

A.C.A.L.M.E.R.M.E

A IS FOR AWARENESS

A.C.A.L.M.E.R.M.E
A IS FOR AWARENESS

'When I have awareness, I have self-control, and I own myself. When I don't have awareness, I don't have self-control and someone or something else owns me.'

Awareness is the first step in our process. When we become aware of the source of our emotional struggles and suffering and hold the appropriate people accountable, confusion and shame about who we were in the past can be transformed.

We no longer blame or punish ourselves for what someone else did or said to us that damaged us so profoundly. With awareness, we can tell our truth and release ourselves from the belief that the emotional pain we feel is all our fault.

When we learn to merge *awareness of our own sensitivities* (self-awareness) with *awareness of our environment* (situational awareness), we have the golden ticket to *radical* awareness wherever we are and whoever we're with.

Radical awareness means fewer shocks, fewer surprises, and a conscious mind that gets to write a new script.

So, what is awareness?

Awareness is knowledge. It's consciousness. When we have knowledge about a person's ability to provoke us, or about a situation that might trigger us, our awareness fuels us to remain conscious and think about our responses. For those of us who have

experienced trauma, awareness gives us the ability to read the room and check for any possible dangers or threats.

When we have awareness, we know how our potential triggers may be ignited and we're empowered to step back and walk away, rather than engage in yet another emotional battle.

- Awareness is perception. It's mindfulness. It's the fuel our conscious adult self requires to soothe our fearful inner child.
- Awareness means identifying how our senses can ground us, allowing our bodies and minds to be calm amid chaos. Awareness is not intimidated by distressing memories because it has knowledge about them.
- Awareness will not bend to people who attempt to hinder or sabotage us because it knows their destructive intention, and it won't play their game.

When we have awareness, we're conscious. And when we're consciously aware, we're empowered to think first.

A PRACTICE IN AWARENESS

How aware of your surroundings are you right now? Would you know without looking up the five nearest objects to you? Become aware of the words you're reading. Really see them. Are you reading them on a screen or on paper? Are you at home? On public transport? In a café? A library? College? Are you outside on a beach, or in a park? Are you in a prison? A hospital?

Look up. What do you see? Observe the colours around you. The aromas. The noise. Do you sense a shift in your posture as you become aware of your surroundings? Or a change in how you're feeling, breathing, or what you're thinking?

Do background noises blend in or do they annoy and trigger you?

THE AWARENESS STEPS

Awareness is the beginning, but it leads to so much more.

- Each time you choose awareness, you're choosing presence.
- Each time you choose presence, you're choosing consciousness.
- Each time you choose consciousness, you're choosing self-control.

The more you practice awareness, the more you quietly reclaim your emotional power one moment, one breath, one choice at a time.

*

Think about the mantra I gave you at the start of this chapter: *'When I have awareness I have self-control, and I own myself. When I don't have awareness, I don't have self-control and someone or something else owns me.'*

For this exercise, we're using awareness to gain knowledge about our environment and the people around us. If we know there's a chance someone may do or say something that provokes us - intentionally or otherwise - we can think before we respond to any triggers. And remember, walking away is also an empowering response.

When we take time to think, we can prepare - even if it's to excuse ourselves and leave the situation. Awareness means we can choose to remain present and practice self-control. No more plunging into dysregulated reactions.

Knowing where potential triggers may be lurking and why and how they may provoke us, means we can unplug ourselves from the power they once had over us.

I had a long list of potential triggers and one day I thought about how to prepare myself for the next time I felt provoked. The 'one question 'am I choosing/feeling/thinking this because of my emotional history helped dissolve the trigger. Alongside self-compassion and patience my triggers finally defused completely. When we have knowledge and awareness about how we might be overwhelmed, we can practice self-control and stay empowered.

As we practice awareness, our perceptions of places and people change.

Practice becoming aware as you stand in a queue, walk along a street, or go into a shop:

- Are you making choices or having feelings and thoughts because of your past emotional experiences?
- Are you preparing to defend yourself?
- Or are you choosing, feeling, and thinking in more regulated ways?

If someone dismisses you, knocks into you, or jumps a queue, would they trigger your fear of being bullied, overlooked, unheard and unseen? Or does having awareness and knowledge of your potential triggers mean you can respond calmly with self-control - which also includes walking away and getting on with your day.

GROUNDING IN THE PRESENT

Become aware of where you are right now. Hold your head up and look around. You have permission to be here, and you're entitled to feel safe.

It's our **Conscious Adult Self** who's practicing this awareness. When anxiety or panic rise up, it's our **Wounded Inner Child** who will need to know:

- Am I safe?
- Can I breathe?
- Will this pass?

Our Conscious Adult Self - and their awareness - will always answer yes, yes, and yes.

When we're aware of potential triggers in our environment, and we're equipped to think about our responses, we can't be provoked.

When we recognise someone's attempt to press our buttons, goad us, or trigger us, we ask ourselves the one question - am I choosing, feeling, or thinking this because of my emotional history - or simply affirm and repeat:

"I won't allow past pain to ruin present peace."

One of the sweetest feelings you'll ever have on your road to emotional freedom is the moment you realise you've disarmed your fear response and its old coping mechanisms and replaced them with Conscious Awareness. The satisfaction you'll feel when you realise that awareness helped you stop at the emotional fork

in the road and choose the path to peace will be the moment you know you're truly winning your emotional war.

When you've faced, unpacked, and overcome a trigger and you've controlled your fear response rather than letting it control you, that will be the moment you see the empowered truth of who you really are. And you'll have done it all in your conscious mind, without saying a word, without confrontation, without defensiveness, without needing to ruminate afterwards about what you should have said or done. You may not even remember the trigger.

You've become aware - the Master Observer.

Seriously, High 5 yourself.

AWARENESS MEDITATION

To help you practice awareness and self-control you can visualise yourself in the following meditation. Below is the meditation script but I recommend plugging yourself in and absorbing the powerful vibrations of the audio version which is available free of charge on my website. Play it when you're out and about, on your way to work, college, an interview, at home, in the garden...anywhere! When you're stuck somewhere that feels oppressive or when you begin to feel overwhelmed, remembering this meditation will help you feel comforted, protected, and safe. The meditation is available as a free audio file at:

www.howtomendyourmentalhealth.com/acalmerme

And if it gets too much you can stop the meditation any time you choose.

MEDITATION

You enter a room through a door that only you have the key to. You unlock the door, walk through with your head held high, and close the door behind you. You decide to lock the door from the inside.

You find yourself in a large room. You choose to sit down in a soft, comfortable chair. In the middle of the room stands a clear-glass partition. The partition is soundproof and unbreakable. It stretches from floor to ceiling and wall to wall. *Nothing and nobody can cross the partition.*

You are safe.

Take a deep breath.

On the other side of the partition are people from your past who have shamed you. Some of them you've forgiven, others not. Be aware of how you're feeling and take a moment to reassure yourself that all is well. You are safe.

You stand up and walk slowly to the partition. The people who have shamed you are seated. They are so burdened by the shameful things they have said and done to you that they cannot move.

After a few moments you return to your chair and sit down. You have nothing to fear; they no longer have any power over you. You are stronger, calmer, and wiser. Whole and complete.

You relax into the chair. Your hands rest gently in your lap, and your feet are placed lightly on the floor. The muscles in your legs, back, neck, and arms are relaxed and soft.

As you look around the room, you notice details you hadn't seen before:

A vase full of flowers on a table.

A lampshade with a fringe and tiny beads stitched to the fabric.

Three pictures hanging to the right of you and a mirror to your left.

You look closely and make out faces in the pictures. Who do you see?

On a shelf, you notice books by your favourite author, several you recognise. Who is the author? What are the titles of the books?

You become aware of noise from outside. A siren blares past. You smile to yourself remaining calm, untriggered by the loud, disturbing noise. You hear laughter and chatter from a café opposite and inhale a mouthwatering aroma. You imagine the taste of spices and soft bread on your tongue.

Your awareness floats gently back to the people on the other side of the glass partition. Their expressions don't bother you at all. Their mouths are moving, but you cannot hear their words or voices. You look at each one in turn and tell them: "Your lies are no longer my truth." You smile to yourself as you affirm: "Nothing and nobody can shame me. Nothing and nobody can harm me."

You are consciously aware of your surroundings. You feel safe. You are in control. You hold your head up and look around. You tell yourself: "I am powerful. I am strong. I am looking forward."

You have permission to be here.

You deserve to feel safe.

You take one last look at the people seated beyond the partition.

You have a message for them, a message only you can deliver.

What is your message?

Now, they are silent. You unlock the door and leave the room, locking the door behind you. You won't return to the room again. You are at peace. All is well.

*

When you're ready, gently bring your awareness back to the present moment. Notice your breath. Notice your body. Feel the safety that still surrounds you. You have practiced awareness. You have strengthened your self-control. You have honoured your power. Carry this calmness with you now, knowing you have everything you need to manage anyone and anything with grace, dignity, and strength. Let's continue your journey.

AWARENESS IN THE REAL WORLD

Practice becoming aware of yourself as you speak. Visualise your mouth moving, the words you choose, the pace and tone of your voice.

Slow down.

Breathe deeply.

Listen.

This simple practice will increase your sense of self-control and awareness. We want to ensure that the foundation of our emotional power is built from awareness. When we're aware of what's going on externally as well as internally, when we're aware of what or who could trigger us, and why, we can reclaim our power and win our emotional war.

We are aware.

We are present.

We have self-control.

We have the power to choose what happens next.

Fork in the road.

Pain, or peace?

When we're out and about, most of our stress and overwhelm is created by the sensory connections between ourselves and other people talking too loudly, moving too quickly. People can feel scary!

Our senses pick up messages from our environment that put our fear-based memories on alert. Before we know it, we're open to

provocation from innocent passers-by, processing loud traffic noises, sirens, scooters, bikes, demands for money from charities, buskers, "5-minutes of your time?" from someone who thinks we want to go paintballing, and *the curse of the modern age*: eyes glued to screens, *nobody* looking where they're going, *nobody* practising awareness.

No wonder we feel overwhelmed!

The good news is, with awareness, we can prepare ourselves. We can anticipate and navigate around these environmental triggers.

We are no longer helpless. We are no longer unconscious. We are aware. And with awareness comes calm, choice, and power.

CHALLENGE IT TO CHANGE IT JOURNAL PROMPTS

AWARENESS

- What have you learned about awareness?
- What does awareness mean to you?
- Where are you most aware of your emotions? With family, at work, in crowds, with strangers?
- Where do you find it hardest to stay aware and calm?
- What one trigger do you now feel more prepared to manage with awareness?
- How will choosing awareness instead of reaction change your next difficult moment?

Final reflection:

When you next feel triggered, what words will you quietly affirm to yourself to stay aware and choose peace? For example: the one question - am I choosing/feeling/thinking this because of my emotional history, or "I won't allow past pain to ruin present peace." or "I choose calm. I choose me."

Think about yourself in the following scenarios. Choose your answer A B or C based on your current feelings.

Scenario 1:

You're in the supermarket and it's busy. The lighting's too bright, the music's too loud, people are walking in front of you, bumping into you, reaching across you, and generally behaving like you're invisible. You finally get to the front of a slow-moving '5-items-or-less' queue for the checkout. Suddenly a person behind you, who's been complaining loudly about the wait, pushes in front of you and

gets to the checkout with way more than 5 items in their basket.

Do you:

A: Throw your basket at their head.

B: Say 'I was next if you don't mind.'

C: Think to yourself 'I used to be like that' and gratefully use the next free checkout.

Scenario 2:

You're walking along the high street. It's just after 1pm. There's lots of activity as people rush to get lunch and run errands. You see a guy on a scooter. He's weaving his way down the high street only just missing pushchairs and screaming toddlers. You're almost face to face with him. Do you:

A: Scream and theatrically leap out of the way.

B: Step aside calling him an arsehole and tell him he's breaking the law.

C: Purposefully stand still in all your power and wait for him to pass.

Scenario 3:

You're sat uncomfortably in the reception area of a company with whom you're interviewing for a job. You're called 30-minutes late (no apology) into a freezing cold room. Nobody offers you a drink although they all have water, tea or coffee. Not once during the interview do they use your name. Do you:

A: Thank them for their time but tell them they can stick their job where the sun doesn't shine.

B: Thank them for their time and tell them **they** wouldn't be a good fit for **you**.

C: Thank them for their time and tell **yourself** they wouldn't be a good fit for you. You deserve better.

Scenario 4:

It's Saturday and you've decided to say yes to an online date. You've turned up ten minutes early and waited 15 minutes for your date to arrive. You order a drink as do they and you both have a starter and main. You find the conversation dull and slow, and you call for the bill. Do you:

A: Go to the loo and climb out the window.

B: Pay your half and, for your date's benefit, summarise your negative experience there and then.

C: Pay the bill and wish them good luck and goodnight.

SCORES:

MAINLY A: Really?

MAINLY B: Good. Work in progress!

MAINLY C: Good job. My work is done. Almost.

Now, let's go deeper. Working with the scenarios above describe yourself without awareness versus yourself with awareness. What's the biggest difference you notice between the two?

Scenario 1:

Me before awareness:

Me after awareness:

What's the biggest difference?

Scenario 2:

Me before awareness:

Me after awareness:

What's the biggest difference?

Scenario 3:

Me before awareness:

Me after awareness:

What's the biggest difference?

Scenario 4 :

Me before awareness:

Me after awareness:

What's the biggest difference?

Reflection:

- Describe a 'real-life' situation that overwhelmed you. There's probably a few, just pick one.
- How did you **react without** awareness?
- Now imagine how you would **respond with** awareness, self-control, and compassion for yourself?

STAYING AWARE IN UNEXPECTED MOMENTS

How do we stay aware when the unexpected happens, when most people would burst a blood vessel to have the last word or run screaming for the door? First thing to remember: even an FBI agent needs a few seconds to sweat and shake before their thinking brain kicks in.

Remember Clarice Starling in *Silence of the Lambs* when she realises she's knocked on the kidnapper's door? You can almost see the word "fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck" go through her mind. Her throat muscles ripple as she swallows. And then boom, she's in FBI mode. Awareness working overtime. Heart racing, senses highly tuned, body trembling but composed. Aware as if her life depends on it because, of course, it does.

When the shit really hits the fan, most of us feel something else before we feel "aware." But what matters is not the first wave of reaction - it's how quickly we reengage with conscious awareness. By the time you get to the end of this book - if not by the end of this exercise - you'll have a mindset that naturally reengages with awareness, consciousness, and logic.

That's the kind of person you're becoming - aware, conscious, and logical. No longer will there be space in your brain for illogical nonsense.

- We're human.
- We've had traumas.
- We've developed sensitivities.
- We'll be works in progress for a while yet.

But whatever chaotic thoughts race through your mind in the first second of provocation, challenge yourself to get back onto the path to peace before you can even finish saying: A CALMER ME!

Remember the mantra: I no longer allow past pain to ruin present peace.

Awareness is the first step. And you're taking it beautifully.

The Awareness Checklist on the next page is another tool to get you consciously thinking about awareness. It's available as a free downloadable PDF at:

howtomendyourmentalhealth.com/acalmerme

AWARENESS CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING ANYONE AND ANYTHING

From this moment forward, this checklist goes where you go! It will fuel your self-control, prepare you for the unexpected, and reduce both social and general anxiety.

Preparation + **A**wareness + **C**ontrol + **E**motional Strength = **PACE** yourself!

Prepare Yourself Before You Leave Home:

- If you're travelling somewhere for the first time, research the location.
- Check maps and familiarise yourself with the area.
- Plan your route - choose the safest, most direct path.
- Have alternative routes ready in case of unexpected changes.
- Look up reviews and feedback about the place if possible.
- Identify landmarks and nearby facilities like bathrooms, cafés, and safe zones.
- Set reminders for appointments and departure times.
- Take your time, don't rush yourself out the door.

Prepare Essentials:

- Pack ID, phone, charger, wallet, keys, tissues, book, water, lip balm, and any medication you might need.
- Carry a small amount of cash securely in case you lose your wallet.
- Bring a small notepad and pen for jotting down important information.

- Let a trusted person know where you're going and when you expect to return.
- Save emergency numbers to your phone but also...
- Write important contacts in your notepad in case your phone dies.
- Keep your phone charged when you can and check in periodically with your trusted contact.

When You Arrive at Your Location:

- Don't rush. Give yourself time to assess your surroundings.
- Acclimatise. Let yourself settle.
- Find a quiet spot to rest if you feel overwhelmed.
- Identify exits and entry points.
- Locate bathrooms and seating areas.
- Find staff members and notice who seems approachable.
- If unsure about anything, ask staff or friendly locals for help but never go anywhere with someone you don't know.
- Assert your right to say no. If they mind, you've dodged a bullet.
- Trust your instincts: if something feels off, it's okay to leave or seek assistance.
- Stick to well-lit, safe, and populated areas.
- Avoid isolated spots, especially if you're alone.

When Meeting New People:

- Observe body language - gauge their approachability and feel free to use your judgement.

- If they're sarcastic, confrontational, or unhelpful, don't personalise it. Observe. Nothing more. And then walk away.
- Trust your instincts, don't second-guess yourself.
- If you get "low vibes," trust them.
- Don't dismiss yourself as "just being paranoid or over-sensitive."
- When meeting new people, observation first.
- Trust yourself to stay emotionally and physically safe. Never mind everybody else. Your people-pleasing days are so over.

One of the biggest obstacles we face when meeting new people is the tendency to overcompensate for not feeling good enough. That's when the people-pleasing, fear-fuelled perfectionist version of us surfaces and thwarts our self-control. But when awareness highlights this tendency, we can stop it in its tracks.

Remember: "No thank you" or at the very least "I'll think about it" are the only responses you need to give. You don't owe anyone your safety or your peace of mind.

Emergency Protocols:

Know what to do in case of an emergency.

- Have a clear plan for leaving quickly if you feel anxious or unsafe.
- Identify safe spots and safe people ahead of time if possible.
- Use calming techniques like deep breathing, slow counting, or visualisation - like the Awareness Meditation.

When You're Back Home Tucked Up in Bed

- Reflect on your experience.
- What went well?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Adjust your plans based on what you observed.

Ask yourself: How will I reward myself for staying aware and keeping hold of my power today?

And finally, have a beautiful, restful night's sleep. You deserve it.

YOU'RE READY!

You've just given yourself something most people never will: **P**reparation. **A**wareness. **C**ontrol. **E**motional Strength. You're no longer moving through the world hoping for peace, you're creating it, with every step you take.

Every time you practice awareness, even in small ways, you are proving to yourself that you're capable, conscious, and in control.

Now that your foundation is strong, it's time to build even higher. Let's take the next step towards becoming A Calmer Me and discover how Conscious Conversation transforms not just what you say, but how you feel about yourself when you say it.