

# Improving Your Child's Self-Awareness Skills

Tips and strategies for helping your child develop better Self-Awareness skills for a healthier life and a happier future.

**LearningWorks**  
**for kids** playing smarter in a digital world.



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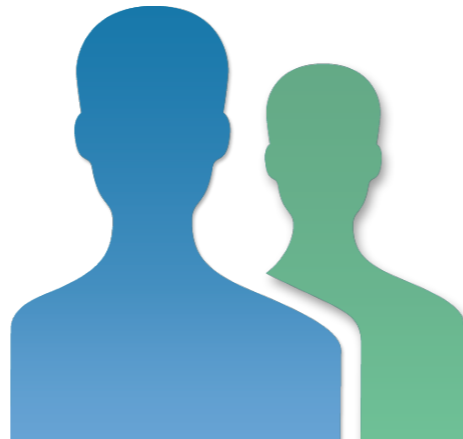
*Tips and strategies for helping your child develop better Self-Awareness skills for a healthier life and a happier future.*



## **What is Self-Awareness?**

*What Self-Awareness skills are all about, and how to tell if your child needs to improve them.*

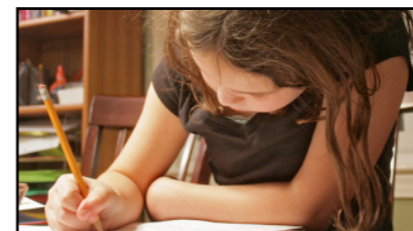
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## **Improving Self-Awareness**

*Tips and Strategies for Improving your child's Self-Awareness Skills*

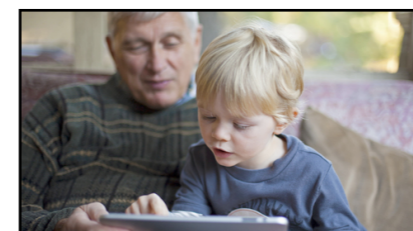
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## **Self-Awareness and Academics**

*How developing strong Self-Awareness skills can help your child succeed in the classroom.*

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## **Self-Awareness and Digital Play**

*How healthy and responsible digital play can help improve Self-Awareness skills*

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# What is Self Awareness?

## Kids With Good Self-Awareness Skills:

1. Recognize the needs of younger children, such as holding their hands while crossing a street.
2. Have an awareness of how their behavior impacts others.
3. Display an ability to understand and articulate their feelings.
4. Use self-instruction, such as, "First, I'll do this; next, I'll do that."
5. Are able to identify what they must learn in order to complete a task successfully.
6. Understand their personal strengths and weaknesses.

Self-Awareness is the thinking skill that focuses on a child's ability to accurately judge their own performance and behavior and to respond appropriately to different social situations.



Self-Awareness helps an individual to tune into their feelings, as well as to the behaviors and feelings of others. For example, a child successfully uses self-awareness skills when they notice they are talking too loudly in a library where other children are trying to work, and then adjusts the volume or their voice to a more considerate level.

Self-Awareness is vital both to a child's academic success as well as their social and emotional growth. This thinking skill facilitates a child's ability to accurately judge their own performance and behavior, as well as their ability to appropriately respond to different social situations.

The thinking skill of self-awareness is associated primarily with Dawson and Guare's executive skill of metacognition. In the LearningWorks for Kids thinking-skills model, we have added the component of social thinking, which reflects an individual's capacity for understanding others' feelings and motivations.

As an executive function, self-awareness refers to the capacity to understand the impact of one's behavior on others, as well as the capacity to connect and empathize with individuals in their environments. Self-awareness helps children to be reflective and think about their actions and behavior, as well as to step back and consider what others in their environment are experiencing.

Self-awareness facilitates the capacity to learn from one's mistakes, accept criticism, and listen to and understand the feelings of others.

Assessing the executive function of self-awareness in children involves seeing how effectively they understand themselves and others. The Learning-Works for Kids Thinking Skills Assessment is based on the Executive Skills Questionnaire, which measures self-awareness primarily by children's capacity to explain the rationale for their decision making, accurately assess their performance, and their capacity to take on other people's perspectives.

### **Kids With Underdeveloped Working Memory Skills:**

1. Have difficulty understanding nonverbal cues and body posture.
2. Are unable to understand other people's perspectives.
3. Are in frequent conflict with others due to misunderstandings.
4. Engage in inappropriate behaviors without recognizing how they impact others.
5. Have difficulty being accurate in their self-assessment, such as in describing their academic or athletic performance.
6. Are unlikely to double check their work and often make simple mistakes, such as adding instead of subtracting.

# Improving Self-Awareness



These are some general strategies and ideas for helping kids to improve their Self-Awareness skills.

1. Develop checklists to help children determine how well they have completed a home-based chore or activity. Use a grading system and give praise for accurate self-evaluation. Have them rate themselves as you rate them for the same task then compare and contrast scores. Describe your methods of evaluation and ask them to do the same.

2. Encourage estimation and prediction skills. Ask children how they might do on a test at school, how long it might take them to complete a task at home, or how they might perform in a game or sport. Have them record their estimates and then step back later to determine the accuracy of their predictions.

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*“Younger children may benefit from visual reminders of their sets of strengths and weaknesses.”*

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3. Express yourself: Model self-verbalization skills by expressing your thoughts and problem-solving strategies aloud. For example, verbalize statements such as, “This reminds me of the time when we tried to do this,” or “I need to think about what worked and didn’t work the last time we did this.” Encourage your child to use similar self-instructional strategies to help them in their own problem-solving tasks.

4. Estimating how easy or difficult a task might be will assist your child to gauge her ability to complete the task. It can also be helpful to consider potential barricades to completion of a goal. Ask questions that encourage thinking about what might hinder, delay or prevent successful completion.

5. Be a friend. Help your child to set up a play date with a friend by talking about the guest’s interests, anticipating any needs or preparing some activities that they might both enjoy. You might also find ways to have the child “help” you to get ready for dinner guests or visiting relatives with similar considerations in mind.

6. Be “reporters”. Make use of occasional opportunities for you and your child to sit back and observe other

children in small groups. On a bench at the playground, the beach or the mall, take turns reporting on social interactions you can watch “live”. Make guesses about what might be going on. Then point out any physical actions, facial expressions, behaviors or tones of voice that give clues to support or disprove your imagined story.

7. Be actors. Role-playing or rehearsing lines can be a big help in getting ready to meet new people or enter a new setting. Take turns introducing yourself to each other and asking one or two appropriate questions. As your child becomes more confident with these skills, simply offer a prompt prior to entering a new situation. Describe your methods of evaluation and ask them to do the same.

8. Younger children may benefit from visual reminders of their sets of strengths and weaknesses. For example, a collage of pictures showing a social, friendly, but disorganized child smiling with friends, engaged in cooperative play activities, yet also having a messy room. Encourage your child to collect and group the pictures and to talk about her choices.



# Self-Awareness and Academic Skills

**Self-awareness is an important skill in the capacity to assess one's academic performance.**

Carefully checking over one's work in math, taking the time to see that you have spelled words correctly while writing, and stepping back to make connections and inferences about what one has read are all important

skills, particularly at higher levels of learning. Metacognition facilitates reflecting about what one has learned, and not simply memorizing a series of facts.

## Reading

- Self-Awareness skills are an important part of making inferences and connections about content while reading.



- Self-Awareness helps children monitor and assess their comprehension of what they have read.

## Writing:

- Self-Awareness is an important aspect of understanding one's audience and the type of writing assignment at hand.
- Self-Awareness helps kids develop a willingness to reflect on, and edit their work.

- Self-Awareness helps kids become proficient at spell checking techniques, proof-reading, and other revision activities.

## Math:

- Self-Awareness helps kids to explain their mathematical reasoning in words.
- Self-Awareness is vital when self-evaluating and checking one's work for errors.





# Self-Awareness and Digital Play



**Digital Play is filled with opportunities to improve Self-Awareness.**

Playing video games, searching the Internet, trying out the newest app, or Facebooking a friend demands a variety of thinking skills. Proficiency with any of these digital tools requires the ability to apply skills such as Planning, Organization, Working Memory, or Self-Awareness. For children, the attraction of video games and technologies makes them an ideal teaching tool for practicing game-based skills and learning to apply them to school and daily activities.

Self-Awareness is a frequently applied thinking skill for video game players who are looking to improve their performance or

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simply share their game passions with other players. Players will often ask each other questions, explain their approaches to difficult parts of the game, and reflect on new ways they can use their digital technologies to help them in real-world activities.

Many popular video games today are loaded with opportunities to practice and develop the skill of Self-Awareness. Beating a game frequently requires that players recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, consider the assets they have in the game, and think about the skills needed to be able to beat a particular level. These reflective (sometimes called meta-cognitive skills) and self-recognition skills are all core components of Self-Awareness.

### **Digital play can help kids improve Self-Awareness skills by helping them to:**

- Plan and discuss game strategies with parents or friends in a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG).



- Talk to their peers who have an interest in the same video game or technology.
- Self-evaluate their performance in order to assess what they need to do in order to be successful and beat the game.
- Learn from one's failure in the game, as well as one's success.
- Develop estimation skills that help them hypothesize how certain strategies may "play out".

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