

How to Develop Self Awareness- Three Books That Will Change Your Life

Red Pill Theory | 8 September, 2017 | by Avery



Self-awareness isn't a sexy concept. Six-pack abs, a six-figure income: these are the ideas that get us drooling in anticipation. In comparison, learning about self-awareness is about as exciting as watching grass grow.

And that's too bad. Self-awareness is the most powerful tool anyone can use to become more successful, happier, and more fulfilled in life. This is a problem, because most of us severely lack self-awareness, and we don't even know we lack it.

In fact, psychological research has found that most people [think they are better than average at most things](#). Above average intelligence, above average looks, above average kindness. And best of all, most of us [think we are less biased than average](#). We can see that other people lack self-awareness, but we don't see our own lack of self-awareness.

Nobel Prize winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman wrote, "We're blind to our blindness. We have very little idea of how little we know. We're not designed to know how little we know."

It's a pernicious trap. It's very challenging to improve our self-awareness, because we don't know we lack it.

A lack of self-awareness is, in many ways, a *psychological parallel to cancer*. Cancer isn't a foreign invader, it's our own body destroying itself.

If your body produces cancer cells, and it knows those cells are cancerous, the cancer will never spread. It will be swiftly eliminated. But, if your body doesn't notice cancer cells multiplying, they will replicate until they destroy the body that created them. A self-awareness deficit plays out similarly, without knowing it, you get in your own way.

Here's how a lack of self-awareness plays out in real life:

Imagine there's a high-school student, Lance, who wants to get good grades so he can earn scholarships, go to a high quality college, and eventually, earn a prestigious career. There's a problem, though. Lance believes he is dumb. His friends always teased him about being stupid, his grades in elementary and middle school were always poor, and no one saw him as a promising student. As much as he wants to get good grades, he doesn't try; because he doesn't see the point in trying.



He's stupid, right? So why waste his time studying and writing and doing homework? All that effort would be a waste, because John just isn't a smart kid- he lacks talent- so he doesn't try to get good grades.

But Lance is wrong about himself. He's not inherently stupid, he's just not trying hard enough. He's behind other kids his age, so it would be more difficult for him to get good grades than for his peers at

first, but if he worked hard enough, he could excel and get into a good college.

Unfortunately, Lance lacks self-awareness. If he knew it was his belief that he was stupid that was holding him back (as opposed to actual stupidity), then he wouldn't have an excuse to avoid trying. As soon as he knew he could control his fate, he would take control of it.

If Lance were self-aware, he wouldn't destroy himself without knowing it, just like how cancer cells wouldn't spread, if the host identified them as cancer cells.

Similarly, when you lack self-awareness, you can limit yourself without even knowing it. In fact, it's often not a lack of willpower, confidence, or ambition that prevent us from living the life we want, but a lack of self-awareness.



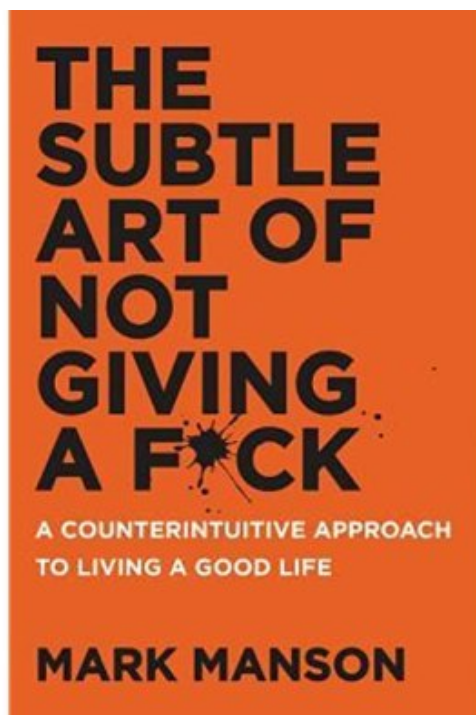
Developing self-awareness isn't easy; how can you possibly learn that your own beliefs are wrong? We use our beliefs to understand the world and to navigate through it, asking yourself to abandon some of those beliefs is like asking an explorer to abandon their map and compass. Our beliefs are what give us bearing, they ground us in reality. Yet, many of those beliefs are wrong. What our compass tells us is north, may be south.

There is no magic pill for becoming self-aware. Yet, self-awareness can be developed. There is an ancient ritual that used to be quite popular that can radically change how you see yourself and the world around you. Reading.

Specifically, reading non-fiction books written to challenge your assumptions and beliefs. If you start reading these books, you won't be able to help but to become more self-aware, intelligent, and in many ways, free. There are numerous books that can help you develop your self-awareness, but here I'm going to focus on three of the most powerful I've ever read.

The Subtle Art of Not Giving A Fuck

By Mark Manson



The *Subtle Art* is the antithesis of a self-help book. Where self-help tells you what you want to hear, *The Subtle Art* tells you what you don't want to hear. Where self-help teaches you how to become more successful, Mark Manson teaches you that pursuing success is often misguided, and even toxic. Where self-help teaches you to care more about the future, *The Subtle Art* teaches you to stop obsessing over the future.

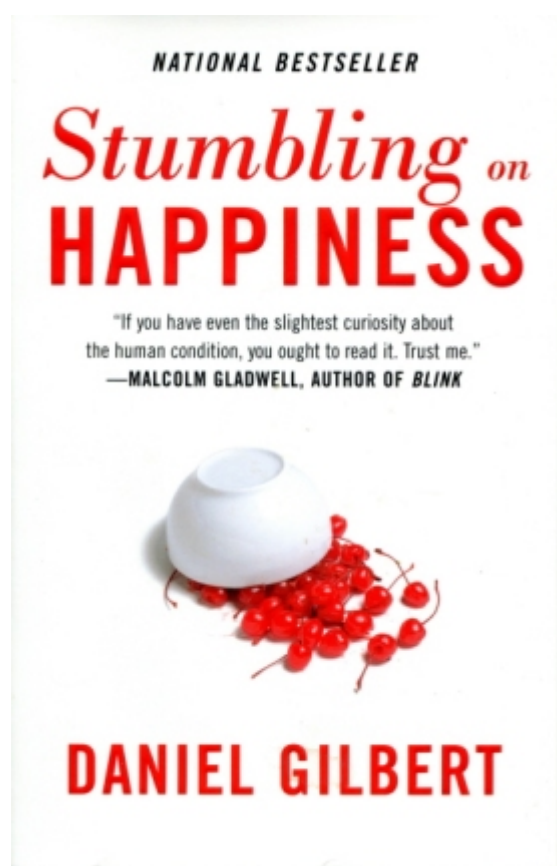
This book is successfully iconoclastic, and stands out not only because it's well-written, but also because it is chock-full of controversial concepts that you probably haven't heard before. Reading Manson's book will make you question your values, your goals, and your self-concept. It is painful to read, and that's a good thing.

Frankly, I disagree with many of *The Subtle Art's* concepts. Despite this, I appreciated all the ideas because they challenged my thinking, and made me question what I know.

Amazon link: [The Subtle Art of Not Giving A Fuck](#)

Stumbling On Happiness

by Daniel Gilbert



Written by Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert, *Stumbling On Happiness* is a bonafide odyssey of the mind. Gilbert asserts that humans are the only animals that can contemplate the future. This gives us a set of unique advantages, but it also comes with a litany of negative consequences.

Because we can contemplate our future, we can also plan out how to make ourselves happier in the future. Unfortunately, we are overconfident in the accuracy of our predictions. We think that a certain spouse,

career, or house will make us happy; but we're often wrong.

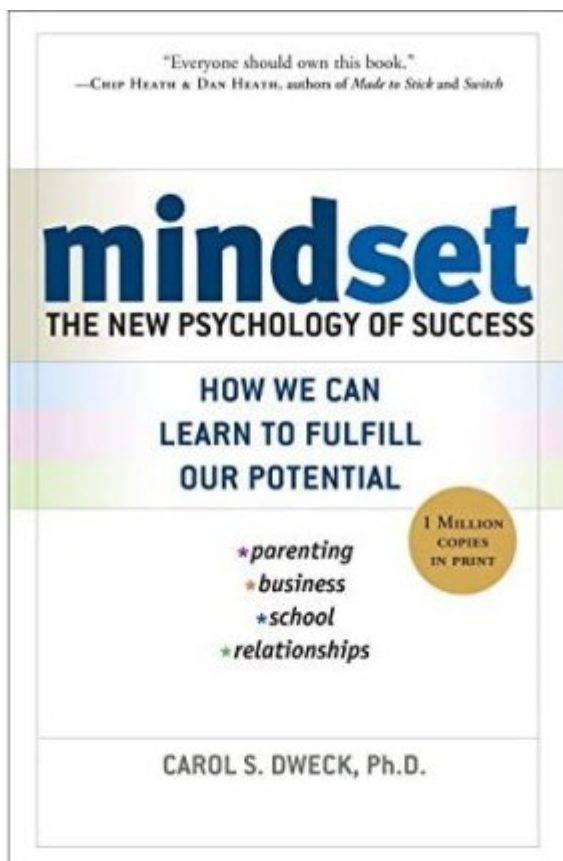
For example, we might think being a lawyer will make us happy, because of our imagination. Perhaps we saw *Law and Order*, thought it was cool, and wanted to say cool phrases like, "Objection," in court. But the reality of being a lawyer is mostly reading and writing in an office, not high-octane in court arguments. After a couple years of being a Lawyer, we may realize that we had no idea why we wanted to be a lawyer in the first place, and we set our sites elsewhere.

That's an oversimplification, yet, if you look at the rate at which adults leave careers they spent years of college to obtain, it does make you wonder if those decisions were well thought-out.

Stumbling on Happiness shows us that our ability to predict our future happiness is questionable, perhaps even nonexistent. We all pursue happiness, but reading Gilbert's book will make you question whether you really know what happiness is, and whether your beliefs about your happiness- in the present and the future- are misguided.

Amazon Link: [Stumbling On Happiness](#)

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol Dweck



Psychologist Carol Dweck shows us that what determines personal success might have a lot to do with something that most of us have never considered. Dweck argues that what whether we have one of two mindsets- static or growth- is the secret driver of success (or failure).

If you have a static mindset, you believe that your degree of success is a product of innate characteristics. Your intelligence, creativity, etc. are traits you were born with. If you fail at school, it's because you're not smart. If you fail in your pursuit to become a musician, it's because your tone deaf.

If you have a growth mindset, however, you believe that your degree of success is determined through a process of continually learning from past experiences and failures. If you're not doing well in school, you decide to devote more hours to studying. If you didn't make it into your school's band, you find an

instructor.

Dweck gives scientific evidence that a growth mindset predicts much greater levels of success than a static mindset. It's not your inherent limitations that prevent you from succeeding, but the fact that you believe you have inherent limitations.

Reading *Mindset* won't necessarily make you believe that your mindset quietly determines whether you fail or succeed in your pursuits, but it will make you question how you think about yourself. When you fail, you'll start to wonder whether that failure is saying something about who you are, or just giving you feedback about your approach.

Read *Mindset* if you want to challenge your assumptions about what makes people succeed or fail (yourself included).

Amazon Link: [*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*](#)

Reading these books won't change your life over night. But it will lead you to start questioning your values and beliefs. This process of questioning can plant a seed that eventually grows into deep personal change. Reading books that make you think about your thinking can broaden your self-awareness. As you become more aware, the limiting beliefs you didn't know you had will lose their power over you.

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