

# SITUATIONAL AWARENESS IN THE WORKPLACE



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# Learning objectives

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**At the end of this presentation, you will:**

1

- Understand the four domains of emotional intelligence – self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.

2

- Understand the three stages of situational awareness – information gathering, understanding information, and anticipation.

3

- Understand how to use and direct your senses to train for observation.

4

- Understand how to improve your SA in the workplace.

***“Awareness is a key ingredient in success.  
If you have it, teach it,  
if you lack it, seek it.”***

Michael B. Kitson

Founder of the Kitson Creative

Co-author of the Real Life Habits for Success®

Smoke Signals from the Universe, A Path to Fulfillment at Work.

# *What is situational awareness*

Knowing what is going on around us:

Draw a mental map

- Where are you?
- What surrounds you?
- What challenges lie ahead?

See clearly what is happening and develop an effective coping plan.

# Before situational awareness

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# Emotional intelligence

# Emotional intelligence

First appeared in 1964

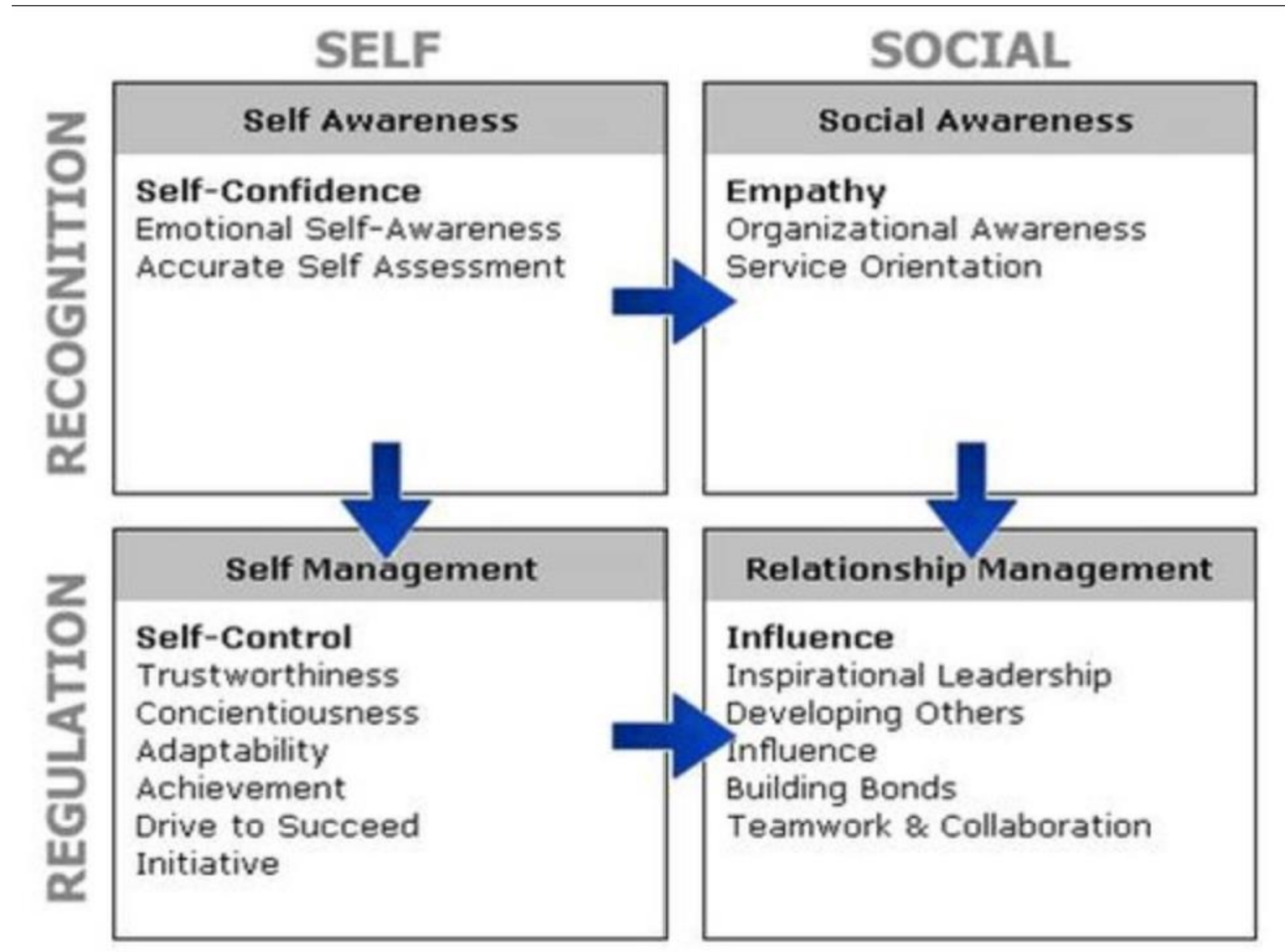
Gained popularity in 1995

*Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate emotions.

Some researchers suggest that emotional intelligence can be learned and strengthened, while others claim it is an inborn characteristic.







# Building emotional intelligence

- Learn the skills
- Apply the knowledge
- Stress – overrides the best intentions
- Permanently change the behavior

# Self-management

- Control impulsive feelings
- Manage your emotions
- Take initiative
- Keep commitments
- Adapt to changes

# Self-awareness

Recognize your own emotions

- Affecting your thoughts
- Affecting your behavior
- Know your strength
- Know your weakness

Self-confidence

# Social awareness

- Empathy
- Understanding emotions, needs, and concerns of other people
- Pick up on emotional cues
- Feel comfortable socially
- Recognize the power dynamics in a group or organization.

# Relationship management

- Develop and maintain good relationships
- Communicate clearly
- Inspire and influence others
- Work well in a team
- Manage conflict

# Situational awareness

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# How to develop situational awareness

Determine where you are mentally

Bring your mind back to the present

Perceive all factors at this precise moment

- How do I feel right now?
- What influences this emotional state?
- Is there a threat (physical, mental, emotional)?
- What hope do I have?



# Perceive

In order to perceive one must be vigilant  
Don't get trapped in old behaviors

Hear what you want to hear – see what you want to see

Focus on one thing – missing the big picture

Walking and texting reduces interpretation of visual clues by 48.3%

# Control

Process information to understand the meaning

Interpret the information to make sense of it –  
recognize key patterns

Environmental changes – understand the  
connections between people, places and things

Sometimes you need to dig into your past to  
break old schemes

# Evaluate

Focused on the future – combine objective data with intuition

Take note of the environment

Anticipate its trajectory

Act accordingly

# Situational awareness and your senses

Senses must be turned on

Senses must be tuned in

Your brain gives you the whole picture, but you only take in certain stimuli while ignoring others

e.g. How many times have you walked past your car  
but don't remember your license plate number when  
someone asks?

To strengthen situational awareness, you must be truly intentional; consciously utilize and direct all your senses.

# Senses

## Sight

- Eyes don't operate like cameras
- Brain ignores things in our environment
- Train ourselves to look for things we'd normally miss

## Sound

- More essential
- Attuned to our surroundings
- Brain's first response system
- Trigger a visceral emotional response

## Smell

- Little respect and less attention
- Connects directly to brain
- Smell-induced memories
- Identify threats – smoke, gas, etc.

# Taste

# Touch

Although incredibly enriching to live more mindfully and to be fully immersed in experiences, these senses do not have much purpose in Situational Awareness.

# Mastering situational awareness

- Learning how to:
  - Observe
  - Interpret
  - Remember



# Observe - expand and enhance your vision

- Eliminate tunnel vision
- Intentionally look for details in your environment

## **From the Boy Scout Field Book:**

Learn to scan the ground in front of you...Let our eyes roam slowly in a half-circle from right to left over a narrow strip of land directly before you. Then sweep left to right over the ground further away.

# Barriers to situational awareness

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Cognitive overload

Emotional overload

# Barriers to situational awareness

## Cognitive overload

- Distractions
- Focus on single stimulus
  - One prevails
  - One is a blur

Biased perception –  
ignore different dangers

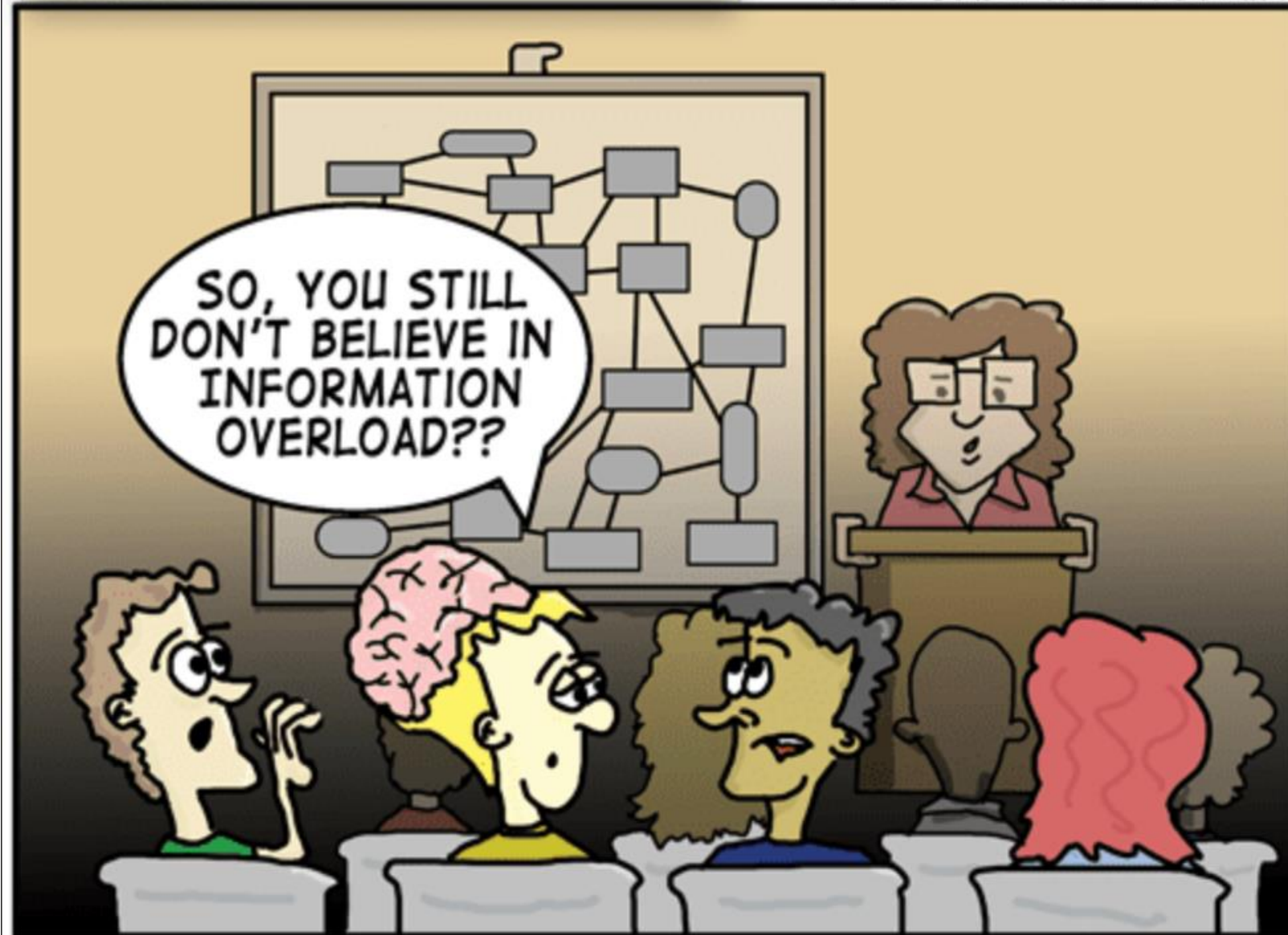
## Emotional overload

- Expectation
- Lose sight of directions that vary
- Decreased EI
- Stress

**BEARMAN**

2-9-11-Bearman-Cartoon-Information-Overload

IF I ONLY HAD A BRAIN



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# Pathway to situational awareness

- Embrace a serene attitude
- Keep an attentive but relaxed gaze
- Discretely distance yourself from the reality you are evaluating

Reduced stress allows:

- Broader perception
- Broader perspective
- Viable plan of action



# Situational awareness safety tips for the workplace



# Adopt a structured situational awareness framework

- Observe the situation
  - Orient yourself to the reality of your surroundings
  - Eliminating your assumptions and biases
  - Decide what you're going to do
  - Act confidently with your ongoing awareness
- 
- **The SLAM technique**



# The SLAM technique

- Stop and think before proceeding
- Look around your work environment for safety hazards
- Analyze the risks present and whether you're prepared for them
- Manage the situation, and if necessary, halt work until you can mitigate the risks

Incorporate it into situational awareness training so your employees have practice with the method

# Stay focused

- Eliminate distractions
- Multitasking leads to errors that may have serious consequences
  - A mistake on a spreadsheet may be caught and corrected
  - Power tools and heavy equipment don't have an undo button

# Promote focus in the workplace

- Limit electronic device usage
- Discourage multitasking
- Manage disruptions:
  - Establish distraction-free zones where only supervisors have the authority to interrupt the work process

# Watch for fatigue

- Fatigue is a serious hazard that can cause slower reaction times, impaired judgment, and difficulty concentrating
  - At best, fatigue can lead to near misses that wake you right up
  - At worst, it can cause accidents involving physical and/or financial damages
- Maintain a positive safety culture that values situational awareness
- Adopt safety as one of your company's core values, and act accordingly
- Weave safety into every aspect of employee training
- Promote company wide buy-in
- Develop messaging as proactive rather than reactive

# Be vigilant

- Identify subtle hazards
- No one is more familiar with your workplace than your employees
- Empower your frontline workers

It's better to investigate a potential risk and discover it was nothing than to ignore it and let it grow into a serious hazard.

# Encourage clear and thorough communication

- Communicate clearly and thoroughly
- Access to emergency notifications
- Report hazards to the right personnel

# Use visual and auditory signaling devices

- Flashing lights on heavy machinery when it's in operation
- Clear, loud beeping when vehicles such as trucks or forklifts are backing up
- Alarms when doors aren't securely closed
- Brightly colored barriers, cones, or fences around non-obvious hazards like oil slicks, ice, or chemical spills



# Have an exit strategy

- Clear directions to emergency exits
- Plan of action if something goes wrong
- Detecting and understanding potential hazards

Risk intelligence bridges this gap, evaluating realistic outcomes and responding to environmental dangers

# Practice and reinforce situational awareness

- Second nature
- Act on instinct
- Monthly safety topic
- Periodic situational awareness training
- Use tabletop exercises
- Brief situational awareness safety moments
- Provide thorough feedback
- Promote a vigilant and proactive safety culture

# Foster workplace safety with strong situational awareness

- Full of potential threats
- Many of them are inconsequential
- Prevent small issues from becoming real problems; promote situational awareness
- Train employees to detect hazards in the workplace, understand the risks, and handle them before they become imminent threats
- A hazard-free environment might not be possible
- When you make situational awareness a key part of your company's safety culture, you can be confident your employees are looking out for each others' well-being



# Thank you

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