

Develop Awareness

In Atomic HabitsJames Clear speaks of the importance of awareness. He makes a couple of sweeping, very profound statements.

"We must begin the process of behavior change with awareness."

Then he tells us why –

"If a habit remains mindless, you can't expect to improve it."

This is a profound concept. We cannot expect to improve ourselves in areas where there is no awareness.

I have an awareness exercise for you. I invite you to try the following experiment. This experiment will span two areas.

- It will demonstrate the concept of small things matter.
- It will be an exercise in awareness.

Here is the exercise:

For the next week, when you ask your new client (one you have never seen before) about pressure, follow this recommendation exactly.

When you ask about pressure, say:

"How are you doing with this pressure? Would you like me to go deeper?"

Remember, the above question is really two questions. Don't allow any time between, "how are you doing with this pressure?" and, "would you like me to go deeper?" Say it as one long question.

The next step in this experiment is to change the tone of your voice. Instead of merely asking in a normal tone of voice, change your voice's tone to a very inviting tone. The tone would be as if you were holding a plate of cookies at your grandmother's Christmas party and asking a little old lady if she would like a cookie. The pitch of your voice will be slightly higher. Imagine it now with a higher, more inviting tone.

"How are you doing with the pressure? Would you like me to go deeper?"

Then, your next task is to be aware.

Remember, this is mostly an awareness exercise. I'm trying to help you become more aware that little tiny things, like the tone of your voice, matter. Do this exercise for a week and see if more people don't take you up on your offer for more pressure.

I've pondered this issue of awareness as it relates to improving our skills as a therapeutic bodyworker.

I've asked team members to be aware of what is working and what is not. What are they doing with clients today that has changed over the past few days, weeks, months. What practices are helping them impact their clients at a higher level?

A word to couple with awareness in this context is "intentionality." As we become "aware" of what impacts clients at a high level – we can do more of that.

A variation of becoming aware of what we are **doing** – is to become aware of what we are **thinking**. Therapists who are impacting their clients at a high level "think" differently. These therapists may not be aware of the differences or be able to articulate the differences, but the differences are there, waiting to be elucidated and made clear. These differences in thinking can be shared if they can bubble up to the surface of our awareness.

Very often I meet therapists who are awesome, with no idea or awareness of how they accomplish their awesomeness. I called these folks the mindlessly awesome.

Mindlessly awesome is the condition of doing great things, with no idea how you do it. This condition is caused by a total lack of awareness of how you are impacting your clients.

What is the solution to this problem?

The answer to mindless awesomeness is awareness.

I ask therapists to start the process of being awake. Note every subtle aspect of what you do and how you think about your work.

As you start to become more aware, I can promise you this; your practice will improve. It will blossom right before your eyes. Your practice will improve because as we become aware of what we do that impacts our clients, we can do more of those things that have a positive effect and less of the things that have a negative effect. We become more intentional.

Carl Jung said,

"Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate."