Cultivating Awareness of Self

Developing self awareness is the necessary beginning to developing skillful ways to respond to situations. Until you know how you are actually reacting, you can’t adapt. (Ultimately you want to develop flexible ways to respond to situations and a broad behavioral palette that allows you to authentically engage in difficult situations and encourage others to engage as well.)

Mindfulness practice is a valuable process for cultivating awareness of self. This awareness training happens both on the meditation cushion and in everyday life.

To start, try simply noticing what is going on in your body. Do you feel open and relaxed or heavy and tight? How is your breathing? Noticing physical cues can help you recognize emotions.

Another way to practice is “noting” your feelings. As emotions flow, note them and label them. You might note that you are anxious, angry, reassured. Do this without judgment or attachment. Practice this in different situations, so you start to recognize how you are reacting and your personal comfort level.