Have you ever had a coworker approach you, and without you saying anything, he understood what kind of day you were having and where your mind was wandering? He knew you must have come from a meeting with so-and-so because he could “see it” all over your face. He knew it was probably time to let you vent, instead of asking for that favor he had in mind. He must have picked up on something.

Or how about that waitress who seems to “just know” what each of her customers need: one couple is in their own world and prefers to be alone; another couple welcomes some fresh conversation from a new person, while another table wants professional and polite service, minus the small talk. Everyone’s sitting at a table to eat and drink and be served, and yet there’s so much below the surface that makes each table unique. How does she quickly size up these tables and know their needs?
Both this perceptive coworker and the waitress have a high level of social awareness, a skill they use to recognize and understand the moods of other individuals and entire groups of people. Though these two may be seasoned veterans at this, it is a skill that they most likely learned and practiced over time.

Instead of looking inward to learn about and understand yourself, social awareness is looking outward to learn about and appreciate others. Social awareness is centered on your ability to recognize and understand the emotions of others. Tuning into others’ emotions as you interact with them will help you get a more accurate view of your surroundings, which affects everything from relationships to the bottom line.

To build your social awareness skills, you will find yourself observing people in all kinds of situations. You may be observing someone from afar while you’re in a checkout line, or you may be right in the middle of a conversation observing the person to whom you are speaking. You will learn to pick up on body language, facial expressions, postures, tone of voice, and even what is hidden beneath the surface, like deeper emotions and thoughts.

One of the intriguing things about building an acute
sense of social awareness is that emotions, facial expressions, and body language have been shown to translate across many different cultures. You can use these skills wherever you are.

The lens you look through must be clear. Making sure you are present and able to give others your full attention is the first step to becoming more socially aware. Looking outward isn’t just about using your eyes: it means tapping into your senses. Not only can you fully utilize your basic five senses, but you can also include the vast amount of information coming into your brain through your sixth sense, your emotions. Your emotions can help you notice and interpret cues other people send you. These cues will give you some help in putting yourself in the other person’s shoes.

The 17 strategies in this section will help you tackle the obstacles that get in your way and provide you with a helping hand when the going gets tough. You can only attend to so much, so it’s critical to pick up on the right signals. These proven social awareness strategies will help you do just that.
SOCIAL AWARENESS STRATEGIES

1. Greet People by Name
2. Watch Body Language
3. Make Timing Everything
4. Develop a Back-Pocket Question
5. Don’t Take Notes at Meetings
6. Plan Ahead for Social Gatherings
7. Clear Away the Clutter
8. Live in the Moment
9. Go on a 15-minute Tour
10. Watch EQ at the Movies
11. Practice the Art of Listening
12. Go People Watching
13. Understand the Rules of the Culture Game
14. Test for Accuracy
15. Step into Their Shoes
16. Seek the Whole Picture
17. Catch the Mood of the Room
Greet People by Name

Maybe you’ve been named after a special relative or family friend, or maybe you have a nickname that abbreviates your long last name. Whatever the story is behind your name, it’s an essential part of your identity. It feels so good when people use your name and remember it.

Greeting someone by name is one of the most basic and influential social awareness strategies you can adopt. It’s a personal and meaningful way to engage someone. If you have a tendency to withdraw in social situations, greeting someone by name is a simple way to stick your neck out; using someone’s name breaks down barriers and comes across as warm and inviting. Even if you are a social butterfly, greeting people by name is a strategy to live by.

Enough said about the value of greeting by name. Now
let’s talk about following through. If names are usually on the tip of your tongue, you claim to be “great with faces, but not names,” or you can’t seem to remember anyone’s name 30 seconds after you hear it—make this the month to practice saying, “Hello, [name],” to someone each time you enter a room and to those you’re introduced to. Remembering a person’s name is a brain exercise—practice may be required. If a name sounds unusual to you, ask the person to spell it for you so you can picture the name written. This will help you remember it later. Be sure to use the person’s name at least twice during the conversation.

Greeting people by their names not only acknowledges them as the essence of who they are, but also allows you to remain connected to them in more than just a superficial way. By making it a goal to remember someone’s name when you meet or greet him or her, you are focusing your mind, which will only increase your awareness in social situations.

**Emotional Intelligence 2.0** is a new book with a single purpose—increasing your EQ. Inside you’ll find:

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- Access to the new, online edition of the *Emotional Intelligence Appraisal*® test, which has the following enhancements:
  - A new feedback report that pinpoints the strategies that will increase your EQ the most.
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