them derail your self-awareness journey.
8. The call to action encourages reflecting on "Why did I say what I say? Why did I do what I did? And why did I feel how I felt?" without judgment. Think about a recent interaction. Reflect on your experience by considering these questions. What new insights did you gain by approaching it as an "emotional scientist" rather than a judge? What is one thing you will do differently next time?
9. Based on this episode, what is one small change you are going to make to help improve in this area. How are you going to keep yourself accountable to that and measure your success? (Be sure to keep it simple, start small, and make it very clear).