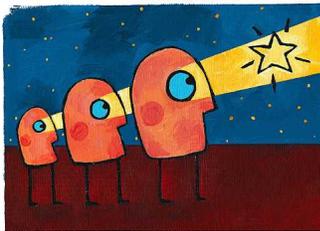


General Semantics and the Practice of Awareness



By Milton Dawes

The practice of awareness is an effective way of keeping in touch with the goings on in our inner world - the world around us.



Awareness is one of the most important keys to becoming better managers of our everyday interpersonal, intrapersonal, social, professional, and domestic interactions. The practice of awareness gives us information about ourselves in our environments. It enables us to better see ourselves, hear ourselves, understand ourselves, know ourselves, take charge of ourselves.

The practice of awareness opens up a way for us to recognize the connections between what we do and how we do what we do, and the effects of this on those we come in contact with, and the situations we find ourselves in - and most important of all, how all this in turn affects us at a later time.

The practice of awareness helps us to recognize that a good deal of our joy and misery, satisfaction and disappointments, understandings or confusions cannot be blamed on others or circumstances, but depends on our attitudes and approach, our knowledge and beliefs, our fears and desires.....a good deal depends on us.

The following is a set of simple exercises designed to help you develop greater awareness. Select one every now and again and record your experiences.

- Watch people walking.....notice the variety of walking styles.....notice your own walking style.....silently, without judgments.
- See if you can catch yourself using one of the following words: *always... never... true... false... fact... wrong... right... should... only... normal... perfect... exactly... bad... equal... same... ought... know...*
- Make an effort to justify to yourself your use of these words.
- When you touch, or remove something, try to replace it "exactly" the way you found it ... so that no one would know that it was disturbed.
- Whenever you enter a room, do a stock-taking exercise...look around and take note of the furniture ... fixtures ... paintings ... equipment ... people ...
- Every now and again, listen to the various sounds around you ... see how many you recognize ...
- Listen to yourself talking ... identify the times when you find yourself describing things ... making assumptions ... seeking information ... asking questions ... disagreeing ... criticizing ...

- Wear your watch or ring on a different hand...notice how uncomfortable a simple change can be..
- Notice which shoe you put on or take off first ... make a switch ...
- In going some place you usually go to ... take another route ...
- Notice which part of your body you touch first when you take a bath ...
- Notice which foot you lead with, while walking, or when you step on to a flight of steps ...
- See if you can discover the times when you are most aware ... or unaware ...
- Make a graph and plot your mood for each hour of a day, using the following scale: ***Feeling***
Low...Tense...Angry...OK...Fine...Great...Fantastic...
- See how many things around you that you don't understand the workings of ...
- When next you go someplace, (the office, a party, to visit a friend, etc.) decide on an arrival time one day ahead: try to be there within 5 minutes of time selected. (It is important to select a specific arrival point - greeting your host, entering the door, etc.). Notice the things, situations, people (including yourself) that affect your timing.
- Create some exercises of your own to add to this list. Think of these exercises as a brain game.

