

Reflected Best Self Exercise

Adapted from the University of Michigan

Purpose of the Reflected Best Self

The Reflected Best Self Exercise is designed to help you gain deeper insights into how others perceive you at your best. It provides an opportunity to uncover your unique strengths, understand areas for growth, and explore the impact you have on those around you. This exercise is adaptable and can be customized to meet your goals—whether you want to identify your core strengths, gain clarity on potential career paths, or gather feedback on both your positive attributes and areas to improve.

Outcomes of the Reflected Best Self

By completing the Reflected Best Self Exercise, you will uncover valuable insights into how others perceive your unique strengths, contributions, and potential. This process reveals recurring themes that define your natural talents and values while providing constructive feedback on areas for growth. It offers clarity on how others see your career fit and professional possibilities, helping you align your personal and professional goals with your authentic self.

Ultimately, the exercise enhances self-awareness and confidence, equipping you with the foundation to craft a compelling mission statement, a distinctive value proposition, and a personalized development plan.

In this document, you'll find:

- (1) Process & instructions
- (2) Sample questions
- (3) A sample email template
- (4) Additional resources



PROCESS

(1) Determine your goals

Begin by reflecting on what you hope to gain from this exercise. Are you looking to identify your core strengths, gain clarity on potential career paths, understand how others perceive your impact, or uncover areas for growth? Define your purpose to guide the rest of the process.

(2) Choose 6-8 questions to ask

Select questions that align with your goals. For example, if you want to uncover strengths, choose questions that prompt others to reflect on your positive attributes. Tailor the exercise to meet your needs.

(3) Choose who you will ask

Make a list of ~10+ people to send this survey to. It can be from all areas and times of your life: current coworkers, old coworkers, friends, family, etc.

(4) Solicit feedback

Create the survey in Google Forms or SurveyMonkey and send it to a diverse group of individuals who know you well, such as family, friends, colleagues, and/or mentors. Provide clear instructions, a deadline for responses, and an explanation of what you'll be using this information for and why it's valuable to you. Aim for at least 10 responses.

(5) Review feedback

Compile all responses into a single document for analysis. Look for recurring themes, words, or stories that highlight your strengths. Consider working with a coach for additional clarity in synthesizing the feedback.

(6) Develop your self-reflected portrait

Use the feedback to create a portrait of your best self. Use the feedback to understand how your strengths and values give you a competitive advantage. Identify areas for improvement and strategies to address or mitigate them. Define actionable steps to grow professionally and personally based on the insights. Combine the feedback and analysis to articulate a clear statement of what makes you unique.

(7) Optional: Share results with participants

Since the feedback is anonymous, share the results or key insights with everyone you invited to participate, regardless of whether you know they contributed. Sharing the results of your Reflected Best Self Exercise demonstrates vulnerability, gratitude, and a commitment to growth.

It shows participants their feedback was valued, strengthening relationships and fostering trust. This transparency inspires others, encourages meaningful conversations, and reinforces your credibility as someone dedicated to learning and development.



SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. If you had to describe me in 3 words, what would they be?
2. What do you think I value most or am most passionate about?
3. From knowing me and observing me, what do you think are my greatest talents and strengths (qualities, characteristics, and/or skills)?
 - a. Can you provide any specific examples or anecdotes of me using those talents / strengths / qualities?
4. Please relate a short story or two of when you have seen me at my best. What most impressed you?
5. What are my areas of growth (zones of improvement/ blind spots)?
 - a. *eg. "Mary loves so many things, she gets spread too thin/could be more focused, which would help her to achieve her goals..."*
6. From what you've experienced and noticed about how I interact with people, how would you say I make you / others FEEL?
7. Fill in the blank: I can **always** count on [name] to _____.
8. Fill in the blank: I can **never** count on [name] to _____.
9. During this period of growth, is there anything else you've noticed or want to share that might support me in my process of self-discovery?
10. How have you noticed that I've grown or changed (for better/worse) through the years?
11. If I were an animal, which would I be and why?
12. What are my top 3-5 strengths (qualities, characteristics, and/or skills) and describe why/examples/anecdotes when applicable.
 - a. *eg "One of X's top strengths is her drive / persistence - she follows through on everything she starts, like the time when..."*
13. What problems in the world could use someone like me to help solve them and why?
14. If I had 3 lives/ careers - what would you see me doing in them?
15. Career fit: What could you see me doing, if I could do anything - where I might be happiest/best suited in terms of career?
 - a. *eg. "An academic mentor because X is very supportive and loves to work with children"*
16. Everyone knows this about me... _____
17. My objective next is ____, do you have any connections / advice that would be helpful for me?



SAMPLE EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: [Name] – Best Self Survey – Expires [MM/DD]

Hi [Name],

I hope this finds you well! I'm reaching out to ask for your help with a short, anonymous survey I'm conducting as part of a personal / professional growth exercise.

The survey has [#] questions and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. It will remain open until [MM/DD].

Here's the link: [Insert link]

Why I'm doing this: I'm gathering feedback to better understand my strengths, areas for growth, and common themes that might not be apparent to me. Your input will help me use these insights intentionally in my personal and professional life.

Why you: I selected you because I value your perspective and feel you know me well. Your honest, constructive feedback will be incredibly meaningful to me.

A note on anonymity: The survey is completely anonymous to ensure you feel comfortable sharing honest and constructive feedback.

Please feel free to skip any questions that don't resonate. Thank you so much for taking the time to help me grow – I truly appreciate your thoughtful feedback!

[Your name]

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Official Reflected Best Self](#) (University of Michigan)

[HBR article: How to Play to Your Strengths](#)

[Podcast: Know the Real You Better](#) (Jordan Harbinger/Adam Grant)