



# AWARENESS WHEEL ANNOTATED TOOL

## A Tool for Handling Difficult Conversations

Having difficult conversations stirs up a range of emotions; all of which makes us want to avoid them. We fear saying the wrong thing and having the situation escalate or being misunderstood and not heard. Sometimes it just seems easier to not have the conversation than it is to have it. However, we all know that that only lasts for so long. Eventually, that difficult conversation must take place.

### HERE IS HOW THE AWARENESS WHEEL WORKS:

It has 5 phases or steps for reflection and communication: sensing, thinking, feeling, wanting, and asking/ actions.

**Sensing:** In this phase, you identify what you sense (see, hear); these are just the facts without any judgment or interpretation.

**Thinking:** Next, identify your thoughts, ideas, and judgments. This is how you interpreted the actions you heard or observed.

**Feeling:** Then you identify how it made you feel, the emotions you have because of the experience. Caution: do not confuse thoughts with emotions. If you begin a sentence with “I feel like...” it will be a thought which follows, not an emotion. Here you want to focus on emotion words: I feel angry, sad, frustrated, glad, afraid, etc .

**Want:** Now you can focus on what it is you want from or for yourself or others in this situation. Identify what you could do to resolve the situation or how you would like a similar situation handled differently in the future.

**Ask/Actions:** Lastly, you determine what actions (actual behaviors-not opinions or attitudes) you must do to resolve the issue or you would like from others to improve the situation in the present or future.

### Reflective Example:

It is extremely helpful to use the tool to reflect on your experience or the situation before you communicate with the other person involved. This will help you eliminate a lot of the judgment you have about the situation and home in on exactly how it made you feel and how to resolve it. Much of what happens with difficult conversations is people get caught up in their version of the “story” which does not lead to resolution. Sometimes, the process of reflection alone can eliminate the need for any discussion at all. Consider the following example for reflection:

*Yesterday when I was talking to Mary she said she didn't have any time for me and walked away. I thought that was really rude and unfair because I had more to say. I felt ignored and frustrated when she walked away like she didn't think I was important. I really wanted her to listen to me or make time to hear me and give me her opinion. Next time, I will ask her if she has time to listen to me before I delve into a topic.*

### Communication Example:

After some reflection, you can identify both your role in the situation and what you want to happen differently in the future. As the saying goes, it takes two to tango. Now that you have more clarity about the situation you can use the same framework to communicate with the other person to resolve the situation.

*For example:*

*“Hi Mary, is this a good time to talk about something that happened yesterday? “  
(If yes, proceed – if not, let her know you want to talk and ask when it would be a good time  
for you to get together to talk)*

*“Yesterday, when I was talking to you, you said you didn’t have time to talk (use exact words – don’t paraphrase  
or rewrite the past) and you walked away (don’t add any adjectives here like “abruptly” or “with an attitude”).”*

*“I thought that it was rude and now I realize I had not asked you if you had time to talk. I was frustrated and felt  
ignored because I had more to say and wanted your advice. In the future when I want to talk to you, I’ll make  
sure you have time to talk. If you don’t have time to talk, can you let me know before I get involved in my story?”*

Now Mary has been informed about the situation and you have given her a way to resolve the situation. Depending on her response you may have to reply, if so, continue to use the same framework until you come to an ask/action you both can agree upon.

The **Awareness Wheel** is most effective when used with “I” statements, and an attitude towards resolution. It is also a flexible tool, which means you can do the steps in any order and when communicating with another about a situation, It is important to use all 5 steps. Be sure you are in the right step. Out of order is ok.

*Using the example above, one could simply say:*

*“Hi Mary, do you have time to talk about yesterday? I wasn’t able to get your advice before you left and made up that you didn’t value my time or input. I was frustrated because I wanted your advice. In the future when I want to talk to you, I’ll make sure you have time to talk. Do you have time now?”*



## AWARENESS WHEEL

Kathy Fleming, MA,  
Master Certified Coach  
760-929-1268  
[www.KathyFlemingCoaching.com](http://www.KathyFlemingCoaching.com)  
[kathycoach@att.net](mailto:kathycoach@att.net)

**Like any new skill, it will take some practice. Hopefully, once you become comfortable with it, you will find it useful to have those difficult conversations.**

Empowering You is offering Strategy Sessions designed to help you refine your awareness when it comes to communication and having difficult conversations or address other issues you're facing in your business.

Your personalized Strategy Session is waiting, don't miss out. In your complimentary Strategy Session, an Empowering You Coach will focus on you and your business with laser precision, offering solutions and tactics that will clear your path to success.

**DON'T WAIT!**

**CALL OR TEXT US DIRECTLY  
TO BOOK YOUR FREE 30-MINUTE  
STRATEGY SESSION.**

**AMY CARTER: 812.455.1367**

**KATHY FLEMING: 619.602.7974**

