

The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

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Jacob: Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of The Future of Work Podcast. My guest today is Dr. Tasha Eurich. She's an organizational psychologist, and author of the book, *Insight: The Surprising Truth About How Others See Us, How We See Ourselves, And Why The Answers Matter More Than We Think*. Thank you so much for joining me.

Dr. Eurich: Thanks for having me.

Jacob: All right. I went through your book and I've actually been using a lot of your stuff in different engagements that I've been a part of for various [00:00:30] workshops. I've tons of questions for you. But before we get into any of that, I'm really curious to learn a little bit more about you. How did you get involved with all this stuff? Why self-awareness is kind of like your main topic area?

Dr. Eurich: Sure. I've been an organizational psychologist, as you said, for the last 15 years. I've spent time in Academia as a researcher and instructor. I've spent leading large leadership [00:01:00] development programs and Fortune 500 companies. But for the last seven or so years I've been out on my own consulting, speaking, and researching. I wrote a book about five years ago on leadership. There have been a lot of books on leadership, but what was interesting actually was the response we got to a very specific part of the book, it was just a conclusion, and one of the things I talked about very briefly was how important it was to know yourself.

It's [00:01:30] funny, because now that's all we're talking about. But there weren't a ton of people talking about self-awareness at the time. That was intriguing to me. I remember one Christmas, business is slow usually around the holidays with my clients, and I had some extra time. I wondered, I've been hearing about self-awareness, we're getting this response, what do we actually scientifically know about it? I started geeking out, doing the research, [inaudible 00:01:55] searches. What I discovered was actually pretty surprising. We [00:02:00] don't know as much as we should know to be making all of these grand claims about self-awareness is, why it matters, how we increase it. That was what made me decide, me and my research team, about five years ago, to really try to do a true scientific investigation of self-awareness.

We wanted to know what is it exactly? Because there wasn't consensus on that. We wanted to know what knowledge makes up self-awareness. We wanted to know where does it come from? How do we increase it? [00:02:30] What was so interesting about

this process is we, in our research, we debunked a lot of the very commonly accepted "truths" about self-awareness. For me, it started off as something I knew was important, I saw the importance of it in my consulting, in my coaching practice, but really we fell down the rabbit hole when we started researching it. It's just been so fascinating to continue to look up.

Jacob: What's a typical day for you now? I know you mentioned you worked for a bunch of big [00:03:00] companies, do you like it better being on your own? Or do you miss kind of the corporate life?

Dr. Eurich: The joke I make, I come from a long line of entrepreneurs, I make the joke that I have a lot of problems with authority. So working 9:00 to 5:00, the organizational job is not the best one for me. But what I actually love about what I do is I have the comradery that I had in the corporate world with my clients. I worked with a large telecommunications company for several years, [00:03:30] embedded a leadership development program at every level of their customer service organization. As you work closely with your clients, they become your friends and your colleagues. For me, I almost feel like I have the best of everything, and I have a little bit more independence, which usually works best for me.

Jacob: Hey, you can't go wrong with that, right?

Dr. Eurich: Right.

Jacob: Today, what's a typical day like for you? Do you have certain routines to kind of get your day started? [00:04:00] What is a typical day in the life of Dr. Eurich?

Dr. Eurich: Part of what I love about my life is I don't really have a typical day. Today, I am working from home, hanging out in my loft in downtown Denver, trying to answer some emails, write some stuff. I might jump on a plane tomorrow and fly to the Philippines and work there. I might be doing a keynote engagement somewhere. In some ways, it's like I'm either on stage, or on [00:04:30] some way, or I'm home working and really trying to do a lot of the reflective work, writing, strategizing. So it's on or off for me in my life now, which is actually really interesting.

Jacob: Yeah, that makes things fun. I've been on my own for around 10 years, and it's always a fun ride, you never know what some random email might bring your way.

Dr. Eurich: Right, exactly. Any day, anything can happen.

Jacob: Yeah, it's always fun and exciting. Okay, so let's jump into some of the topics [00:05:00] in your book, maybe we can start with just super high level, what is self-awareness?

Dr. Eurich: Self-awareness means seeing ourselves clearly. And specifically, it means understanding who we are, how other people see us, and how we fit into the world around us.

Jacob: It's a simple enough definition.

Dr. Eurich: Seems simple, doesn't it?

Jacob: Yeah, you hear that and you're like, "Okay, I get it. It makes complete sense." [00:05:30] You mentioned that there were a lot of myths of self-awareness, because I'm sure a lot of people listening to this podcast right now are thinking, "I'm self-aware. I heard her definition and I match all three of those things." Which I think it'll be fun to unpack with some of the things that you have in the book. But what are some of the typical myths that you start to see around self-awareness?

Dr. Eurich: Yeah. Let's take a step back and talk about the myth that we all feel that we are self-aware. [00:06:00] Our research has shown that 95% of people, if you ask them, "Are you self-aware?" They will generally agree. They will say, "Yes, I am self-aware. I agree. Or I strongly agree with that statement." 95% of people think they are, but the real percentage that we've investigated and we found consistently is about 10% to 15% of us actually are self-aware.

Jacob: Which is crazy, that's a huge gap.

Dr. Eurich: Exactly. The joke I make is, on a good day what that means is that 80% [00:06:30] of us are lying to ourselves about whether we're lying to ourselves. Which is where it starts to get a little scary, doesn't it? It's funny. I talk a lot when I'm doing keynotes and workshops at how I too am not immune from that effect. It's been a humbling process, actually, to realize that I too am not as self-aware as I thought I was. I've stumbled on a lot of these tools, and techniques that we can talk about, but what I tell people is, [00:07:00] what we should be assuming, just as a natural daily principle, is that I think I'm self-aware, that's fine, but what if I weren't as self-aware as I think I am?

Not in a way that is negative, or self-combative, or we're punishing ourselves for it. What I found, and what we found is the most self-aware people have this innate curiosity about themselves. Even though they're arguably the [00:07:30] most self-aware among us, they're the ones who are the most likely to say, "Yeah, you know, I still have a lot to learn. I am open. I'm questioning my assumptions. I'm getting feedback from the people around me." To me, that's actually kind of freeing. What it says is, "Maybe I'm not as self-aware as I think I am." But almost anyone can improve that skill if they approach it the right way. I think that's probably the most pervasive myth, is that we don't have work to do when it comes to our own self-awareness.

Jacob: [00:08:00] How did you ... you mentioned that you did some research on this, and I'm actually curious, I'm sure some people listening as well are, how did you figure out that only 10% to 15% of people are actually self-aware? Was it kind of like a series of questions that people had to answer and then you scored and evaluated those?

Dr. Eurich: See, this is where, remember I said the definition sounds simple enough? It actually took us almost a year just to define what self-awareness actually was. We can talk [00:08:30] a little bit more about that. But at a high level, there are two core sets of knowledge about ourselves that make up self-awareness. One of them is called internal self-awareness, which is, "I know who I am, what I want, what I value and so on." The

second is something we need external self-awareness, which is knowing how other people see us, knowing the shadow that we're casting. Fascinatingly, those two types of self-knowledge, as much as it seems like they would be related, [00:09:00] there is no relationship between them. Just because I'm high on one, doesn't mean I'll be high on the other and vice versa.

After taking that year to come up with what sounds like a very simple definition, you know, we analyzed by now it's thousands of empirical studies, we surveyed thousands of people around the world, it was really quite in-depth. But then we developed and validated a 67-question assessment that measured each of those things. Internal, my own [00:09:30] perspective, there are some specifics under that. Am I clear about my values, my passions, my aspirations, and so on? Then we had people who knew our participants well [inaudible 00:09:42] their self-awareness.

We get a read of my internal self-awareness, and maybe my husband fills out a survey on how self-aware he thinks I am. Then using those two scores, we set a series of cutoffs basically. You had to be significantly above average in both in order [00:10:00] to meet the cutoff. But if we take a step back, and this is something people say a lot, and they're right. It's never as simple as saying, "Are you self-aware or are you not self-aware?" Of course it's a continuum. It's helpful to illustrate our lack of self-awareness by saying we are or we aren't, but I encourage people to think about where are you in your internal self-awareness journey on that continuum? Where are you on your external self-awareness journey knowing how other people see you? Again, [00:10:30] it's about making small incremental progress that can lead to some really big impact and insight.

Jacob: Maybe we can talk about some of those questions a little bit later on to give people some ideas of how to tell if they're self-aware or not. But before we do that, I want to jump into kind of another broad theme of why is self-awareness important? Because I'm sure a lot of people listening to this, even business leaders, they're probably so focused on the numbers, [00:11:00] on strategy, on telling other people what to do, growing the business, that some people might scoff at the idea of, "Come on, give me a break. What is this self-awareness stuff? Why is that important if I'm so good at managing the numbers and growing the business?"

Dr. Eurich: I'll let you in on a secret that has been well-kept until now, I think, which is that if we, as leaders, or people, professionals, improve our self-awareness, here [00:11:30] are the ripple effects it creates. The first thing it does is it makes us better performers at work, it makes us objectively higher performers. It also makes us more promotable. It strengthens our relationships at work and at home. There is a lot of evidence that self-aware leaders have much more engaged employees, who are willing to work harder, who are more committed, they have stronger marriages and partnerships outside of work, they even raise more mature children. [00:12:00] The list goes on.

There's a lot of other outcomes like it makes us a better communicator, it helps us be more influential, it helps us be more persuasive, it helps us avoid unethical behavior. There is some evidence for example that self-aware people are less likely to lie, cheat, and steal. But if those outcomes are not compelling enough, this is usually what I end with. There is some pretty compelling evidence emerging that self-aware leaders

actually lead more profitable [00:12:30] companies, and companies with large numbers of self-aware people in general have better financial returns. My question to people is, why wouldn't you spend a little bit of time working on something that's going to give you a ripple effect in every area of your life?

Another way to think about it is, your self-awareness is going to set the upper limit for all of the skills that are important to be successful in business in the 21st century. I've never been able to [00:13:00] get an answer on this, but can anyone think of a really, really great communicator who isn't also self-aware? Or a really great salesperson, or a great presenter, or any of those skills that we need? That's what I would say in response, and I think, again, it's a well-kept secret, so the people who know about this and can work on it really do have a unique edge.

Jacob: Do you have an example of maybe how a self-aware versus a not self-aware leader might act in a certain situation? I know [00:13:30] a lot of things have been thrown around for example for the CEO of Uber, and I've seen a lot of articles written where if he was more self-aware, chances are what would've happened there wouldn't have happened, and he'd still be running the company. I don't know if you find that to be kind of a relevant example, but I think it would be great for people to kind of wrap their minds around, maybe something tangible like how does self-aware people act versus not self-aware people?

Dr. Eurich: I'm going to give you two examples, one of them is pretty quick, [00:14:00] the other one might give a little bit more detail. Oscar Munoz is the CEO of United Airlines. Everybody who listens to news at all probably remembers that scandal where they physically hold a doctor out of the plane because they'd overbooked their flight.

Jacob: Yeah.

Dr. Eurich: I was pretty intrigued with him, even since they appointed him to his position, because he seemed reflective, he seemed open, he was very different than [00:14:30] his predecessor, and I think that was for a good reason. But what initially happened during that scandal, if you remember, was he started basically defending everything that the airline had done, and sort of making excuses for it, not taking ownership, and generally acting pretty un-self-awareness. But what was interesting was right after that, obviously there was this backlash, and what he did shortly after the backlash happened was he issued another statement, the statement was [00:15:00] really the statement he should've made the first time. But what it showed was, "Now we are taking responsibility, this is completely unacceptable. We hear you. We're going to change."

That's an example, I think, of how self-awareness can really make or break how a company responds to a public relations disaster. That was interesting because it showed both sides of it, and it showed me that he is self-aware enough, or open enough to be willing to change his approach based on that information. A more detailed example, and [00:15:30] this is probably my favorite business story of all time, and that's what the former CEO of Ford, Alan Mulally, did when he turned that company around.

When he took the reins of CEO, Ford was on track to lose \$17 billion, with a B, that year. When he stepped down, about five years later, they had their second most profitable year ever, and they had \$20 billion worth of profit. What he talks about was [00:16:00] the core of what made him and his team so successful was something he called awareness for everybody. He created the conditions in his executive team for everyone to tell the truth, not to be punished for bringing bad news. He was open to criticism, and feedback about himself, much like the United CEO, he would read things in the paper, and he would realize that maybe there was a different approach that he could take.

He directly [00:16:30] interacted with employees, and heard what they had to say. They were incredibly transparent about how the company was doing. This idea of awareness for everybody started with him as a leader, but it trickle down to the unions and to their shareholders, and to the public. I think, if you take a step back and look at those two examples, what it shows is a humility, an openness to new information, an openness to information that might contradict what they believe [00:17:00] about themselves, and that's what, again, at the top of an organization can create a culture. No matter where you are on the organizational hierarchy, that is a very strong impact that a self-aware leader can have. I don't know, does that answer your question?

Jacob: Yeah, no, for sure. Definitely. I know you interviewed Alan Mulally for the book, did he share any specific practices or things that he may have done on a regular basis for himself to practice self-awareness? [00:17:30] Any rituals or techniques that he was fond of?

Dr. Eurich: Let me give you an example. I just laugh about this with ... just so much appreciation of who he is. We've become very close since we met. But the first time I met him, I flew to Phoenix, which is where he spends the winter. We had this lovely interview, I was obviously trying to understand all of the bits and pieces of what he did at Ford and a lot of that is in Insight. But at the end of our meeting, he looked at me and he said, "How did that [00:18:00] go for you?" I said, "Oh, Alan, I am so grateful for your time. I know you're a very busy man. And this has just been really enlightening." He goes, "Tell me. Do you have any feedback for me on how I did? Is there anything I could've done differently or better?" And my jaw fell on the floor, because someone that's been as successful as him, who's as prominent, and powerful, and well-regarded to ask little me, this author writing this book, for feedback it floored me.

[00:18:30] I think that's just a great example of the fact that a lot of this isn't rocket science. But it does require an ongoing consistent commitment to question our assumptions and ask how we're showing up.

Jacob: You know, now I have to ask you, what did you tell him? After he asked-

Dr. Eurich: I think I was so surprised that I didn't even know what to say. I think was blabbering about something probably. But yeah, he's one of those iconic leaders [00:19:00] that's even better when you finally meet them than you think they're going to be, [inaudible 00:19:04].

Jacob: Yeah, I hear amazing things about him. When you look at self-awareness in general, what's your perception of the state of self-awareness in the business world. Do you think it's severely lacking? Are we doing an okay job? What's your perception of where we are?

Dr. Eurich: My first reaction is, it's a word that we seem to love tossing [00:19:30] around, but a word that most people don't actually have a true and courageous commitment to developing in themselves. You sort of think about an average conversation about self-awareness, it's probably not going to be, "Hey, how self-aware do you think I am?" It's going to be talking about how un-self-aware someone else is that you work with. I think we talk about it a lot in the negative. I always use the example of Steve Carell's character in The Office, Michael Scott. [00:20:00] It's sort of fun. It's almost like a sport to point out other people's lack of self-awareness. I think the problem is, we pay lip service, we have all these platitudes about it, but we're not truly committed to developing it in ourselves.

Jacob: It seems though, I mean, at least from a lot of interviews that I've done it, you're right, it does keep coming a lot in conversation, it keeps coming up all the time actually. I'm wondering if maybe [00:20:30] organizations are starting to take it more seriously, they're starting to make investments, they're exploring these things. At least maybe more than they were a decade or two ago. Hopefully it's moving in the right direction. But why do you think some organizations are starting to take it more seriously? Is there something that's happening in the business world that's causing us to kind of reexamine why self-awareness is so important?

Dr. Eurich: I'm sure there are a lot of answers to that. [00:21:00] But for me, what comes to mind is all of these examples that we've been talking about, the Alan [Mulallys 00:21:06] of the world, you can't really argue with that. When you ask Alan Mulally what's been the singular secret for your success, he says, "Awareness. Self-awareness. Team awareness. Awareness for everyone." What I think is happening, hopefully, is that there are enough positive role models who are singing the praises of this that have a track record, it's not just like a foolish pursuit, it's something [00:21:30] that helps them be successful in their business as much of that as we can put into our collective consciousness in business, the more organizations are going to be willing to invest time, and energy and money into developing that in their workforce.

Jacob: Part of me also wonders if our obsession with technology is contributing to this, because you know we keep hearing about so much with AI and automation, and all these different technologies flying into our companies, that part of me wonders, if [00:22:00] because of that companies are starting to realize the importance of having these more human skills and qualities. I don't know, if you have any thoughts on that, or if you've seen that, but maybe the influx of technology is forcing us to become more human.

Dr. Eurich: Yeah, Jacob, I think that's a really astute point. That reminds me of a keynote I was doing for a group of C-level executives and financial management firms. What we were talking about was this whole influx in that industry, [00:22:30] it's the robo-investors. It's algorithms that could potentially replace what a lot of the people who work in their companies are doing. But, there is some research on that, and what some scientists

have shown, at least in that area, is people who need those services are wanting that human experience more and more. It's almost like as technology is infiltrating our lives so much we're yearning for that human connection.

A [00:23:00] robo-investor can't out-human a human. If a human, you know, an employee, or a client service person is bringing that to the table, there's no competition. I think it is, in some way, maybe related to survival, related to changing in our world and being able to compete in the midst of all this technology, I think you're absolutely right.

Jacob: I loved in the book, you have this idea of self-awareness unicorns. Can you talk about [00:23:30] who they are and why are they these unicorns?

Dr. Eurich: They're not unicorns in the Silicon Valley sense. Here's the background. Part of what I wanted to do, very early on in this research program, was find really self-aware people and interview them about what they did differently. I thought that was actually a pretty smart approach. I just pat myself on the back, we were finding people that qualified, and interviewing them. I would ask them things [00:24:00] like, "What do you do to stay self-aware?" The most common answer I would get time and time again was, "I don't know. I've just sort of always been like this." Pretty quickly we realized that our amazing plan was not as amazing as we thought it was. So we went back to the drawing board.

What we thought about was, what if we could find people who were highly self-aware, but who actually didn't start out that way? People who had made either the commitment, or who had had self-awareness trust [00:24:30] upon them by the circumstances they found themselves in in their lives? What if we could find those people and interview them about how they got there and what they did differently? So we used all of our self-awareness assessments to qualify people. But then what we did is we added two other hurdles that they had to clear. One was they had to believe that they had made dramatic improvements in their ability to see themselves clearly in their lives, and someone who knew them well had to agree. We kind of had a threshold [00:25:00] of this level of improvement above.

We found 50 people. But the reason they're called unicorns was early on when we started this strategy, our research team was meeting, and we were sort of talking about our plan, and I said, "You guys, what are we going to call these people?" And we were actually so worried that we wouldn't find any, that one of my research assistants said, "I know, we should call them self-awareness unicorns." And we all laughed. And then it actually stuck, because it's a great illustration of what makes these people [00:25:30] so special and unique. But a lot of the insights that we had on counter-intuitive self-awareness practices come from very, very exhaustive interviews of our self-awareness unicorns. Personally, for me, they have taught me more than I could have ever anticipated at the beginning of this process.

Jacob: I'm just amazed how you even set about trying to find these people. I mean, I'm trying to think like if I had to find self-aware people right now, where would I begin? And I have no clue [00:26:00] how to even begin doing that. I'm amazed that you were able to spend the time, and find all these people. I'm curious, you talked about two things, which were internal, and external self-awareness. Maybe we can talk about each one of

those, maybe just for a minute or two, to kind of compare and contrast. And maybe you can give any advice to how you would figure out if you're internally self-aware and externally self-aware.

Dr. Eurich: [00:26:30] Sure. I think if we start at the beginning, internal self-awareness requires a commitment to look inside of ourselves in a way [inaudible 00:26:42] always comfortable, it's not always easy, it doesn't always give us the immediate answers that we want, so I think that's the challenge we have with internal self-awareness. With external self-awareness there is the challenge of, "Oh my gosh, what if I ask people for feedback, and I learn [00:27:00] that no one sees me the way I see myself?" Just to take a step back from that, I think the lifelong journey of self-awareness is about building both of those things, while at the same time balancing what you learn.

Just because you get a piece of feedback that contradicts your self view, doesn't mean that they're correct. It means that it's a piece of data that you have to balance with everything else. I think for people, maybe if I present those two challenges, the folks listening might latch onto [00:27:30] one and say, "That is a little bit hard for me." My example, I tend to be so focused sometimes on how other people see me, or the impression that I want to create, in other words, external self-awareness, that I neglect what I want. I recently renewed the lease on my car, and I couldn't, for the life of me, figure out the color car I wanted to get, I mean, this is a really stupid problem, but I was really just struggling with it.

I crowdsourced it, and I asked 10 of my closest friends what color car should [00:28:00] I get. I actually, I didn't even take a minute to say, "No, I need to figure this out for myself." That's a stupid, little example, but that's what it looks like to have maybe a more developed sense of external self-awareness than internal self-awareness.

Jacob: Just to follow up on that really quick, is indecisiveness a potential kind of red flag for not being self-aware? I just don't mean like business indecisiveness, but somebody says, "Hey, do [00:28:30] you want to go out and do something?" And you say, "Yeah, I don't care. Whatever." Is that kind of something to look out for as a red flag of being not self-aware?

Dr. Eurich: You know, that's a great question. I think there's a difference between going with the flow and being indecisive, right? To me, the example you shared is more just somebody being relaxed and not having expectations, but I do think there is an element to that where if somebody says, "Why don't you pick a restaurant?" And you just can't figure out which restaurant you want to choose, to me [00:29:00] that's an indication that maybe you're not clear on, in this case it's the environment that you want to put yourself in. I don't think people should go overboard and totally freak out, but self-aware people tend to be able to make clear choices that are in the spirit of their happiness and their success.

Another example is, if somebody, you know, if you just feel stuck, if you feel something isn't quite right in your life, you're hitting a wall, you're not happy, you're not fulfilled, to [00:29:30] me that is a big signal that you might have some internal self-awareness work to do.

Jacob: Okay, perfect. Let's talk about the external piece maybe for a minute.

Dr. Eurich: Sure. External self-awareness, you may need to work on your external self-awareness if you've had an experience where somebody has given you feedback that has totally blindsided you. Some of the examples our unicorns gave, before they had become unicorns, one person had [00:30:00] their spouse leave them abruptly one day, and obviously it wasn't abrupt, it was a problem that have been going on for years. But that person had no idea there was an issue. Another unicorn gave us the example of getting fired from her job, in what she thought was a really abrupt way, but again, it wasn't. Those types of things, where we just get feedback that floors us, negative feedback that we never even thought was possible, that's a good indication perhaps that we're not as self-aware externally as we could be.

[00:30:30] Then the other question to ask is just how often are you asking for feedback? How often are you having a meeting with someone and saying, "Hey, is there anything I could do better next time? Or do you have any thoughts on the presentation I gave in our staff meeting?" As much as we can get in the habit of that, what we learned from our unicorns is it's actually not even easy for them. None of them said, "Oh gosh, I love hearing how many flaws and weaknesses I have." No. But it is a matter of making that commitment [00:31:00] and developing the habit. Those are two things I think about for external.

Jacob: Yeah, I don't find that being ... I give a lot of talks as you do as well, so I'm just trying to imagine after each talk going up to the organizers, and the people that brought me in, and asking for feedback. Do you do that after every talk that you do?

Dr. Eurich: There are a couple ways we do that. I have a company that manages my speaking, and they always do a follow up that's a little bit more scientific.

Jacob: Okay. Like surveys and stuff like that.

Dr. Eurich: The interesting ... but to your point, if [00:31:30] you ask people that question, you're not always going to get an answer. The reason for that is so few people do it. It's like when Alan Mulally asked me that, I had no idea what to say in response, because I was so surprised. I think we should all do that as much as possible, while also extending other people grace. "Okay, that's okay. If you can't think of anything. No pressure, no worries." But I do think, I've had people chase me down, I remember there was one talk I was doing, and my flight was boarding, so I had [00:32:00] to get to the airport. This really amazing gentleman just literally chased me down the hall screaming like, "I have some feedback for you." It was a gift. It was a very little thing, but it was something that I was doing that was maybe minimizing the impact. I just, I hugged him. I said, "Thank you so much. That must not have been very easy, and you're clearly very out of breath. So thank you so much."

That's the other thing that we open ourselves up to, is just that gift of having control over our destiny.

Jacob: [00:32:30] I wanted to ask you about things like alarm clock moments, and blind spots, but I want to save that for a couple minutes, because I want to jump into maybe inside of organizations, since a lot of people listening to this are either managers, or working for managers, or working for organizations. How can we bring this inside of our company? Let's say you work for an organization, you're maybe an entry or mid-level employee, are there any things [00:33:00] that you can do to become more internally and externally self-aware? Where would you begin with this?

Dr. Eurich: Sure. Depending on the resources that your company has, the first kind of easiest step to take might be to give your HR rep a call, and find out what assessments are available in the company. Depending on where you work, there might be a lot of examples, there might be a couple, some companies make 360s available for folks that maybe haven't taken a 360, [00:33:30] it's a pretty exhaustive assessment of how you're showing up as rated by you and then as rated by other people. Your peers, your direct reports, your superiors, your board members. That could be just a really great snapshot. When we talked to our unicorns, a lot of them gave examples of having these pretty huge self-insights from assessments like that.

Now, is that enough? No. But if you can really try to take those as much as possible, especially [00:34:00] if they have a component where other people are giving you feedback, that can be really powerful. I think another side of it is maybe starting with your boss. We are rewarded actually for asking for critical feedback. A lot of people think, "Oh, if I'm a leader and I ask my employees what I could do better, they're not going to respect me, or it's going to be uncomfortable." There's a lot of evidence that the most successful leaders are the ones who ask for critical feedback [00:34:30] often.

If you're in entry-level job, and you're working away, maybe a way to build your external self-awareness is to formalize that relationship with your boss a little bit. I know that when I am concluding an executive coaching assignment, what I'll do is sit my client down with their boss and ask the question, "Okay, how are we going to keep this feedback free-flowing?" A client that I'm ramping down now, she and her boss made a decision that they're going to meet for 15 minutes every [00:35:00] month for the exclusive purpose of her getting feedback on how she's showing up, and getting ideas for the future. That would be probably the two things I would suggest to start. Obviously, there's a lot more to do, but I think that could be powerful.

Jacob: On the external side, could you also just, I don't know, take somebody out for coffee, one of your co-workers, and just say, "Hey, I just want to chat about me for a couple minutes, and see how I'm doing and see if you have any feedback for me."

Dr. Eurich: So, the exercise you're alluding to [00:35:30] is something in the book, I call the dinner of truth, or the power lunch of truth.

Jacob: It sounds so ominous.

Dr. Eurich: It does. I'll give you a couple of examples that'll hopefully make it way less scary. But here's the way it works. You pick someone at work who you want to improve your

relationship with, who you know can give you some honest feedback, and you take them out, and you pay. Coffee, lunch, whatever. You ask them the following question, the question is, "What do I do [00:36:00] that is most annoying to you?" Then you listen to their answer. You don't defend, you don't justify, you don't tell them how long they are, you say, "Thank you very much." I would never tell other people to do an exercise like this that I haven't done multiple times myself.

What I've discovered, and what I think a lot of people in our community who do this have discovered, is it's a surprisingly affirming experience. The first [00:36:30] power lunch of truth I ever did was with actually a former client of mine, who's now one of my closest friends. His answer was, "Well, I love you in person, but I hate you online." That's [inaudible 00:36:46], that's [inaudible 00:36:47] of it. I said, "Interesting, tell me more about that." We got into this really fascinating and helpful conversation about the way I was showing up on social media that I really didn't intend to, but that was creating a different impression than I thought.

[00:37:00] I think, at the end of the day, with this exercise, the reason it's so scary is our worst fear. Going into that meeting, I remember thinking. "He's going to tell me that I suck as a person. He's going to indict my entire personality, my entire approach." What most people find when they do this is it's a very controllable, small behavior that now that they know about it, they can make a decision about what to do.

Jacob: [00:37:30] The lunch or the coffee of truth. I think that's-

Dr. Eurich: Yes, if you want to get out of there faster, coffee of truth for sure.

Jacob: If you're really a glutton for punishment, you do the dinner of truth, the prix fixe menu, one of those four-hour dinners. Do you have any advice for what to do if you're perhaps working for a manager that isn't or you don't feel is open or receptive to doing something like this? Maybe you [00:38:00] work for a manager that a lot of people don't like, he's not very nice to you, he's one of those kind of stereotypical office space managers. Would you still ask that person for feedback? Do you go to somebody else? How do you build that relationship with somebody to be able to ask them for that honest feedback so they don't just put you down?

Dr. Eurich: One of my closest mentors is Marshall Goldsmith who's considered to be probably the number one leadership thinker and executive coach in the world. He has a very interesting perspective on this that I just recently heard that I think might be helpful here. In his process of coaching, and the process of coaching I use too, we have our clients [00:40:00] go and ask the people in their lives, the stakeholders that work at home, "How did I do this month at the goal I'm working on? What ideas do you have for me in the next 30 days?" Very similar to the types of question we're talking about. What Marshall said, somebody asked him, "What happens if I go and ask a particular stakeholder, maybe it's my boss in this case, and they don't answer me?" He said, "Well, you ask again the next month, and then you keep asking until you get an answer."

I thought, "Wow, that's really [00:40:30] interesting." As long as you're creating expectation, and you're really showing them that, "I do want this feedback." I wouldn't settle for one interaction where you don't get the answer you're looking for. I just thought that was an interesting, it challenged my assumptions about feedback. What I would've said before he told me that was, "Just go ask someone else." But there might be something really valuable that that person has to tell you, especially if it's your boss. [00:41:00] What I would encourage people to do is try pretty valiantly several times, and nine times out of 10, you're eventually going to get something.

Jacob: Yeah, Marshall is great. He was a guest on the podcast here, he wrote the foreword for my most recent book, so he's, I mean, he's great. He always has wonderful material that he puts out there. It's great that you guys have teamed up on stuff as well. What if you are, so we're talking about if you're an entry, maybe [00:41:30] junior-level employee, but what if you're a manager? You're maybe more senior, you're responsible for other people, and you want to work on your self-awareness. I guess, first is how do you even know if this is something you need to work on? Because as you mentioned earlier, if you're kind of more high up in the organization, you kind of are, I don't know, you feel like your own little ivory tower, everything that you do is great, and wonderful, and maybe you don't even know that these are things you need to work on. How do you begin [00:42:00] with that?

Dr. Eurich: You're exactly right. There is an inverse relationship between how much power a leader has and how self-aware they are. That's a tough pill for a lot of leaders to swallow. But if you think about what the day-to-day life of a senior executive looks like, it's not surprising. You enter the room, and everyone falls silent. People only want to give you good news, and they don't want to give you bad news, that's not always a function of you, that's simply a function of the role that you're playing. [00:42:30] I have a good friend, who is the CEO of a global real estate company, the day before she went in after she had been appointed, one of her mentors said, "Today [inaudible 00:42:42] Margaret. Tomorrow you're going to be the CEO and everything is going to be different."

She sort of shrugged it off, but she said, "I did, I showed up the next day and the way treated me completely changed." I think for leaders, it's just a matter of saying, "As hard [00:43:00] as I'm working to get feedback, I have to assume that there are lots of things that I'm not hearing that I probably need to hear." The easiest way to start this process is an exercise I talk about on the book called the leader feedback process. Usually, if you're a leader, your direct reports are going to be a valuable, just a gold mine of feedback on all the stuff you're doing, that's getting in your way that you might not know about. But the question then is, " [00:43:30] How do I get this feedback from these people when the problem is that they're not telling me the truth because they don't feel comfortable?"

This is a process that was actually developed at GE initially for new managers. The way you do is you get a facilitator, it's someone like you or me, an HR person, someone who's skilled in group dynamics. So the leader convenes a meeting and tells the team everything we just said, "I want to be the best leader I can possibly be for this team. I know that you all see me probably differently [00:44:00] than I see myself, and the goal

of the next two hours is for me to figure out how I can best support you." Then the leader leaves the room. The facilitator then asks the team a series of questions. "What do we already know about this leader? What do we want this leader to know about us? What is something we want this leader to stop doing immediately or to start doing that they're not doing, or is something that's working that we want them to continue?"

So the facilitator leads the conversation, writes down [00:44:30] all of the answers on a flip chart, and the idea there is there has to be a pact, a blood oath that no matter what happens, no one will reveal who said what, and that's where the safety to tell the truth comes in. Then, the leader comes back and with the facilitator's help, they actually go through each of those as a team, and the leader is able to immediately address things, they're able to clarify things, they're able to ask for support. It's funny, there are a lot of leaders who have never done [00:45:00] this exercise who say, "This is the single most powerful feedback experience I've ever had in my career."

There are even leaders who have done it once who when they make a commitment to do it yearly, or biyearly, it continues to build their self-awareness. Again, that's not going to take you from zero to 100 in self-awareness, but hopefully it's something concrete where if you have the help of a facilitator you can really get some great information.

Jacob: What do you do if you work [00:45:30] for a manager that is not self-aware, completely delusional, as you talk about in your book? I hear so many stories of this, and I'm sure you do as well, you can't just go up to that manager and say, "Hey, you know what? You're not very self-aware, you need to work on this stuff." Because chances are that's not going to be a conversation that goes well. The manager doesn't know that they're not self-aware, because they don't do any of these exercises. How do you start the process to make [00:46:00] your manager more self-aware? You drop subtle hints kind of like what do you do?

Dr. Eurich: Let's look at another type example that I think illustrates the point I'm about to make. I think probably everyone in their life, at some point, has dated someone that they wanted to change. It's like, "Oh, this person would be a really great partner, but they're just such a jerk." Or like, "Oh, they just have the worst fashion sense." Whatever it is you want to change about them. The question I ask is, "How did that [00:46:30] work out for you?" 99% of the time the answer is, "Well, I wasn't able to change them. I spent a lot of energy, and time, sort of energy I could be spending on something else trying to change this person when they didn't want to change. That was something that had no outcome in a positive way."

By the same token, I believe that it is not our job to make other people more self-aware. Now, actually, it is my job, [00:47:00] Tasha's job, that's what I get hired to do. But if I'm somebody working for a manager who is not self-aware, that weight, I shouldn't put that on myself. There are a lot of reasons for it. The first reason is that it is very career-limiting if you approach them the wrong way, it can backfire, it can hurt you, it can hurt your success and your promotability. Another is, they might have every understanding of their behavior, and they're just being a jerk. I call these people aware [00:47:30] don't care. They know exactly what they're doing, but there's no reason for them to change.

Another possible scenario is that they are just a lost cause, no matter what you say to this person, even if you say it skillfully, they're not going to change. What I tell people to do is take a step back from that, and release yourself from the burden of trying to change this person. Instead, work on your own self-awareness. There are a lot of techniques, and [00:48:00] I talk about them in the book, but to figure out how you can relate to this person in a way that they're not going to drain your energy, or your happiness, or your ability to do your job. I would even encourage you to focus on how can I control things in myself to make this a better relationship?

One example I give in the book is something I call the laugh track. It was actually a tool that I invented out of pure desperation. I was working for a CEO who really took pleasure [00:48:30] in bringing people to his office and making them cry.

Jacob: Oh, my God. This sounds terrible.

Dr. Eurich: I realized one day, I've got to figure out a different way to deal with this person. What I remembered, I don't know if you've ever watched The Mary Tyler Moore Show, I'm probably dating myself a little bit.

Jacob: I have seen it, yes.

Dr. Eurich: Perfect. So Lou Grant, Ed Asner's character, he was the meanest jerk. He was so mean to Mary, the main character. But what happened was, because there was a laugh track [00:49:00] behind everyone of his snide, ridiculous comments, it became funny. Sometimes it even was, it was endearing the things he said. What I started to do when I was meeting with this CEO was, if he would say something that I knew was pointedly designed to make me upset, I would literally imagine a laugh track around him. Sometimes it would just snap me out of it, but other times I was actually able to see him as a human being a little bit more. I had more control over my own reactions. [00:49:30] That's what I would ... it's a very, very long answer. But I would encourage people to think about that instead.

Jacob: It's really interesting that you say don't try to change the other person, because I think a lot of times that's exactly what we try to do in our relationships, inside of our organizations, we say we don't like that we're working for somebody and we try to change them. But it sounds like your advice is, in that kind of a situation, focus more on yourself instead of the other person.

Dr. Eurich: That's it. I would even be careful even if they ask [00:50:00] you for feedback. I would be very, very careful. What you want to make sure of is that they are willing to hear an answer that they might not like. I think if that's the case, if they ask you one day, hallelujah, this is your opportunity. But what you said is exactly right, which is we can't create those opportunities, we have to figure out a way to live without them.

Jacob: I want to talk about some of the other exercises, and maybe some tips that listeners can focus on to become more self-aware. You [00:50:30] talked about some of them. You talked about Ben Franklin in the book as well. I know Ben Franklin used to do his assets

and liabilities exercise, where I can't remember how often he did this, but he would write down his strengths and his weaknesses to get kind of a balance sheet of his character or his virtue. I don't know if you recommend people doing that on a regular basis. You also talked about one called zoom in, zoom out, which I thought was great. Maybe you can talk about those.

Dr. Eurich: Let's go to Ben Franklin, [00:51:00] who I have deemed America's first unicorn for many reasons. We don't hear a lot about his early failures, but he stumbled around at life and really was not successful until the time that he made a commitment to outline what his virtues were, the principles that he wanted to live his life by, and then very honestly track them. He did, what you said is true, he had a notebook where he had his 13 virtues listed, and every day he would make a check [00:51:30] if he had lived to that virtue, and he would leave a blank if he hadn't. What he was doing was creating a daily ritual, that didn't take very much time, that allowed him to reflect on his behavior.

We saw the same thing with our unicorns, it was actually kind of uncanny. Essentially what every unicorn, all 50 of them, in some way did was at the end of the day, they spent five minutes tops thinking about how the day had gone. The questions they asked themselves were things [00:52:00] like, "What went well today? What didn't go so well today? What can I do to be smarter tomorrow?" It's on your commutes, it's while you're laying in bed if you can't sleep. It's just finding a couple of minutes. That's what we named the daily check-in. It's something that's so easy. Most people think that becoming self-aware requires this tortuous self-analysis and self-examination. But what we found with our unicorns was that it's little exercises like that that create [00:52:30] small insight, and just build up and create these amazing, huge transformations over time. That is the daily check-in.

Jacob: I want to stop you real quick because I think that's a really awesome exercise. To start with that, would you put down then your ... I guess first you need to identify your virtues, or kind of the things that you stand for and the things that you want to practice every day, whether that's 10 things or five things. I don't know, love, compassion, so that would be the first step, right?

Dr. Eurich: [00:53:00] Yes. I think for each person it's what are the things that you want to keep track of? For the folks how are listening to this, who are Marshall Goldsmith devotees, he talks about this in his book Triggers, which I would absolutely recommend to anyone. But is this idea that, "What are the things I'm trying to be better at?" For me it's, am I connecting with my mom every day? Am I calling her? Am I texting her? Am I not getting angry about things that don't matter? Am I being-

Jacob: That's a big one for me.

Dr. Eurich: As generous as I can be? Exactly.

Jacob: [00:53:30] I'm trying to work, for me, I'm trying to work on being less critical about things, trying to not get upset about things that don't matter. Trying to focus ... putting things into perspective, right? When you have a job, you do a lot of speaking. If you

don't get a gig, you might get upset. If you get bad feedback on something, you might get upset. But, the important thing is your family, you're spending time with them. I try to work on that stuff, that's not [00:54:00] easy for me.

Dr. Eurich: You're absolutely right is you have to almost force yourself to have that perspective. That's what I think is so helpful about this exercise. There is actually an app, it's called Impact Yourself Daily, that allows you to put in, and I think you can put in as many daily goals as you want, and then every day it allows you to give yourself a score on it.

Jacob: Really? What is it called again?

Dr. Eurich: It's called, I turned my phone off, I [00:54:30] think it's Impact Yourself Daily.

Jacob: Interesting.

Dr. Eurich: It's not the most amazing technological app, but it does what it needs to. What I have been doing lately, although I've fallen off the wagon a little bit, truthfully, is I have a very close friend, and every day we send each other a snapshot of the screen to show that we've done it. So not only am I putting that on myself, I know that there's somebody who's going to say, "Hey, I didn't get your questions today. What's going on?" It's just [00:55:00] a really nice way to create habits around that self-reflection, and making sure that you're living the life that you want to be living.

Jacob: Very cool. I'm going to check that one out. Okay, so you put down these virtues, and then do you do the strengths and weaknesses on a regular basis as well?

Dr. Eurich: You know, here's what I would say, actually. There is no wrong way to track those types of things. I think for me personally, it's really helpful to do it daily and very specifically. [00:55:30] But there might be other people who would prefer to take a step back every month and say, "Hey, these are the three weaknesses that I'm trying to address. How am I doing?" Or "These are the three strengths that I'm trying to hone and use more, how am I doing?" What I would tell people, and I tell this to my coach and clients is that sometimes it's trial and error. It's saying, "Hey, this sounds like it might work. I'm going to try it for a month. But I'm not going to give up too quickly. I'm going to give it a good month. If it works, I'll keep doing it, and if it doesn't, I'll try something else."

Jacob: [00:56:00] I like it. All right. That's a great practice. Then maybe you can share the zoom in, zoom out and any others actually that you want to share that are helpful.

Dr. Eurich: Zoom in, zoom out comes in handy when we are usually upset about something. Just as a theoretical example. Maybe you're on a plane, and they abruptly cancel the flight, and then you have to sit in the line, the customer service line for two hours. Then when you finally get to talk to the agent, all you want to do is just yell [00:56:30] and scream at them. Everyone's probably been in that situation. The idea of zoom in, zoom out is to give us perspective, a reminder that we are not in fact the center of the world when we need it most. The next time you find yourself getting very, very upset, and another person is involved somehow. Here's what you do.

The first thing you do is you zoom in on how you're feeling. This is just a mental exercise obviously. "Okay, I'm feeling incredibly frustrated that my flight was canceled. I'm feeling [00:57:00] tired. I'm feeling hungry because I haven't eaten for eight hours. Okay, fine." The next thing I do is zoom out and zoom in on the other person and I think. "What is this person going through right now?" If I hadn't taken a second to do that, I wouldn't have realized maybe that, "Oh my gosh, this person has had to talk to 250 irate customers and they're probably having a worst day than I am." By being able to do that just for a split second in that moment, it's going to change [00:57:30] my interaction with that other person.

I think the trigger is "I am so mad, I want to punch a wall." Or "I never want to talk to this person again." Whenever we feel that way, that's a great opportunity to zoom in, zoom out, get more control over our reaction, be more rational, and not erode our relationship with the person we're trying to work with.

Jacob: Any other techniques or tactics you recommend that we try?

Dr. Eurich: There are several [00:58:00] others, but I think these are the stickiest, easiest ones to describe, just in a quick podcast.

Jacob: Got it. I know we have just a couple minutes left before we wrap up, maybe one or two minutes. Maybe we could look at just briefly some of the things to look out for. You talked about alarm clock events, and you also talked about blind spots. Maybe you can pick whichever one you think is more important. Is it the blind spots to look out for or is it the alarm clock events?

Dr. Eurich: [00:58:30] Again, the blind spots I think require ... there's a lot to that. To me, thinking about alarm clocks events is a great way to maybe conclude this conversation. If we just take a giant [inaudible 00:58:42] back, and we look at what our unicorns taught us, part of the question is, "How do I create these events in my life that will give me insight? I don't want to have to wait until some huge blow up fight to learn that I am not showing up in the relationship in the way I should as an example." [00:59:00] But what we found was, when we asked our unicorns, "What are the key moments in your life where you have experienced really dramatic improvements in your self-awareness?"

We actually found three categories of events, and we named these alarm clock events. The answers weren't actually what we thought. The first category is what we would imagine, which is, we named it earthquake events. Something that happens in your life that is so big, it turns your entire world around. It's getting [00:59:30] diagnosed with a serious illness, having a family member or friend get diagnosed with a serious illness. Divorce, job loss, something really, really traumatic.

But what was interesting about that is, yes, that was an important type of event, but there were two other type of events that were even more common and frequent that led to insight. The second is something we named new roles and new rules. Anytime we are in a new situation, we are usually [01:00:00] in a place where we can see ourselves a little bit more objectively, or we can pay a little bit more attention. An example would

be going off to college for the first time, or starting a job in a new company, or even getting a new job within the same company. Those are just ripe moments for doing a little bit more work on your self-awareness.

But last, this was actually the most common type of alarm clock event, it was something we named everyday insights. A comment from a colleague [01:00:30] at the end of a meeting that made me say, "Oh my gosh, I never thought about that before about myself." Or doing a personality assessment like we were talking about earlier with the HR department. The reason I think that's so important, and the reason it's worth stating is we shouldn't be waiting for events to transform our self-awareness. We should waking up every single day with a curiosity and a commitment to deepen and broaden our self-knowledge. This idea that [01:01:00] if I make a tiny improvement every day, you know, Ben Franklin style, if I'm keeping track of these things, I'm going to, over the course of months, and years, and decades, be able to make just phenomenal improvements, by and large, that's actually how our unicorns got there.

Jacob: And you see dramatic impact in your work life, your personal life, all around. I mean, I love the book and a lot of those insights and stories that you shared. I know we're at the end of the podcast, we didn't even talk about how this [01:01:30] relates to empathy. There is so much more, I think, that ties into this. So I definitely recommend people check out the book. But to wrap up, I have just a couple of rapid fire questions for you about yourself, just fun questions.

Dr. Eurich: Oh, boy. Okay.

Jacob: The first one is what's the most embarrassing moment you had at work?

Dr. Eurich: Oh, my gosh. There are so many to choose from. Probably if I've bombed a keynote. There have been a couple keynotes where I've just totally bombed it, for some reason didn't connect with the audience, and then I think about it for years afterwards.

Jacob: Oh my [01:02:00] goodness. Okay. You had that situation where you left and they were like, "Yeah, that was the worst keynote we've ever had. You're never coming back here."

Dr. Eurich: You know, it's funny. I've never heard that, but I knew it. Every speaker has that. I think part of it is just extending ourselves a little bit of grace.

Jacob: Yeah, it happens. If you were a super hero who would you be?

Dr. Eurich: Wonder Woman. I want to be exactly like her in every way.

Jacob: What's a book that you recommend? Could be business or non-business.

Dr. Eurich: Oh gosh, a book that I recommend, actually [01:02:30] The Great Gatsby is probably my favorite book of all time.

Jacob: That is a great book. If you were doing a different career, what do you think you would've ended up doing?

Dr. Eurich: This is easy, my backup career for the moments that I feel like really frustrated with something in my day job is that I would become a realtor.

Jacob: Oh my good- ... a realtor? All right, all right, that's a good backup.

Dr. Eurich: Yeah, it's the same. You're doing deals, it's psychology, it's a lot of the same stuff.

Jacob: Yeah, yeah, for sure. If you could have dinner with anybody in the world, who would you have dinner with?

Dr. Eurich: [01:03:00] Abraham Lincoln.

Jacob: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

Dr. Eurich: New York City.

Jacob: And last two questions for you. If you could get rid of one workplace practice in organizations around the world, what would you get rid of?

Dr. Eurich: Policies.

Jacob: Yeah, I hear that a lot actually. Last one, if you could implement one workplace practice in organizations around the world, what would you implement?

Dr. Eurich: I would make every leader 80% [01:03:30] more self-aware, and the world would change.

Jacob: I like it, I think that's a great way to wrap up. Where can people go to learn more about you, to find your book, anything that you want to mention for people to connect with?

Dr. Eurich: Sure. If they want to learn more about the book, they can go to insight-book.com. If you've listened to this and you're kind of curious about, "How self-aware am I really?" We have this fun, it's really short and easy, it's called The Insight Quiz. You answer 14 [01:04:00] questions about yourself, you send a survey to someone who knows you well, who answers the same 14 questions, and you get a report that gives you a high level picture of your internal and external self-awareness. We've had, I think, we're almost 100,000 people that have taken it at this point. So they could go to insight-quiz.com

Jacob: Well, thanks for taking time out of your day to speak with me. I really appreciate it.

Dr. Eurich: Thank you so much, it was a pleasure.

Jacob:

Yeah, likewise. Thanks, everyone, for tuning in to this week's episode of the podcast. Make sure to check [01:04:30] out Dr. Tasha Eurich's new book, *Insight*. It's available wherever books are sold. I will see you guys next week.