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- **The Awareness Continuum is a mindfulness “describe with integrity” practice.**
 - **An Awareness Continuum practice can be done...**
 - Alone, with each step spoken silently
 - Alone, and spoken aloud
 - With another person, and spoken aloud
 - With a small group, taking turns, and spoken aloud
 - **It is useful because it helps us take responsibility for our perceptions about ourselves, others, and the world rather than blaming our experience on other people or the world.**
 - **It teaches us to notice and label differing forms of inner experience** (thoughts, sensations, emotions, and images). Putting a label on an emotion is especially useful for bringing its intensity down.
 - **It provides an opportunity for us to practice describing our perceptions, without needing to explain, justify, or defend ourselves.** This frees up energy to notice other things in our life and helps us create a non-defensive sense of self. This is particularly useful in discussions of conflict or disagreement (see last bullet point in Step 4).
 - **It provides a structured means to practise revealing our inner experience to another person in a manner that is both self-effacing and self-respecting. This requires humility, which can enhance relationships.**
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- **It is self-effacing** because an Awareness Continuum practice signals to the other person that our perceptions are potentially fallible; they are not absolute truths.
- **It is self-respecting** because an Awareness Continuum practice signals to others that we are taking responsibility for our own perceptions rather than blaming them on others or the world. It helps us remember that we choose our reality; no one can force us to perceive, think, or feel in a particular way.

Four Steps for an Awareness Continuum Practice.

Step 1. Begin by saying the word "I."

- This signals to yourself and others that you are the source of the observation.

Step 2. Clarify that you are mindfully observing by adding the words "am aware of." ("Mindfulness" just means "awareness".)

Step 3. Label what is being observed by classifying it as one of four different forms: sensation, emotion, image, or thought.

- **Sensations** include any experience involving the five senses (sound, taste, touch, hearing, or sight).
 - **Emotions** include emotional experiences, mood states (for example, fear or anxiety), urges, impulses, and/or desires (for example, a feeling of desire to walk out of a room).
 - **Images** generally fall into observations about the past (for example, a memory), the future (for example, what might happen), or mind reading of others (for example, imagining what another is thinking or feeling).
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- **Thoughts** are cognitive experiences of the current moment (for example, thinking about learning the Awareness Continuum, thinking about a math problem).
- **Step 4. Describe the content of your experience, without explanation, rationalization, or justification.**
- **Avoid clumping**, or combining two or more forms into one statement. For example...
- **Nonclumping:** "I am aware of an emotion of sadness" consists of one form – an emotion.
- **Clumping:** "I am aware of an emotion of sadness because I just thought about my lost dog that ran away three weeks ago" is an explanation about the initial experience of sadness that clumps several forms together (the emotion of sadness is clumped with thoughts and memories about a lost dog).
- **"Editing" is okay.** Feel free to choose what you label or reveal. The choice to keep certain parts of our life private is an important part of independent living.
- **Use the Awareness Continuum during an argument or conflict.** Instead of saying "You make me angry," use the Awareness Continuum to take responsibility for your perceptions by saying, "I am aware of a feeling of anger" or "I am aware of imagining that you are purposely trying to make me angry."



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