



## CHAPTER 2: AWARENESS



## CHAPTER 1: AWARENESS

# Therapy Session Number 2

Imagine you are back in my office for a second session, where we are working on promoting your awareness. As I ask you the following questions, write your responses below.

**What did my story bring up for you?**

**How did your family impact your mental health? Your financial health?**

**Can you think about a time in your life when self-awareness helped improve both your well-being and your finances?**

20 MINUTES

The following are some examples of common roles in families, as well as how they end up impacting one's career and financial life:

**Hero or Golden Child:** is a high achiever person and the pride of the family. They are often good leaders who are goal oriented and self-disciplined but may lack the ability to relax or allow others to be right or in charge. Heroes tend to become business owners and business leaders but may struggle in some of their personal relationships because of their tendency to be bossy or domineering.

**Scapegoat or Black Sheep:** Family members may feel this person has problems—including mental health, addiction, social or financial issues. The scapegoat may show the signs and symptoms of underlying family problems. Their strengths may include a sense of humor, vulnerability, and authenticity. They tend to struggle to transition into adulthood and achieve less success in their career and finances.

**Good Child:** is the passive, subservient child who avoids being a problem. They tend to be flexible and easygoing, but lack direction, are fearful of making decisions, and follow others without questioning. They may end up being taken for granted in relationships or working in support roles which tend to be lower paying.

**Mascot or Clown:** These people use humor to diffuse conflict and may not feel free to express their true selves. They tend to have emotionally immature relationships that lack a deeper intimacy, and may end up working in sales or entertainment, which can be lucrative for some, but challenging for many.

**Mediator:** Mediators work to keep peace in the family system and may also be a rescuer. They act as a communicator or buffer, which may or may not be healthy for them depending on how well received or effective their efforts are. Mediators may work as attorneys, real estate brokers, or middle managers.

**Nurturer:** These people provide emotional support and stability in a balanced and healthy way. They can also be a mediator and may work with children or in education.

**Rescuer:** This person takes care of other family member's problems, often to relieve their own anxiety. They tend to experience guilt and are prone to codependency and detrimental caretaking at their own expense. They may work in helping professions as a therapist, nurse, or paramedic. Overall, helping professionals do not realize their true earning potential as they tend to view their finances as being outside of their control and accept the notion that they will not make much money.

**Cheerleader:** These people provide encouragement and support to others while taking care of their own needs and having a positive influence on others. They may work in marketing or leadership roles to motivate customers or staff.

**Thinker:** These people are objective, logical, and rational, but may find it difficult to emotionally connect with others. They may be drawn to science, medicine, mathematics, and have difficulty with the people skills needed for networking and business development.

**Truth Teller:** This person says it like it is. They communicate the information that is needed, but others may not appreciate their advice. This role can be a real strength when coupled with the qualities of a nurturer or cheerleader. Journalism or law are natural career choices for these people.

You may have played more than one of these roles in your family of origin. Hang onto the good parts of your roles, but shift whatever is no longer serving you.



# Identify Your Default Role

Reflect on your role in your family of origin. Write down two to three roles from the family systems theory that you most identify with and explain why.

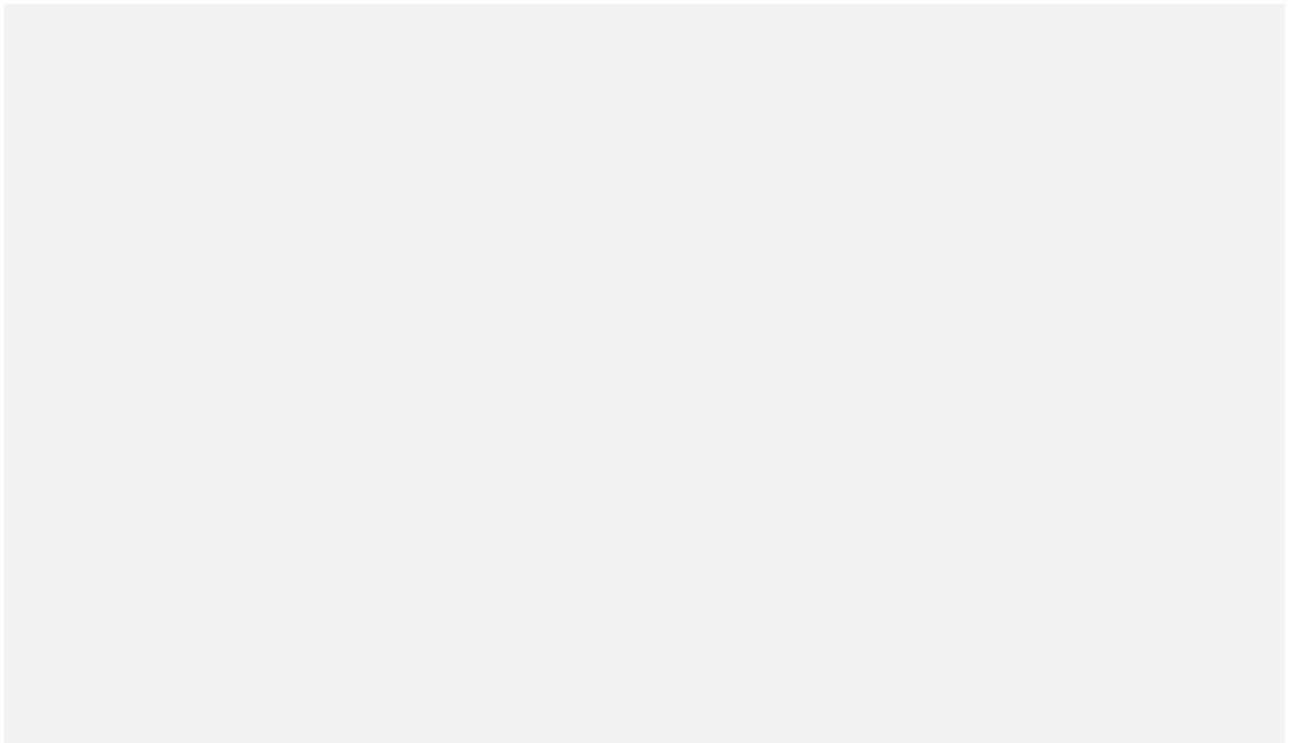
How might each of these roles be affecting your personal relationships or work life?

How might each of these roles be affecting your finances?

Identify two strengths and two challenges of each role.

10 MINUTES

**For each role, describe one change you would like to make to enhance your relationships and one change you would like to make to enhance your professional life or finances.**





# Drop Your Defenses

**Write about a time you used some of the following defenses.**

- Denial
- Displacement
- Sublimation
- Projection
- Intellectualization
- Rationalization
- Regression
- Reaction Formation

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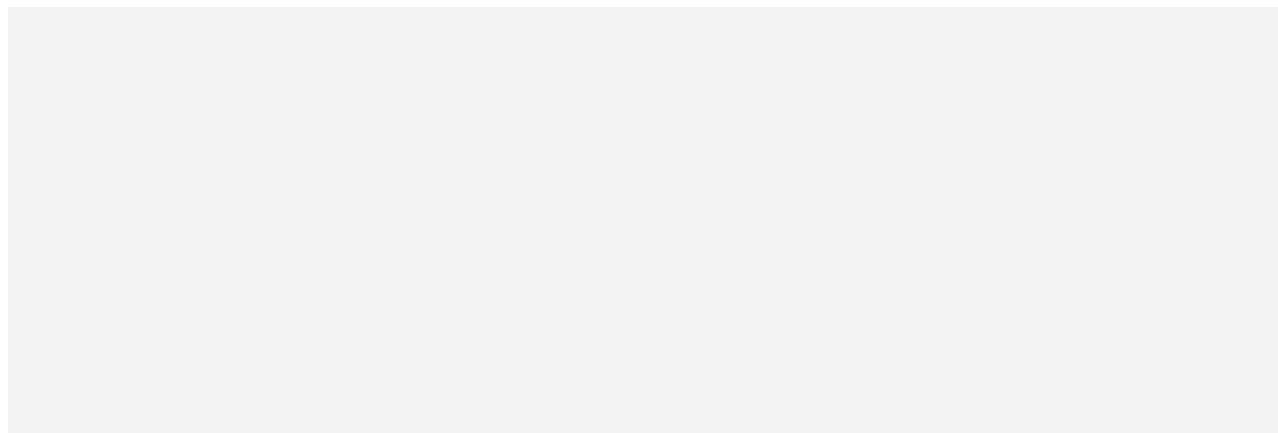
If you are having a hard time coming up with an example, ask a trusted confidant like a close friend or family member, your partner, or therapist for help. Then, answer the following questions:

**How did you use those defenses to justify your behaviors or decisions?**

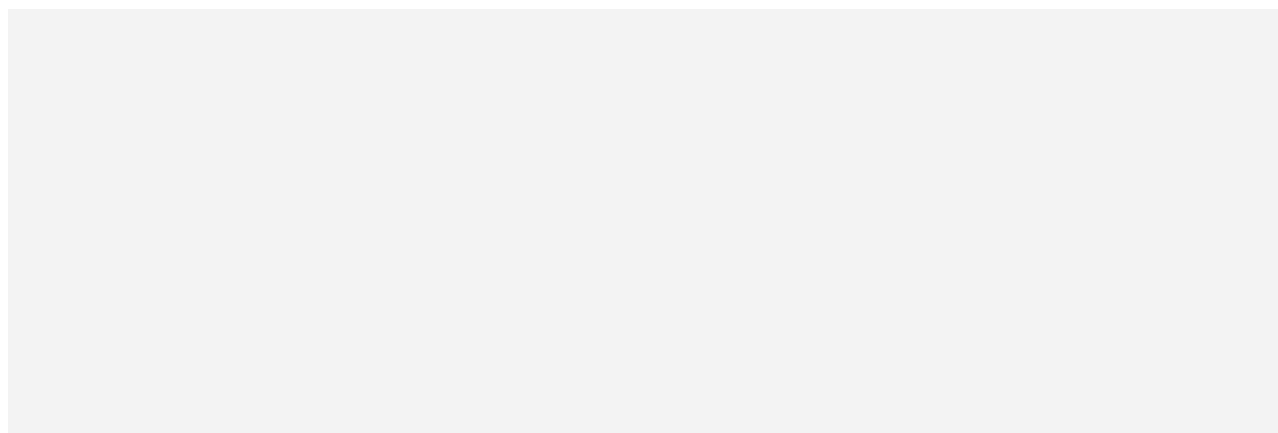
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20 MINUTES; LIFETIME PRACTICE

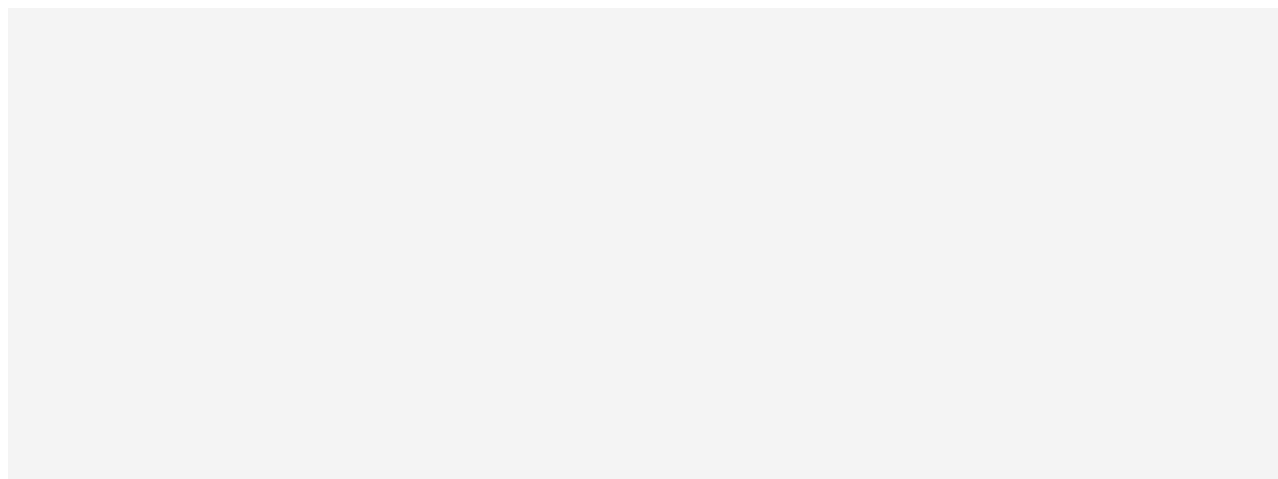
**How were those behaviors or decisions harmful to your mental health or relationships?**



**Do you think it's possible that defense mechanisms like denial may have played a role in your financial issues?**



**How might things have turned out differently if you dropped the defenses?**







# Check Up on Your Mental Health

Answer the following questions:

**What is your family's history of mental health problems, substance abuse, or addiction? Do you have a genetic predisposition to any of these issues?**

Empty response box for the first question.

**What mental health warning signs do you recognize in yourself? Has anybody ever expressed concern to you about this?**

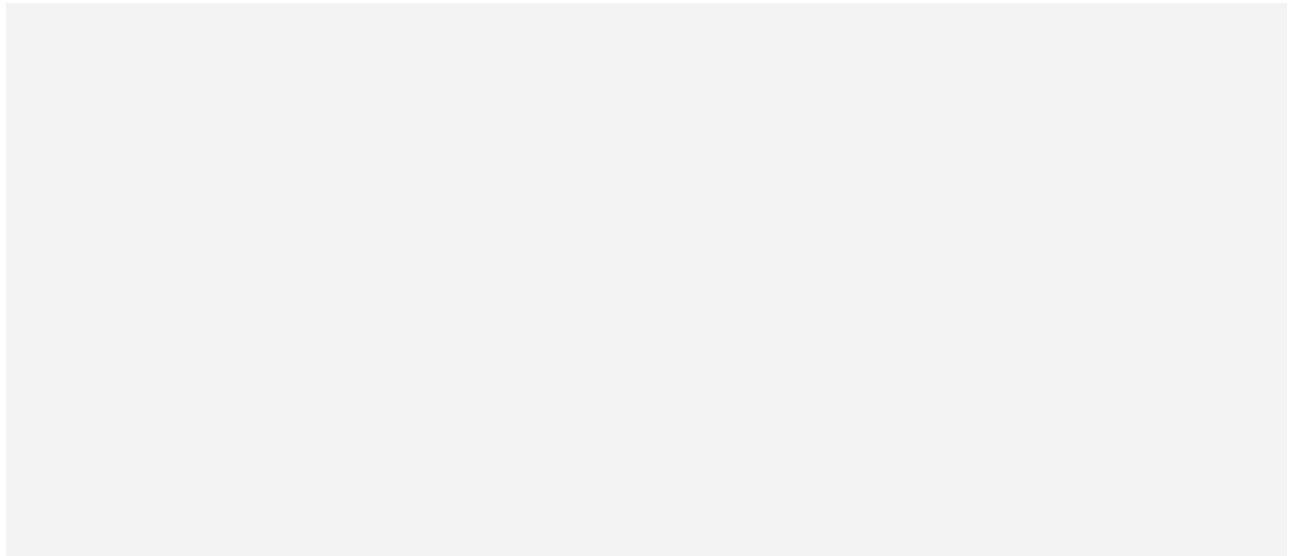
Empty response box for the second question.

**Have you or anybody else been concerned about your substance use or addictive behaviors?**

Empty response box for the third question.

20 MINUTES; LIFETIME PRACTICE

**Have your work or finances been negatively impacted by your mental health, substance use, or addiction issues? If so, how?**





# Check Your Reality by Budgeting

The following checklist includes the six steps you need to follow to create a simple budget. Tackle the steps one at a time and check the boxes once you've completed the task. I suggest creating a spreadsheet on your computer so you can easily track and make adjustments as needed.

Note that some of the boxes under each step might not apply to you. For example, you may not have a student loan balance, so just leave that box blank under Step One.

## Step One: Gather your financial statements.

This will be helpful as you calculate your monthly expenses in Step Three.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bank statements        | <input type="checkbox"/> Utility bills   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credit card statements | <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone statements   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student loan balances  | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other information that identifies monthly averages of income and expenses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other loans            |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Investment accounts    |  |

## Step Two: Tally your sources of monthly income.

- Paycheck— If taxes are automatically deducted, use the take-home amount. If you're self-employed, deduct about 20 percent from your take-home pay for taxes.
- Side hustles— Maybe you're an Uber driver, own an Airbnb, or sell health and wellness products on the side.
- Seasonal work
- Bonuses
- Other

### Step Three: Create a list of estimated monthly expenses.

The financial statements you gathered in Step One will help you calculate this.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rent or mortgage                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement or college savings  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car payments                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional membership fees (add them up and divide by 12)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groceries                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Charitable donations (add them up and divide by 12)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto insurance                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Vacations, holiday and birthday gifts (add them up and divide by 12) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gym membership or fitness classes |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loan payments                     |   |

### Step Four: Break expenses into two categories—fixed and variable.

Fixed expenses are those that are essential and stay relatively the same each month.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mortgage or rent | <input type="checkbox"/> Cable and/or internet service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car payment      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                         |

Variable expenses are those that change from month to month

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groceries            | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes shopping   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dining out           | <input type="checkbox"/> Household shopping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credit card payments | <input type="checkbox"/> Other              |

Total each category in your Excel document.

## Step Five: Subtract your total monthly expenses from your total monthly income.

If your amount is positive, you are in good shape. This means you can budget to use this excess for paying off your credit cards, student loans, or mortgage, or saving to buy a home or contributing more to your retirement plan. If your amount is negative, it means you need to make some adjustments either by working more, seeking greater compensation, and/or reducing your variable expenses by cutting back on eating out or excessive spending at the salon, spa, or bars!

## Step Six: Review your budget weekly or monthly.

Review your budget on a regular basis to make sure you're living within your means and staying on track with your financial health. Create a routine, such as every Sunday afternoon, when you (and your partner, if you are in a relationship) compare the budgeted expenses versus what you actually spent. This reveals where you did well and where you need to improve. A good rule of thumb is to spend about 50 percent of your income on fixed expenses, 30 percent on variable expenses, and save at least 20 percent.

By completing this budget checklist, you now have a starting point. Did anything come up that surprised you? Some people feel shame, fear, anxiety, or resistance about creating a budget. Others feel anger or rage because they're making less than they should be because of discrimination based on race, gender, or immigration status. This is normal. I encourage you to honor these understandable feelings, get support from others, and power through. I detest budgeting and it makes me incredibly anxious and fuels shame. Because I care about myself and my financial well-being, I have had to push past this in order to become financially conscious. I encourage you to do the same. Although sticking to a budget is not easy, being aware of what is going on with your finances will empower you to reap financial gain over time.



# The Awareness Wheel

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Rate your response after each question using a number from the following scale: Poor (1-3), Fair (4-5), Good (6-7), Prosperous (8-10)

20 MINUTES

Poor

Fair

Good

Prosperous

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

**Self-Awareness:** How aware are you of your personality characteristics, your strengths and areas of needed growth, and how you impact others?

**Relational Roles:** How aware are you of the roles and patterns you often play in group dynamics—including family and work—and how this impacts your financial success?

**Unconscious Contracts:** How good are you at recognizing possible unspoken agreements? How are they impacting your mental health, work, and finances?

**Defensive Mechanisms:** Are you aware when defenses like denial, rationalization, or projection pop up and impair your well-being and prosperity?

**Substance Use:** How aware are you of your substance use (caffeine, sugar, alcohol, recreational, prescription, and other drug use) and how it impacts your mental, physical, and financial health? (Please note that substance use does not necessarily mean you are a substance abuser or have a substance use disorder, which are disorders that span a wide array of problems arising from substance use.)

**Addictions:** Addiction is the use of substances or engaging in compulsive behaviors that continue despite harmful consequences. Addiction is a treatable, chronic disease that involves interactions between the brain, genetics, the environment, and a person's life experiences. How aware are you of how an addiction to drugs, alcohol, shopping, gaming, or sex has negatively impacted your finances?

**Traumas:** How good are you at recognizing your history of traumas, including financial traumas, and how they might be influencing your mental and financial health?

**Attachment Style:** How aware are you of your attachment style and how it impacts your relationships and your finances?

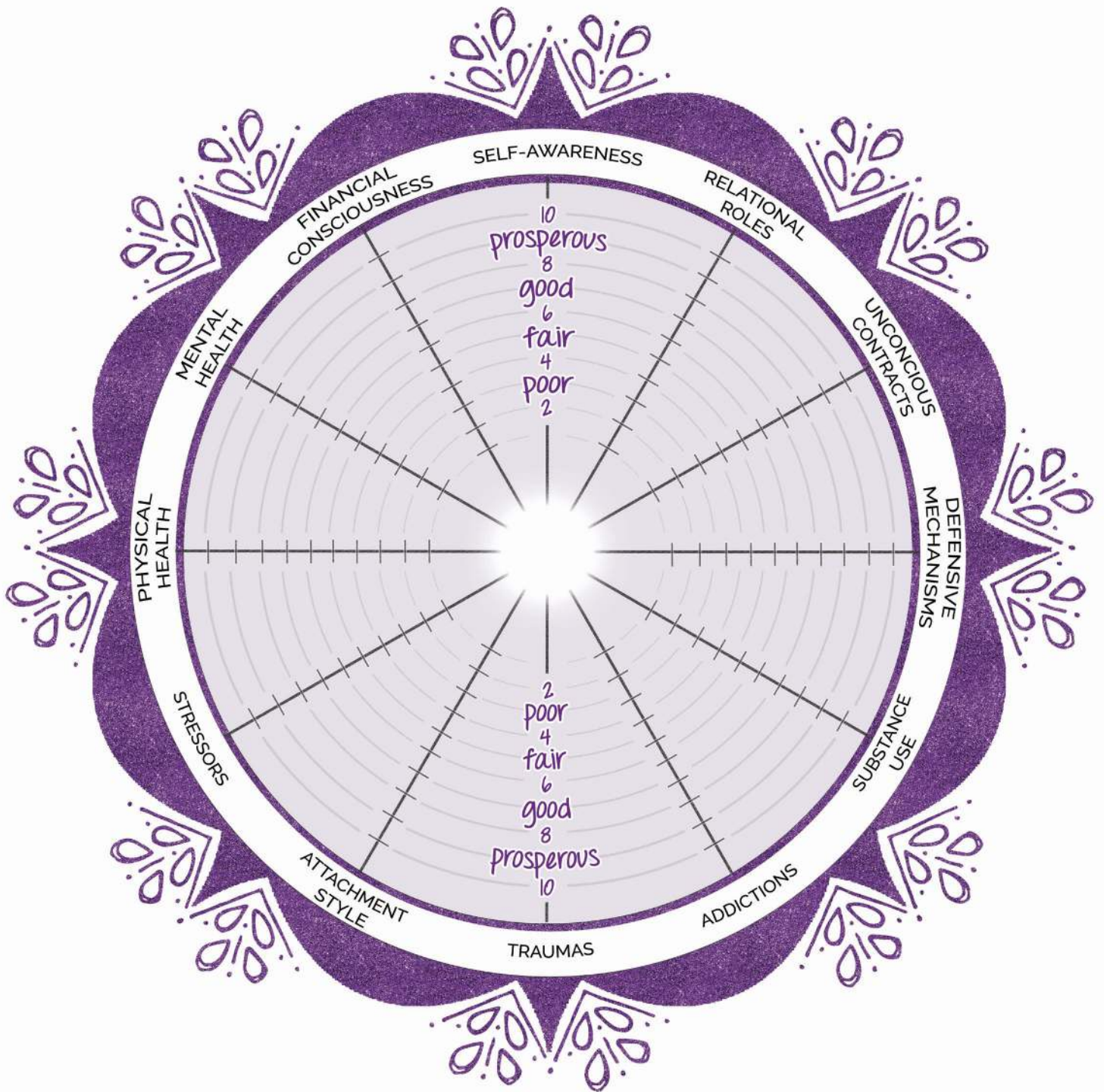
**Stressors:** Relationship issues, financial challenges, losses, deadlines, projects, and holidays can all increase your stress level and may be negatively impacting your mental health and functioning at work. How would you rate yourself when it comes to figuring out what is stressing you out?

**Physical Health:** How aware are you of your physical health and how that may be impacting other aspects of your life, including mental and financial health?

**Mental Health:** How aware are you of the impact of your stress levels, emotional wellness, and experiences of depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues?

**Financial Consciousness:** When it comes to being aware and understanding your financial reality, how would you rate yourself? Do you combat financial denial by having and living within a budget?

Chart your responses on The Awareness Wheel. Let's start at the top: are you Poor, Prosperous, or somewhere in between when it comes to Self-Awareness? Put a dot on the spoke next to the number that corresponds with your answer. Now, continue going around the wheel and after scoring yourself on every spoke, connect the dots to create a circle.



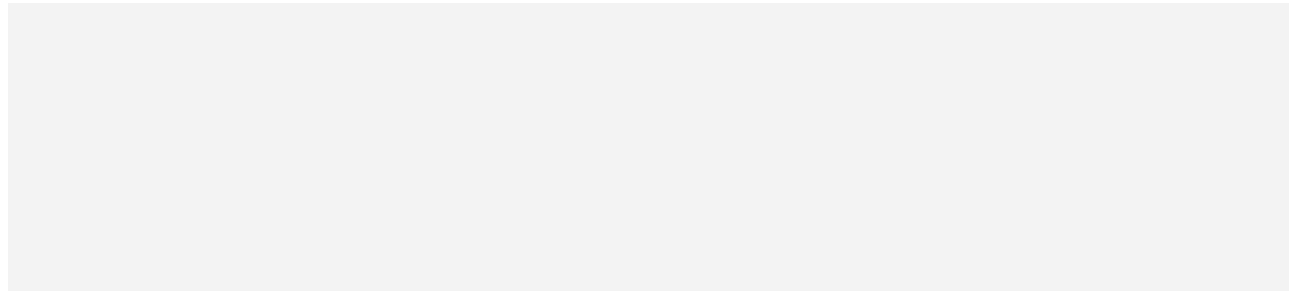
# The Awareness Wheel



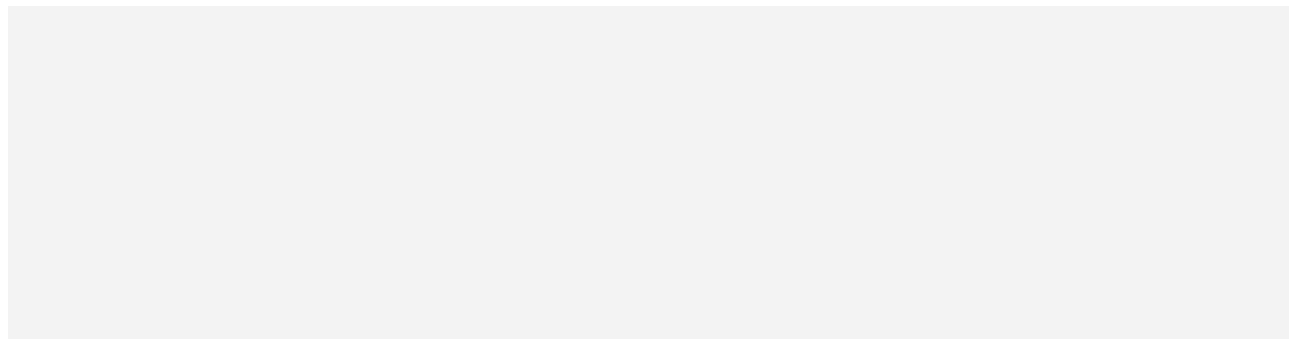
# The Awareness Wheel

Don't worry about your scores; just be honest. Continue to practice this mindset just like you would exercise to improve your fitness. Then, answer the following questions:

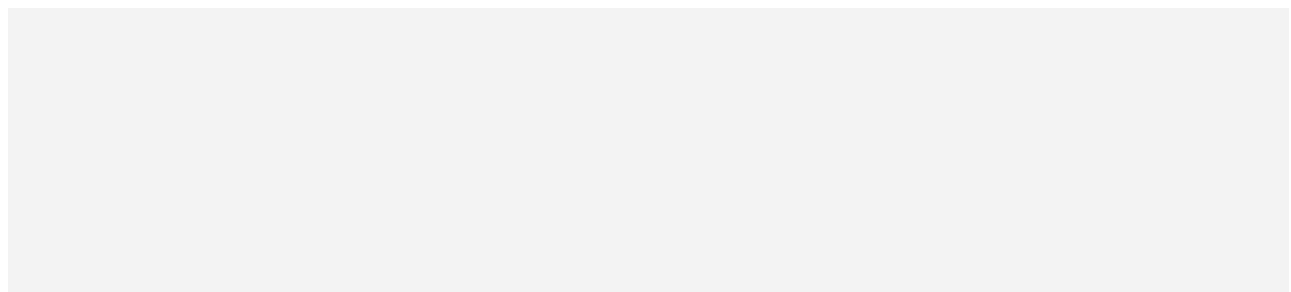
**As you look at your completed wheel, where do you see the biggest dents? What are two things you can do better right now in those areas?**



**As you look at the wheel, what three areas of your mental and financial life are you least aware of?**



**Would you consider therapy, coaching, mentoring, a consultation, or training to promote more awareness?**



Remember to date your wheel and file it for later reference so you can track your progress over time. Consider completing this exercise once a month or quarterly so you can live more consciously.