**The Strength of Self-Consciousness**

Although it gets a bad rap, there is a real strength in being self-conscious. Too often we think negatively of this trait, and we overlook the potential power that comes with a self-monitoring style.

It is important to note than when we use the term self-consciousness, we are referring to Self-Consciousness in Birkman terms, not those feelings we experienced during our adolescent years. In the Birkman context, Self-Consciousness is an acute sense of self-awareness. Not in the philosophical context of being conscious of oneself as an individual, but in the **self-monitoring context of being actively aware of what we say and how we say it**. There is also a heightened awareness into how actions and words are received by others around us. If you have a high score, you know this about yourself. And for better or worse, it is not something we can turn off.

With Birkman, you will find that most people have a higher Need for Self-consciousness than their Usual Behavior may show. This means that even if their Usual Behavior is to be direct and candid, they have an underlying sensitivity or self-consciousness that is hidden from most people. All too often, people see this underlying self-consciousness as a liability or a weakness. But that assumption couldn’t be further from the truth–underlying self-consciousness is a gift. **At Birkman, we are working to reframe sensitivity as a powerful strength, as it lends itself to being able to gauge sensitivity in others and allows us to shift our own communication style when necessary**. If I don’t know what it’s like to have my feelings hurt when someone is overly direct with me, how can I know if I am saying something that may offend someone in this manner?

When leaders embrace their natural sensitivity, it is a powerful strength. They are able to take a behavior that could potentially work against them, transform it into a strength, and take their leadership to another level.