

Awareness

To be aware is to be open, curious and ready for the new. A person who is aware is likely to appreciate a variety of possibilities and attitudes, and to embrace novelty. And yet a person who is aware is aware of this or that in particular, and is inevitably unaware of certain other things, that awareness precludes.

Examples

1 Walking

When I walk around the track in the morning, I am usually unaware that I am walking. Without awareness I just start moving around the track. I don't **know** that I am unaware—because I am unaware—until something happens that calls my attention to the fact that I was/am unaware. Perhaps I pass someone, perhaps I straighten and adjust my posture, perhaps I feel a twinge from last year's hamstring. When one of these things happens, I am suddenly made aware that I am walking. I begin to take stock of myself and my environment. I become very aware of what I am and where I am. After a while the in and out drama of awareness fades. I stop counting my steps. I stop noticing the wall TV as I pass it in my circuits. I become myself walking rather than myself being aware of myself walking. I am unaware until something makes me aware.

2 Detective work

Awareness is a prized virtue among detectives. In the TV show *Colombo*, Monk (the detective) is forever playing the dummy—scruffy raincoat, loosely tied necktie, stinky cigar—but as he wanders through the Bel Air mansion, where the murder took place, he is aware of every clue. Unlike the reporters milling around the crime scene, or the cops busy taking witness reports, Monk spots a negligible acid stain in the corner of a rug, and stores it in his mind. He is aware, doubtless without fully knowing it, that the stain may enter some future forensic calculation, and may convict the jealous heiress. What *will* happen is not the business of Monk's awareness at this moment, but what *may* happen. His awareness is a keyed up anticipation, and it scours the room without knowing it is doing it.