

BE AWARE

Ruth Brown Coppage, PhD

September 1970

To live life as fully as possibly, it is necessary to know who you are, how you function, and what action, to the best of your knowledge, is in your highest and best interest. This is accomplished by self-awareness, which means knowing and understanding what is going on inside of your head. Then, by applying this understanding in the most natural, spontaneous way possible for that moment, life will become more meaningful.

You will begin to become more aware of the subtleties of emotions, the many facets of crying, laughing, arguing, loving, hating, and whatevering. This will mean being more honest, trusting, and allowing of "mistakes" in self and others. Remember, mistakes are to learn. They are in the past, and the past is used to make the present more satisfying. Learn from what you consider errors -- and then drop the heaviness!

Remember, too, that the eternal NOW is the most important moment in time. Do not live in the past -- or in the future. Be as responsible as you can -- in thought, word, action -- so that you need neither to carry shame or guilt about past behavior. And, by being more aware in the present, you then set the stage for future events in a more positive way. BE AWARE. Save yourself some pain-of-growing, but remember, too, that you often learn the most when you suffer. Rather than avoiding events that frighten or embarrass you, face up to them and control your actions in a healthy manner. If you make a change which you consider helps you mature, then the pain had merit. Each moment is what you make it. The choice is yours. Only you are responsible for your actions.

There will be a number of ways presented in this paper of looking at and listening to self. If you glance over them, not too much will happen. If you begin to work with them, making each experience a challenge through which your highest self can respond, then a feeling of oneness with self and the universe will gradually deepen. Your body will flow more smoothly as your mind relaxes and expands with the challenge of continuing growth.

Sometimes, the growing will be frightening, puzzling, or bewildering. Remember, you never have been at this point in time before. Give yourself a chance to accommodate to the new behavior, and, to do so you may have to retreat back into your old self. Don't be surprised if this feels uncomfortable. This once was the place where you found security, even if neurotic, but you are a different person now.

Because a new you is being evolved, don't be surprised if you become anxious. The territory ahead is unexplored and magnificently, unbelievably vast. But as you become more committed to growing up and out, you will at first be in awe because there are no horizons or guideposts. You often will be "just beginning," and when you get to a point

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where, finally, you think you know, then you will blunder. Pick yourself up. Examine your behavior, from inside and out. Then look at the actions of the others involved -- and begin again.

There is no end to your growth. Take risks, and you'll grow more quickly. Learn to control in a healthy way, but also let your responses happen. Does this sound contradictory? Think about this: You have free will, despite manmade and natural restrictions. In each instant, even with its restrictions, you are the one who decides on your action. Whatever external and/or internal forces prod you, the choice is yours. And it can be spontaneous, even if you are aware of what you are going to do. If you decide to be angry, for example, will your choice of words be ones you'll later regret? Or didn't you give yourself a choice when you heard the words tumbling out! Will you rehearse the action in advance and stumble if the other characters don't know their lines? Is your anger honest, or are you being angry to hurt yourself, punish others, get revenge or attention. Think about it.

Finally, remember that as you explore your mind, dark areas will be uncovered. Do not be afraid of your own mind. Each part of it is uniquely yours -- the despairs, terrors, and nightmares as well as the dreams, sunspots, and treasures. Share yourself with yourself, and, selectively, give as much of yourself to others as you deem fit. Be true to your real self, and, eventually, you won't be a stranger to yourself. Learn to communicate more intimately with your inner and outer selves.

The five senses of man generally are used in a rather superficial manner and most of us use only a fraction of our brain's power. As you become more aware, you will find each of your senses increasing in power, both externally and internally. For example, think of a recent dream you had. Do you remember it being in black and white, brown tones, color or no color? Could you taste, smell, feel, and hear in the dream? Was any one sense more prominent than another? Is this generally true of all dreams or only this one?

Examine each of the senses individually, remembering that the inner and outer responses exist to whatever extent you have been using them. They'll develop further as you allow them to expand.

How well developed is your sense of vision? Can you visualize pictures in your head at will? When you remember something from the past, do you visualize it? If something has been misplaced, can you "remember" where it is by tracing the events in your mind? Do your pictures come in clearly, or do you think or "feel" the images? Can you sharpen the image, hold it in place, go back to it? Is the image in color? When you create from an idea, can you see progression from the original plan in your mind? When you listen to someone speak, do you get a picture of what they are saying? Have you ever had an ESP experience? Mental telepathy? How do you explain these phenomena? Are you aware of the marvels and variations of your near and far vision? Check out this last point by examination of something right in front of you and then expanding to take in the horizon.

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How sensitive is your hearing? Listen to outside sounds at this moment and relate what you hear. Are you adept at identifying noises? Look around and see things that are moving but have no sound. Can you reproduce that sound in your head? Can you hear your voice in your mind? Can you make it high, low, sad, angry, happy? Can you distinguish the voice of your "conscience" or "inner master?" Do you talk to yourself when you need guidance to find out what the different parts of self -- positive, negative, and/or neutral as well as parent, adult, and/or child -- feel you should do? Can you listen to the sounds of your own body? Tune into the sounds of silence. Can you listen to two conversations at once?

How conscious is your sense of touch? Can you pick up fine objects without clumsiness? Are you familiar with the touch of your own body? Can you distinguish objects with your eyes? Are many of your hand and body motions automatic or are you generally aware of movement? Can you feel the pressure on your body where you are standing or sitting now?

Is your sense of smell well developed? Can you tell what is in a recipe by the smell of the various foods? Can you identify fragrances that you smell in the air? Can you smell something inside of your head?

What about your sense of taste? Do you taste in your dreams? Do you enjoy the different foods you eat? Just swallow them? Do you appreciate new tastes or stay with the familiar? Are you aware of the subtle differences in food taste -- crunchy, stringy, mushy, and what else?

Are you aware as you thought you were? Think of how much more aware you'll be tomorrow if you work on it today! Take time to be aware. Find out things you've been doing, habitually, without being aware of the process. Think about process in each of the senses. Think.

To grow wisely, be as aware as you can of your senses, throughout day and night, both inwardly and outwardly. And when you have a particularly meaningful experience, let the emotions flow as awarably as possible while it is happening. Experience the boredom, the joy, the restlessness, anguish, physical pain, nightmare and/or orgasm with as much as possible of your total being. Live each experience.

After experiencing the event, it may be important to you to reexperience. If you were dissatisfied, think what you might have done differently. If pleased, store the behavior in mind for future use. But, remember, the same solution may not work in a similar situation. Each second of your life, you become different as new experiences create change. No two instances in time are the same, and this can be valid enough a reason for you to want to be as receptive and flexible as possible. If each instant is never to be lived again, the more responsible you are for self, the more meaningful your life experience will be. Use your mistakes. Every experience has something to teach. Did you learn?

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Unfortunately, some persons do not examine their past behavior, especially if it is painful. They shut off the memory and are afraid of facing truths of self. The result is a neurotic person who has emotional blocks in his personality. This crippled person, then, may seek another who meets his needs, but the needs are not healthy. A merger of the negatives of each person then can occur -- the dependent person finds someone on whom to lean, the comic finds an audience, the young girl (no matter what age) finds a father figure in her choice of mate, the critic a victim, the loser a sympathizer, etc., etc., etc. By supporting each other's hang-up, each may be held back from growing. You must face the truth of yourself to change in a meaningful way.

Holding back from pain, then, retards growth. Erase the pain from your past by examining and then burying it. Learn to use the past, not carry it. The past has been experienced the only way it could have happened. No "shoulds," "ifs," or wishes change what has been. Regrets weigh down and build up guilt, which can explode behind the pressure -- turn inward. And eruptions/depressions are the sad, empty, lonely places in self that need fulfilling.

Examine the pain. Look into the unfinished business of the past. Face the guilts. In person, in writing, in head or in journal, face up to your burden. Talk to those who betrayed you, move into their consciousness, allow them to tell you the what and how of their actions/ reactions. Understand your behavior in relation to yourself and to them. Then tell them how you received and played back the sad/sick games. Unravel your pain -- then erase it. Soon you'll find, with diligent awareness games, that your present goes along much more smoothly and your past doesn't hold you back.

Live in the now. Use each moment as wisely as possible. The less you squander self, the more freely you live. Do not despair when you fall back upon yourself. The lesson just was not learned well enough. But remember how it feels to be full of light and joy and love. Visualize the light in your head. Feel it in your body. And send it to self -- and others -- when the pain returns. Most importantly, learn to listen to yourself -- to the still, small voice inside which will guide you -- if you become quiet enough to listen.

Below is a discussion of emotions -- how to understand and gain control of them in ways that suit you best. While there may be some repetition, actually, it is necessary to go over and over the "problem" areas in your life until the lesson is learned. Therefore, the different emphasis on awareness in this section will firm up your understanding and use of what has been said and allow you to approach awareness from new directions.

You, in a sense, may be taking some "tests" -- if you choose to spend time doing so. However, there will be no pass or fail. Rather, these experiences will introduce you to yourself, your conscious to your unconscious mind. You will begin to understand more how your mind operates. Chances are, though, you already have some ideas as to your mind and/or body function(s). Going one step further, by understanding their

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relationship, you will gain a better understanding of how the deeper, soul part of self functions. Herein lie the gifts.

Begin to be observant of yourself as much as you can. Notice extremes of behavior and who, if anyone or any type, triggers. Or if no one is needed to start a negative chain, how do you begin events? Who falls into your trap? You may be surprised how often you're the culprit. But when you begin to become more honest with self, you'll find this amusing -- that you needed to fool yourself! What a sad joke!

Realizing that you've been harming yourself and others by this dishonesty, you'll want to more quickly learn ways to change behavior which is in opposition to your higher self. Here are some hints: Do you need the last word? Are you always "wrong" or usually "right?" Do you make snap decisions or is it hard for you to decide? If you can't turn to yourself for answers, who, then? Was this answer "right" for you? And if you knew it wasn't right, did you follow through on it? Why? To please someone else? Because you didn't trust yourself? If you can't trust yourself, who can you trust?

To be more adept at this aspect of getting to know self, you must be able to identify the "games" you have been playing with others. Do you need to be the martyr, dictator, ruler, queen, scapegoat, child? Who plays with you? Are you, for example, a delight at work and a monster at home -- or vice versa? Are you a secret sinner or do you flaunt your behavior in public? What's your facade -- braggart, winner, loser, clown, rebel, critic and/or? What are you inside where it counts?

To identify some of your games, be aware of a few "rules" -- you sometimes will criticize in others what you don't like in self, or make fun of something you admire or are afraid of. Or you may seek to get attention by negative behavior -- like yelling, crying, or having tantrums. Or you may not be able to give gifts or accept them. Or you might be too "good" or "right." Or you may not be able to ask for help, but be aware that it is your mind that caused you the problems. Until you become more efficient in calling the games you want to play, remember that others often may be able to see you more clearly. Ask the ones you trust what games you are playing -- or tell them the destructive ones you've put on them. Can you admit to being "wrong" without blaming others? Learn from your mistakes.

As you begin to identify your destructive behavior, you'll learn to modify. Don't be disappointed when you fail to mention the positive self. Remember that the habit took years to build, and that you often will be between where you were and who you want to be. This is unsure territory, for you will feel pulled by the past (which often was "safe," even if destructive) and to the future, which is unknown. Each time you retreat, you will feel less comfortable there. The past is for learning. If you live there, you are carrying excess emotional burdens that keep you from living more productively in the NOW. How can you function well in the present if you have not understood or forgiven yourself and others for immature, naive behavior?

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To be more aware, visualize yourself as having three selves? High, acting, and inner. The high self is somewhat removed from you but is your ideal self. It can be visualized as you above yourself -- your soul -- looking down on and watching your behavior rather abstractly. What you say or do, or don't say and don't do, is observed rather unemotionally. This is the part of yourself you will grow into as you become more aware and modify your destructive behavior. This is your impersonal self.

The acting self is the part of you that walks, talks, sits, dances, sleeps, moves in any fashion -- or doesn't move. Some of this movement is functional and part of the body motions -- like the heartbeat and blood flow. Other movements are directed by the inner self, which has many facets. But the extreme positive and negative usually vie for control. If your inner self is in conflict, the result of this internal civil war may at times be destructive, sloppy, disjointed, depressing, and/or clumsy behavior. When particularly unsure, the result may be indecision. But as you learn that you can control yourself in a healthy way, you will find yourself making better decisions. You'll live more graciously and experience life as a challenge. Use all your emotions, but don't let them rule you.

Remember that you can observe self as you live each moment, but at particularly important times, watch yourself more closely. Do this by outwardly seeing/looking at self in the mirror, watching others as they reflect your behavior, and inwardly listening to your voices. Listen to what the different parts of self are saying, and how they say it. Is your dominant inner self your friend, lover, stranger, mother, father, therapist, what? Is the inner self in operation your higher self? Is it an adult, or are you ashamed of your behavior? You are responsible for your actions?

The only person you can ever truly know is yourself. And there is no other person who can answer for your behavior. Get to know yourself. Get to trust yourself. Listen to your "hunches" and follow your intuitions. Know that deep inside of you, at your core, at your soul level, you know all the answers. You do not yet know that you know, but the more aware you become, the more you will feel right about yourself. No matter what someone else thinks or says, you will feel good about yourself because you made the best decision for that moment.

In becoming more aware of emotions, know that they have a positive, negative, and neutral value, which will differ from creature to creature, event to event. You must know the emotion that suits you for that moment, and find the balance right for you in your repertoire.

The more aware you become of the variety of your emotions, the more choice you will have. What, for example, are the differences between crying for joy, anger, frustration, satisfaction and/or embarrassment. Does a man's crying differ from that of a woman -- in meaning, in tonal quality, in quantity? What is the difference to you between anger, fear, despair, helplessness, anxiety? What experiences have you had for each of these emotions? Can you bring up the physical feelings that accompanied the experience, as well as the visual image in your head?

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Emotions, then, have tremendous potential for good and for evil. In the neurotic person, the emotional response tends to be extreme. If you are too moody, angry, happy, depressed or whatever, you may need to balance that emotion. To do so, you may have to go to the other extreme to test yourself. Don't be surprised when this happens, for after you experience both sides of the emotion, you will have a better understanding of the total response. Then you can find the balance that suits you. Remember, though, that life is not static. The balance keeps changing as you continue to grow. Be flexible.

As you become more flexible, you will be more able to understand and experience the feelings of others. Again, do not be too extreme. If you experience someone else's emotions too deeply, you may drain your own feelings. Balance yourself in this regard, too.

Become aware of your patterns, because much destructive behavior begins in childhood. As adults, you cannot function well in the present if parts of you still are childish. The retarded parts of yourself will keep you from growing; the empty parts will weigh you down. Remember, life is change, and growth is life.

To live well with others, then, you must first learn to live well with self. And, to do this, you must learn to live more openly, honestly, and fully in the present, experiencing each moment with as much depth as possible. Be yourself. Be.

SELF PORTRAIT

Do you really know yourself? Are you as willing to admit your faults and hang-ups to yourself and others as you are willing to share your victories? Can you describe your positive aspects? Can you write an honest evaluation of yourself? Try it, but here are some points to think about -- before, during, and after the writing.

How far back can you remember? How would you describe yourself as an infant, child, teenager? What are your dominant traits now? Do you basically like yourself? What do you dislike about yourself?

Which parent was closest to you as you were growing up? Which is closest now, if any? If only one parent was at home, how did this affect you? Was the breakup due to divorce, some kind of separation, death? If they remained together, did they understand themselves? Each other? Were they more happy or unhappy with self and others?

How many brothers and sisters, if any, do you (did you) have? What are the ways you enjoyed them, hated them, or wanted to hurt them? Do you still have negative feelings? Do you feel guilty about this? Were you the oldest, middle, youngest, only child? How did this affect you? Were you spoiled, misused, beaten, ignored, over-protected? Did either of your parents want you to be of the opposite sex? Did you want to be the opposite sex? Why?

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Which of your parents are you most alike in personality, in temperament? What of their traits that you have do you like/dislike? Are any of their negative traits present in a mate, lover, child, teacher, employer? How does this affect you? Do you want to change people, be changed? If so, who do you want them--or yourself--to be?

How did your parents influence your views on religion, politics, society, economics, employment, etc.? Did this help or hinder you? What other people were positively or negatively influential in your life?

Did you grow up in a city or town? Many cities/many towns? On which side of the tracks did you live? If you moved a lot, how this effect your doing well in school, making friends? What if you didn't move much?

Are you afraid of aging? Dying? Do you want, or did you ever want, to die? Were you suicidal? Was this playing a game or did you really want to die? With whom were you paying the game? Has anyone you loved died? Do you have guilt about their death? Have you made peace with them/with yourself? What serious illnesses have you had? Which ones do you fear? In your opinion, is there a hell, heaven, afterlife, between life? Is death the end, the beginning, what? Is there a God?

What religion, if any, did your family bequeath to you? Did you accept your family's religion? Did you go on a "God" hunt into other religions? Was one found that fit, or are you still hunting, an atheist, agnostic? If you still are hunting, have you turned within for the answers. Remember, you know all there is to know, but you don't yet know you know.

Focus now on your day-to-day physical habits and the way you live in your body. What physical habits do you have that you want to change? Do you bite your nails, play with your hair, stutter, blush, take pills, smoke marijuana, drink? Do you find pleasure/pain in these patterns? Under what circumstances are you apt to retreat into one or more of these habits? Do certain persons make you respond that way? Do they initiate the behavior or did you?

Do you want to modify the behavior or remove it? What techniques have you used in the past to try and change the behavior? Did it work? If not, why not? Did you receive encouragement for the change or did you do it out of rebellion? Can you trace the history of the behavior? Is there someone in your early life who has that particular habit? How does this person affect you?

In understanding the where, how, and why of the habit, decide if you, as an adult, still want this habit as is, modified, or dropped. If you want to change, devise ways to do so from where you are in the present. You created the habit. You know how to change it. But, remember, the habits you dislike the most will be the most deeply rooted. Thus, they will take the longest time to change. Be patient, but sometimes be impatient, but also be neutral and watch yourself changing.

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The body within which you are housed is unique to you, in whatever condition it is functioning. Some impairments may be from birth, disease, or disuse, but you can begin today to take better care of yourself. Who else is more responsible for your welfare? And if your body is malfunctioning and it has burdened you, your positive attitude toward the handicap can make you stronger.

There are many things you can do to improve your bodily functioning, but first you must be aware of the ways in which you have been mistreating the marvelous, mystifying, machine in which you live. For example, do you like your body? What do you like about it? The shape of it, the skin, the way it functions, the feel, some of these, all of these, others? Look at yourself. What do you see? Someone too fat, too thin, too small, too tall? Have you had a part of your body corrected by surgery? Was this physically necessary or a luxury? How did the change help or hinder you?

This is the body in which you will be living for the rest of your life. Whatever shape it is in, it is the constant companion of your emotional, mental, and spiritual life. If you treat it with wisdom and love, it will respond in kind. You will find things like headaches, menstrual cramps, stomachaches, constipation and many other physical ailments may lessen and disappear.

Don't believe. Test for yourself. How? First identify the parts of your body that give you trouble. For example, if it is your stomach, when does it get upset? Is the upset tied to food, person, or event? Do you keep making the same mistake over and over again? Do you often overeat, or under eat, to punish your mistake or someone else? Does anyone in your family have the same physical problems? Did they predict you would have illnesses? Did anyone in your family have an unusual amount of sicknesses that could be caused by negative thinking, improper physical care, neglect, etc.? Is this true of you?

Trace each illness or habit to the source in time and place. Did it begin as an infant, in puberty, teenage, adulthood? Tie it in to an event/person, if you can. When not in a similar situation, does the symptom persist?

Look at your face now. Do you like your features? If not, what a waste of emotion. Eyes are to see, nose to smell, ears to hear, and mouth to speak and eat. Rather than concentrating your energies on disliking -- or hating -- a part of your own unique individuality, concentrate on improving and refining the sense.

Your body is truly your temple, and if you have abused it -- or continue to abuse it -- who are you helping, who are you hurting?

In summary, know thyself -- from inside and out. Call your own game when it hurts you to play it: don't overeat and if you know you'll feel guilty, but if you like yourself, occasionally binge and enjoy it! At first it might be difficult for you not only to spot the

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games but to admit them -- to self and to others, whoever else is involved. Be as softly honest as you can. The truth can hurt, but when you're hurting -- STOP! If possible, it also helps to allow someone else to "nag" you about the hang-up.

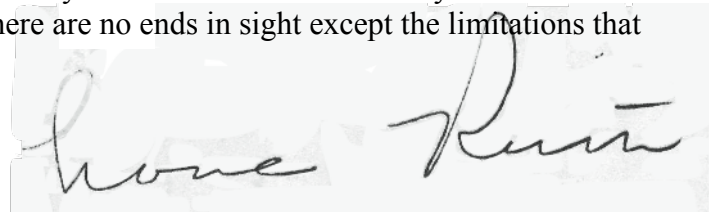
Remember that each emotion has two extremes and a vast number of choices in between. Each time you make a decision to give yourself as much choice as possible, if you've been the kind of person who has been too impulsive, if you've been too indecisive, don't give yourself so many choices that you can't make the decision. And when in doubt, trust your intuition as to when you should postpone a decision.

As to the other person involved in the outcome of your decisions, anticipate his responses to as great a degree as possible. Think of the most positive and most negative reactions as he can have plus the many responses in between these extremes. Make the choice as wisely as you can, but do not expect the other person to behave as you hope. The only expectation should be for the unexpected, and this often is delightfully ironic. Learn to see humor, even if sad, in what you may once have considered painful experiences.

Think into the future to a certain degree, but do not live in it. Broaden your knowledge by asking opinions of persons you trust, but the decision as to your action is yours and yours alone. Move away as much as you can from right/wrong black/white thinking, and remember that each emotion has its positive and negative extreme. Find the balance that suits you. You do not have to continually inflict pain on yourself to grow but you constantly have to face new challenges as you evolve. Look inward and trust. Become more comfortable with yourself, and it will follow that you become more comfortable with others. Feel less hurt and more at home in yourself as you do the best you can for that moment and enjoy living it.

Each morning remind yourself that you are going to be as aware as possible. Watch how hang-ups slip in. See how adroitly your unconscious sets traps for you to fall into. Recognize them. Look for the triggering agent, which, soon, you'll be able to foresee after you become aware of what negative games you have been playing.

Each evening, review the day, noting when you successfully and unsuccessfully passed your self-test toward maturity. Be aware of when you liked yourself, and then sometime transfer this feeling to a time when you do not like yourself. And do not expect the same tactics to work the next time. Each moment expand your thinking so that the positive, aware side of you has your mental, physical, emotional and spiritual essences on your side. Take better care of yourself. Aid in your own survival. Increase your awareness and use more of your brainpower. There are no ends in sight except the limitations that you apply.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ruth B. Coppage". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

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Born September 26, 1902 – Passed November 10, 2001