

Ep #5: Self-Awareness: The Secret to Changing Your Life



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Kelle Cobble & Nina Lynch

Ep #5: Self-Awareness: The Secret to Changing Your Life

Kelle: Calling all the smart driven women out there.

Nina: Yes, today prepare to look at your life through a new lens as we show you how strengthening your self-awareness muscle and repping it like bicep curls is your secret weapon to getting out of your own way. Finding calm and balance and actually enjoying the life you work so hard to create.

Kelle: Okay, hang on, Nina, because self-awareness, it just sounds so basic. There's got to be a sexier secret to all of this.

Nina: I know, right, Kel, it is super basic, but that's kind of like a lot of the things we talk about.

Kelle: Yeah, okay, self-awareness is a simple concept, we get it. But it's not an easy concept to actually execute on and implement in your life.

Nina: That's where we come in. Listen in as we explore the connection between self-awareness and ambition and share practical tools and exercises to help you uplevel your self-awareness.

Let's get started. This is *Ambitious-Ish*.

Burnout? Check. Daily overwhelm? Check. Resentment rash, stress, and a complete lack of well-being? Check, check, check! You're not alone. We're your hosts, Kelle & Nina, and we are here to help you feel calm, balanced, and empowered so you can redefine success, make choices that feel authentic, and ACTUALLY enjoy the life you work so hard to create. You ready? Let's go.

Kelle: Hey, I'm Kelle.

Nina: And I'm Nina, and we are surrounded by our farty fur babies today, both of us. Please meet Coco and Smokey.

Kelle: And Moo is here, yeah.

Nina: Moo is in the house. You've got to explain who moo is.

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Kelle: Moo is a res dog. She was found on the side of the road in Southern Utah, and she kind of looks like a cow so the kids wanted to name her Moo. She's like a baby, tiny cow. She's like a 30 pound cow.

Nina: A 30 pound cow, but she doesn't have a personality or the energy of a cow. She's so funny. And then Coco and Smokey are my chocolate labs. Yeah, we have twin chocolates over here. Anyway, it's a stinky one.

Kelle: Those labs, they just stink up the whole place.

Nina: They stink.

Kelle: Today we're talking all about awareness and how paying attention to yourself differently can change your life. So what even is awareness? What does this mean?

Nina: Yeah, awareness, in a nutshell, is about being the silent watcher, the silent witness or observer of your thoughts and behaviors so you can create intention with them. That's what's so key. We practice awareness so we can be more intentional in our lives, to live life with purpose on purpose.

Kelle: Yeah, we talk a lot about awareness because awareness is the first step in any long term change process. We cannot change something when we don't even notice it.

Nina: We all know people who have zero self-awareness. They don't understand themselves or why people respond the way they do to them. They tend to complain about things a lot, blame others for their circumstances. It's a really disempowering way to show up in the world. So what does it look like to actually be aware?

Kelle: Awareness is what we call becoming the watcher. The watcher brings us into awareness to observe what's happening in the present moment. So the watcher is a practice that helps us check in to see what we're doing from habit on autopilot, to check-in on our thoughts, on our ways of feeling, on our actions and on our behaviors.

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Nina: So notice being a watcher isn't only about noticing your behaviors and actions, like how many JUSTIN'S peanut butter cups you've eaten, I personally lose count, or how many glasses of wine you've had or that you were a little defensive this morning in that meeting with the CEO.

Kelle: It's also about noticing your feelings and thoughts, so the emotions in your body in any given moment, and the thoughts that you think that fire up those emotions.

Nina: Let's take a closer look here. Let's have some fun. Let us ask you a few questions.

Kelle: Okay, fun, let's ask each other and answer. And then the listeners can answer for themselves too, okay?

Nina: Okay, cool.

Kelle: Alright. I'm going to ask you first. Nina, tell us, what does your toothpaste taste like?

Nina: So this is a funny one. I just switched toothpastes. So I went from a pasty kind of all natural Whole Foods type brand toothpaste. I was all out, and I went and grabbed another tube from our closet, and it was one of the Crest type toothpastes. And I feel I have to check the sugar content in the toothpaste because it is so sweet. It is so mind-blowingly minty and it's like a party in your mouth. It's shockingly bubbly and explosive.

Kelle: Wow, party.

Nina: It's a party.

Kelle: Okay, that was not the answer I was expecting.

Nina: I know. It's a funny question for me right now. Anyway, okay, Kel, name three things you eat almost every day without fail.

Kelle: Oh man. Well, everyone who knows me knows that I start with matcha first thing in the morning. I go to bed thinking about my matcha and I just cannot

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wait to have it in the morning. So that's number one. The second, I'm eating a lot of this Immi ramen right now that I found on Instagram. It's this pumpkin seed protein ramen. It's ridiculous. I think it's so good. So that's what I eat for lunch and then a friend dropped off some girl scout cookies and I don't know what happens, we open a package, and they just evaporate. I don't even know where they go.

Nina: Yeah, it's that time of year.

Kelle: Okay, Nina, what song is stuck in your head all the time?

Nina: This is a funny one for me, especially this time of year we're still finishing up ski season here. So I have UB40, Red, Red Wine in my head almost all the time. It's so funny when I notice it, especially when I'm skiing. This song is just on in the background of my day. I don't know. It's just my vibe. It's my ski vibe. I don't know. So if you see me out there, smile and laugh with me because you know what's going on in my head.

Kelle: I love it. I love that.

Nina: Okay, Kelle, what color was the sky this morning when you woke up or walked the kids to school?

Kelle: You know what's interesting? I had an appointment out in Heber at 7:30 and I was driving, and I never drive that way and it was the most gorgeous sunrise. It was just bright oranges, and the sun wasn't quite up yet, so it was a good one. Okay, Nina, when you're in your car, how does it smell?

Nina: Okay, this is a funny one right now too. My car smells like beef jerky, ski wax and wet dogs right now. Come on, you want to ride somewhere? Hop in.

Kelle: Yeah, okay, well, that's fun.

Nina: Yeah. Okay, Kel, what about you, what are your top three feelings lately on a daily basis, in a general sense?

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Kelle: Well it's spring now and so I feel ready. I love this thing about just waking up ready and that's kind of me. I'm a morning person. Like I just said, I love getting my matcha in the morning. So I wake up and go get my matcha. I'm ready. The second is disconnected because it is winter and it's not my favorite season, and I tend to hibernate a little bit. And I haven't been feeling that good this winter. So there's a few reasons I just feel a little disconnected. And the third is, annoyed that it's still winter.

Nina: Yeah, that's singing to me, yeah, totally.

Kelle: Especially today when it's snowing again. Okay, Nina, here, when you wake up in the morning, what's the first thing you notice?

Nina: Right now if I'm being honest, I notice what isn't there and what hasn't been for a long time. And then I quickly shift, and this is my practice, to what I do have and how grateful I am. More on that later. Kel, what thoughts do you find yourself thinking on repeat, like that song that was stuck in my head, what thoughts do you find yourself thinking on repeat?

Kelle: An unintentional thought that I've been working, and we'll get into what unintentional thoughts are at some point. But my default thinking is, I have a lot going on and another one is some version of, I cannot wait for winter to be over with.

Nina: Resisting the snow, yeah, totally.

Kelle: Yes, I'm done, can you tell?

Nina: Yes.

Kelle: Nina, what do you believe about yourself without giving this question too much thought?

Nina: I'm right where I need to be. That just fell out of me, yeah.

Kelle: Yeah, okay, so this is awareness. This is what we're doing, we're just checking in on awareness. Alright, well, that was so fun. This is a taste of what

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awareness is all about. With the watcher, we start by engaging all five senses in any given moment during the day.

Nina: Now that I actually realized that my car smells like beef jerky, wet dogs, and ski wax. The experience of driving becomes what I make of it, appealing or not. I'm no longer on literal autopilot, driving through ski town traffic at rush hour, not paying attention to anything, arriving at Trader Joe's having no idea how I got there. Actually, given what my car smells like, maybe I do want to be on autopilot.

But let's be real, when I'm moving my 11 and 13 year old around, I want to be present for them, smells, and all. That's part of being present and creating connection. So noticing that I'm disconnected and on autopilot opens me up to creating more connection and it all starts with becoming the watcher.

Kelle: Alright, let's get a little more clear on how to practice the watcher. So as a watcher, we're anchored in our bodies, being aware of where our feet are. So just noticing everything, like any other muscle, you develop awareness by practicing so it's a skill we can cultivate. So for the watcher, the example that we use is brushing your teeth. So you want to pick something that you do that's very mundane for at least a couple of times a day, every day.

So we pick brushing teeth as a client example that we use all the time. And the way that we describe this to our clients is, notice when you're squeezing the tube of paste onto your brush. How does it feel in your hands? Can you smell anything? How does it feel when you're brushing your teeth versus brushing your gums? How do you know when you're done? So just noticing everything. What are the thoughts that you're having while brushing your teeth or maybe what do you want to do?

So some of our clients want to check their schedule or walk around the house and grab their phone because they can't find it or whatever. And just noticing that tendency to try to do something else besides what you're doing in the moment.

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Nina: Yeah, we take this a step further and use the watcher with not just our actions and behaviors, but with our thoughts and feelings. And so let's get really basic here, super basic, what is a thought? Thoughts are sentences in your brain and coaching is all about creating change from the inside out. It's rooted in what we call cognitive behavior theory. And it's the practice of becoming aware of what's going on in your brain, why, and learning what to do with it.

And this goes back to the one simple truth of our coaching practice, which is, your thoughts, your mindset, your thinking patterns are creating all of your results, your outcomes right now. And by becoming aware of your own unique thinking patterns is where we begin to change your life.

Kelle: Exactly. It's easy to stay on autopilot and react to what's happening automatically from habit. It's much harder to slow your roll, watch your brain, notice your old patterns, and make the decision to show up differently.

Nina: Exactly. Just to go full nerd for a moment and talk some brain science. We have on average something like 60,000 to 70,000 thoughts a day and 95% or more are automatic, repeat, recycled thoughts.

Kelle: That's a bit frightening when you think about it. We're only using our conscious mind less than 5% of the time.

Nina: Yeah, this is why willpower doesn't work if you're trying to change a habit, by the way.

Kelle: Willpower is that 5% of being conscious. So when you do things by habit, you're doing them automatically, it's mindless. It takes more intentionality, attention, and repetition to unwind habits, but that's a whole another topic that we'll get into.

Nina: This is where we start taking stock, to take inventory of the thoughts and feelings driving our actions, to check-in to see what we do from habit and autopilot. And then decide if you want to change those thoughts, ways of feeling and actions, putting on your lab coat and observing.

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Kelle: Yeah. If you're wondering why you're not taking action to change parts of your life or get closer to reaching your goals, practicing awareness is your starting point, hands down. Before you can take thoughtful, intentional action in the world, you need to become aware of your thoughts and feelings first so you can harness them for the highest good.

Nina: And if you're anything like us, here are some thoughts that your brain may be serving you on repeat. Everyone needs something from me. My list is never ending. My life is complete chaos. Chaos is a big one for our clients, the C word. I have to, I don't have a choice. I just can't win. It's been a long day. I deserve this glass of wine or this cookie or whatever it is. These thoughts can feel like facts, but really they're just one optional interpretation your brain is suggesting, how it's labeling the circumstances around you.

Kelle: Your brain isn't designed to create the life you want intentionally. It's designed to keep you safe and stuck where you are.

Nina: You can be the boss of your brain and choose to think thoughts on purpose, that feel more supportive, more useful so you show up as your favorite version of yourself, the version you're proud to be.

Kelle: When you notice your thoughts, you can question them and change them.

Nina: You can change your perspective and the lens you see life through, but you can't change what you don't notice, is our point here.

Kelle: Yeah, exactly, that's why the first step in any long term behavior change is awareness, this is called thought work. It's the practice of becoming aware of how your thinking impacts your emotions, your actions, and the results you create in your life. Do not believe everything your brain tells you.

Nina: Please, you cannot from now forward. Now that you know this, you have to start questioning what your brain is telling you. As you start to practice this, we have to warn you, the watcher can be kind of brutal. It can be super judgmental when it comes into awareness and starts to notice. So just be aware of that as you practice and just bring in some compassion, remind the watcher to do the same.

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Kelle: When you have awareness, life becomes so much more meaningful, purposeful, fulfilling even, and isn't that really what it's all about?

Nina: This is where we start to take back our lives. Move away from old automatic habits, make better decisions, and move towards something that feels better.

Kelle: Yeah, this is where we make changes we want to make. This is where we get to redecide who we are, question those old stories and beliefs about us, unwind un-useful patterns. Patterns like picking up your phone to look at your email for the 100th time in an hour or having that second or third or fourth girl scout cookie. Or having the same argument with your partner or spouse, again, or drinking more than you wanted to.

Nina: It all comes from the same place, from lack of awareness, from not even realizing what you're doing until you're already doing it.

Kelle: Yeah, like that driving example that we talked about before. You're zipping along and before you know it, you parked outside Trader Joe's and you're like, "Uh, how did I even get here," is literal autopilot.

Nina: And it's sort of scary sometimes and that's okay. This is all mindfulness. The watcher practice is a mindfulness practice. That's what awareness is all about. It's about becoming aware and mindful instead of mindless.

Kelle: Alright, let's get into the how tos here. Choose one activity you do every day when you can bring in the watcher. So brushing your teeth, taking a shower, washing the dishes, drinking your coffee. Pick something mundane you typically do mindlessly, you don't even think about it.

Nina: While doing this, bring in all five senses. Notice the sights, smells, sounds, tastes and how it feels. And then notice your thoughts, where your brain takes you, how you feel and take action. Feeling the urge to grab your phone, a podcast, where do your thoughts take you? Mind racing through to-do's, just notice it all. Some clients have never done this before, brushed their teeth without a podcast on or an Airpod in.

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Kelle: Just a side note. We say come back to where your feet are because your body is always in the present moment, so your brain likes to go to the past and the future and everywhere else but your body, your body stays right here right now.

Nina: So to up-level here over the next week, pay attention to your thoughts in response to difficult situations. Take a moment and record what you're thinking and feeling in the moment. Just identify how you feel, no judgment, no criticism, be your own watcher here.

Kelle: I think it's Jon Kabat-Zinn that says. "If you miss the look in your child's eye one day, you've missed it. If you miss the look in your lover's eye the next, you've missed that. If you miss the beauty of sitting under the trees, you've missed that too. If you add that up over many moments and then many days and years, you may wind up missing the most beautiful aspects of your own life. Who tells oneself they don't have any time when really all you've got is time, all you've got is this moment."

Nina: Listen, we've all had those moments of, I'm here, but I'm not here, on your phone at the Little League game, lap glowing at the stoplight. We've got to start practicing being just a little bit more mindful because we benefit in crucial ways.

Kelle: Alright, Nina, let's land the plane here. Mindfulness is a way to break free from being on autopilot. By becoming the watcher and paying attention to our own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, our relationships, and environments without judgment. We wake up to the experience of what's going on around us and within us while it's actually happening. It's about embracing the beauty of mono tasking.

Nina: We credit mindfulness for allowing us to be awake and aware of the magic that's happening around us every day, but don't just take it from us. A growing body of research backs up the profound mind body benefits of being present. So mindfulness techniques like the watcher, breathwork and meditation are some of the best tools we have to manage stress and our other big emotions, improve sleep, and even avoid sickness.

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Kelle: Yeah, and for us and our clients, stress reduction is key, it starts with you. Your emotional stability and calmness in mind is in your hands and will dictate the way that you respond or react to this big, beautiful life you have.

Nina: Alright, cool, but that's all for today, thanks, everyone, see you next time.

Kelle: Alright, see you next time.

Nina: If you enjoyed today's show and don't want to worry about missing an episode, you can follow the show wherever you listen to your podcasts. And if you haven't already, we would really appreciate it if you share the podcast with others who you think would benefit from it, and leave a rating and review to let us know what you think.

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Thank you so much for listening to today's episode of *Ambitious-Ish*.

Nina: If you're ready to align your ambitions with your heart and feel more calm, balanced, and connected, visit <https://www.kelleandnina.com/> for more information about how to work with us and make sure you get on our list.

Kelle: See you in the next episode!