



Reflective Questions for Understanding Yourself

Margaret Andrews, Author of *Manage Yourself to Lead Others*

1. **Who, and whose thinking, has shaped you as an individual?**

This includes parents, siblings, extended family, friends, lovers, enemies, teachers, co-workers, and even strangers. It includes people that helped you – and people that hurt you. It can also include ideas from history, philosophy, religion, your community, favorite childhood stories, books you've read, classes you've taken, movies you've watched, talks you've heard, and conversations you've had. How have these people and ideas influenced your life and the way you lead?

2. **What situations and events have helped shape your perspective?**

This includes situations and events from your childhood, college days, early career, family life, travel and lucky – and unlucky – accidents. How have these situations and events influenced your life and the way you lead?

3. **What does success look like for you?**

How would you define success for your professional life? For your personal life? Are any parts of your definitions of success related to some longer, larger sense of purpose? How have these definitions of success influenced your life and the way you lead?

4. **What are your core values and how have these values changed throughout your life?**

Where did these values come from (e.g., parents, religion, schooling, friends, society, etc.)? You can also think of things that make you angry – often things that make us angry relate to a value that's been violated/stepped on. How have your values changed over your lifetime and what led to these changes? How do these values show up in your professional life? In your personal life? To what extent you are living your values and not someone else's.

5. **To what extent are you aware of – and feel – your emotions?**

Part of understanding ourselves is being aware of our internal world of emotions and how they can often drive our behaviors. Are you aware of the feeling of anger? How do you behave when you're angry? How about when you are happy, joyful, sad, jealous, disappointed, fearful, or any of the other emotions we all feel? How do people around you respond to you when you're in any of these states? How have your behaviors when feeling these different emotions influenced your life and the way you lead?

6. **What feedback have you received over the years about how your actions and behaviors impact others?**

This includes feedback you've received on a professional level, as well as a personal level, and both positive and developmental feedback. Whether you agree with the feedback or disagree with it, the feedback you receive relates to others' perceptions of your behaviors and is a good indication of the impact you have on others. At a minimum, their feedback is the gift of a perspective or point-of-view you may not have previously known. What was the best feedback you've ever received? The most painful? The most surprising (either a positive or negative surprise)? Are there themes in the feedback? Are there patterns that relate to your self-understanding and self-management? Is the feedback relatively stable over time or does it change over your career? Does any of this feedback perhaps relate to not being aware of your emotions (e.g., anger) and how your behaviors impact others? What insights can you take from this feedback about how your behaviors impact others?