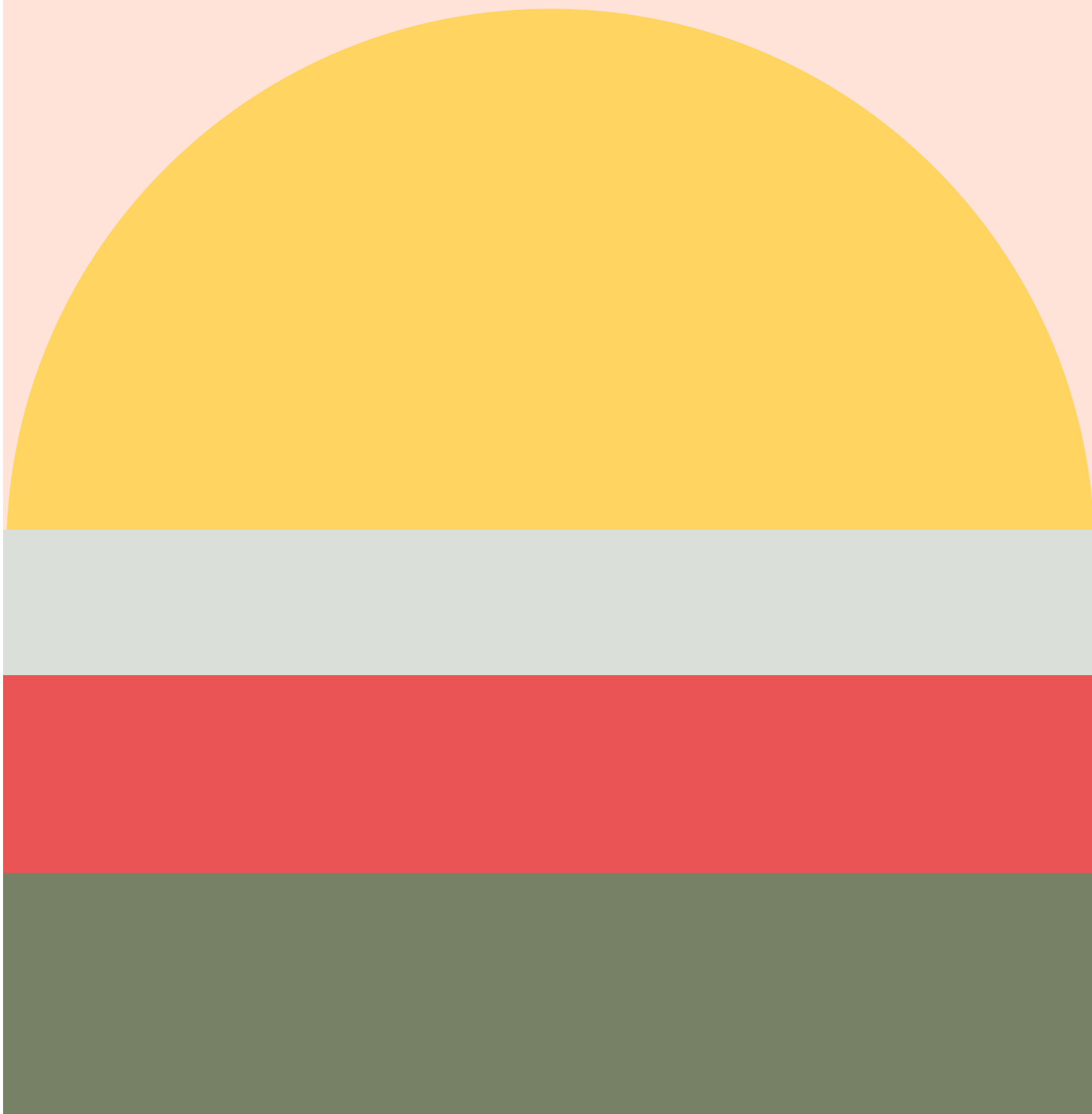


THE 5 A'S OF SELF-AWARENESS

A JOURNAL
EXERCISE





Welcome.

This guide was created to introduce you to the personal growth process called: the "5 A's of Self-Awareness". It includes an overview of each 'A' and gives you a taste of the flow that happens as you move through the whole process.

As you practice these 5 A's and become more skilled in using them, you can grow in your relationship with God, your self, each other, and the world that you find yourself in.

The 5 A's are:

AWARENESS

ACCEPTANCE

APPRECIATION

ACTION

ADHERENCE

There are other places and resources which will give additional detail and further explanation to each of these 5 A's. There are also plenty of other options for practices and exercises which will up your skills in each of these areas. This guide is just a taster. A bit of a get-to-know-you guided tour.

So you're keen to give it a try? What exactly will you need to do?

There are five journal exercises to complete. To start with, you will be asked to identify a specific moment in time to process using the 5 A's and this guide.

We recommend that you take your time to work through the whole process. Perhaps you'll complete one journal exercise each day for 5 days. Of course, there is nothing stopping you from working through all the exercises in one sitting. If you do do the latter, we recommend that you make sure you still have the time and space available so you don't feel rushed.

Take time to pause and reflect before starting each new exercise.

We hope you enjoy yourself!

Journal Exercise #1

AWARENESS

Meditation has a long history of practice across many faiths. But did you know that there are many meditative prayer practices firmly rooted in the Christian tradition? Some of these ancient practices such as contemplative prayer have been used for many centuries.

Meditating helps us to build our awareness. Awareness of who God is and what God is saying. Awareness of ourselves, of others, and of the world around us. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given meditation's prevalence in human history, new scientific tools have allowed scientists to discover some of the biological background to why meditation is beneficial for us.

Think about your day up until this point. Or perhaps look back at a moment in time that stands out. As you move through your day, things happen around you that stimulate you. You hear things, see things, smell things, touch things. Whatever it is that you have noticed and however you have happened to notice it, that thing causes you to think something.

Having a specific conscious thought means that a specific sequence of neurons, the cells in your brain, have fired in your head. Every conscious thought we have occurs because, or is, a pattern of brain cells 'lighting up' in our head.

We associate feelings with how our body feels. So, because your body is different, you feel different to how you did before the thought. And then you act. You do something. You change direction, pay closer attention, eat the food. You react to the stimulus. Most of the time, all of this happens so quickly, we don't even notice the connection between what happened to us, and what we did as a result. This is fine if every single one of our reactions is what we want to do, but for most of us this isn't the case at least some of the time.

Meditation works to create space between an external stimulus and our response. During meditation you might observe your thoughts, your body and your feelings. As the space increases, we have more time to choose how we wish to respond. To hear from God. To pivot our direction of response and act accordingly.

Try a 5 minute meditation. Give this a go before starting the journaling exercise. Try this one: [headspace.com/meditation/5-minute-meditation](https://www.headspace.com/meditation/5-minute-meditation)

Prompts:

When was there a time recently you noticed yourself reacting to something? Describe the situation and what was happening.

How did it make you feel? Perhaps you were sad, anxious, happy, embarrassed, felt stuck, jealous, surprised, excited...

How did your body feel in the moment?

What were some of the thoughts in your head? What were some of the messages you were telling yourself?

Journal Exercise #2

ACCEPTANCE (PART 1)

Start with a 5 minute meditation: [headspace.com/meditation/5-minute-meditation](https://www.headspace.com/meditation/5-minute-meditation)

"It is important to combine our self-awareness with self-acceptance. If awareness gets too far ahead of self-acceptance, awareness simply shuts down. If our insight becomes too sharp a sword, if it fuels the inner judge, some part of our psyche just says "enough", and our defenses kick in to protect us"

Peter O'Hanarahan - Counselor & Enneagram expert

Your last journal exercise could have left you with some uncomfortable feelings. Maybe you are feeling confused about what is going on for you. Maybe you are feeling ashamed of how you reacted. Maybe you have discovered something about yourself you wish wasn't so.

This exercise is about welcoming your feelings and sitting with them. Accepting them for what they are and for why they exist. All of us have habits and ways of understanding the world that we learnt in our childhood. It can be helpful when accepting something uncomfortable in yourself to sit with you as a child - the 'little you'.

Prompts:

Reflect on why you may have reacted in the way you did. Was there something in your childhood that made you feel that way?

Can you spend some time being compassionate for the child that felt that needed to happen? What is coming up for you?

Can you accept this reaction in yourself?

Journal Exercise #3

ACCEPTANCE (PART 2)

Start with a 5 minute meditation: [headspace.com/meditation/5-minute-meditation](https://www.headspace.com/meditation/5-minute-meditation)

"What you give up violently you are forever bound to"

Anthony De Mello - Jesuit priest & psychotherapist

"We cannot solve problems with the same mindset that created them"

Albert Einstein - Genius

When people discover in themselves a habit they don't like, the most common response is to try to stop it. However, just stopping is not going to help. This habit reflects how you see the world and how you interact with it. If you simply try to stop a habit, you do so still using the same logic that created the habit in the first place. As a result, you will become more stuck in your way of seeing the world.

Shame is not the answer. Take for example someone who doesn't like how they exercise control over others. They may try to stop this by trying to control themselves and how they react. But this person is still stuck in a cycle of need for control.

Instead, growth comes in the place of control when we can begin to accept it with grace and compassion. The path towards wholeness does not look the same each time. Is there healing to do? Repentance to find? Slowly over time we can learn to stop trying to hold ourselves together in certain ways and instead let go of the control.

Prompts:

Can you think of a time you decided to just stop something? How did that go?

If you were to just stop this habit, how do you think you would go about that?

Can you see how that might make you more stuck in your way of moving through the world?

Journal Exercise #4

APPRECIATION

Start with a 5 minute meditation: [headspace.com/meditation/5-minute-meditation](https://www.headspace.com/meditation/5-minute-meditation)

"Healing is accepting that we have wounds and caring for them"

Annie Diamond - Enneagram teacher

What we discover about ourselves will teach us and help us to grow.

As you are working through this process, various emotions and thoughts might be coming up for you. Try to simply observe these thoughts and not judge them. What you are learning about yourself now will help you to grow.

These three things - *Awareness, Acceptance and Appreciation* - will deeply transform us. If we become present to them, it can be a healing process. Healing is accepting that we have wounds and caring for them.

Prompts:

What have you learnt about yourself through this time already?

Can you think of times which were painful or frustrating in which you learnt things that you are thankful for?

What are you grateful for?

Journal Exercise #5

ACTION

Start with a 5 minute meditation: headspace.com/meditation/5-minute-meditation

"Action - from a place of discernment: this kind of spaciousness and silence allows us to discern what to do as driven by love, not shame; by security, not anxiety; and by worth not frustration."

Annie Diamond - Enneagram teacher

Through this journal process you have been creating and practicing an inner observer. This observer helps us to create space in a moment and observe what is happening in our thoughts, feelings and body; and why we are reacting the way we are.

You can now start to add an inner coach to this space. This is the voice that in a given moment can say more positive statements and more truth statements that will help you to respond in a different way. This is where you can learn to let go.

Prompts:

What are some of the things I could/would like to tell myself next time I am in this situation?

What would be helpful for me to hear?

What would be a reaction I would like to try instead?

From here...

ADHERANCE

Choosing a different response each time we catch ourselves stuck in a habit would be very taxing and simply isn't possible. Instead choose the moments when you do have energy to try something different. And in the times, when you don't have enough energy, to have grace for yourself.

This is a slow process that will eventually change habits.

The final component of this process is Adherence. The first bunch of times that anyone goes through this process it can take a lot of time and energy. However, practice will make it quicker and second nature. If this process has been helpful, try starting with a 2-minute meditation every day and incorporate the 5 As when you start to observe new things about yourself.

So that's it. Those are the 5 A's which you have just walked through.

AWARENESS | ACCEPTANCE | APPRECIATION | ACTION | ADHERENCE