

Exploring the Self.

Being aware of the self is a key element of interpersonal communication. We are limited in our assessment of the world by the blinkers provided by our own world view. The more aware of the limits of our world view, the more possibilities we can consider on merit and the more contrary views we can consider. Unless we challenge the implicit constructs we have developed about other people and the world, we carry bias that unconsciously spills over into all of our communications. Becoming aware of our values, blocks to learning and insecurities allows us to develop new skills faster and communicate better.

Johari window

The Johari Window model is a simple tool for improving self-awareness, and mutual understanding between individuals within a group. 'Johari' is the name created by two psychologists, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in the 1950's from their first names. Today the Johari Window model is especially relevant due to modern emphasis on, and influence of, 'soft' skills, behaviour, empathy, cooperation, inter-group development and interpersonal development. The Johari Window model is also referred to as a 'disclosure/feedback model of self awareness'. The Johari Window actually represents information - feelings, experience, views, attitudes, skills, intentions, motivation, etc - within or about a person - in relation to another person or their group, from four perspectives, which are described below. Johari Window terminology refers to 'self' and 'others': 'self' means oneself, i.e., the person subject to the Johari Window analysis. 'Others' means other people in the person's group.

The four Johari Window perspectives are called 'regions' or 'areas' or 'quadrants'. Each of these regions contains and represents the information - feelings, motivation, etc - known about the person, in terms of whether the information is known or unknown by the person, and whether the information is known or unknown by others in the group.

1. open area	2. blind area
3. hidden area	4. unknown area

The Johari Window is based on a four-square grid - the Johari Window is like a window with four 'panes'. Here's how the Johari Window is normally shown, with its four regions.

Johari window four regions - model diagram

Johari window four regions

1. What is known by the person about him/herself and is also known by others - **open area, open self, free area, free self, or 'the arena'**. Johari region 1 is also known as the 'area of free activity'. This is the information about the person - behaviour, attitude, feelings, emotion, knowledge, experience, skills, views, etc - **known** by the person ('the self') and **known** by the group ('others'). The size of the open area can be expanded horizontally into the blind space, by seeking and actively listening to feedback from other group members. This process is known as 'feedback solicitation'. Also, other group members can help a team member expand their open area by offering feedback, sensitively of course.

2. What is unknown by the person about him/herself but which others know - **blind area, blind self, or 'blindspot'**. Johari region 2 is what is **known** about a person by others in the group, but is **unknown** by the person him/herself. By seeking or soliciting feedback from others, the aim should be to reduce this area and thereby to increase the open area, i.e., to increase self-awareness. This blind area could also be

described as ignorance about oneself, or issues on which one is deluded. A blind area could also include issues that others are deliberately withholding from a person. We all know how difficult it is to work well when kept in the dark. No-one works well when subject to 'mushroom management'. People who are 'thick-skinned' tend to have a large 'blind area'. The extent to which an individual seeks feedback, and the issues on which feedback is sought, must always be at the individual's own discretion. Feedback needs to be non-judgemental and solicited. Some people are more resilient than others - care needs to be taken to avoid causing emotional upset.

3. What the person knows about him/herself that others do not know - **hidden area, hidden self, avoided area, avoided self or 'facade'** Johari region 3 is what is **known** to ourselves but kept hidden from, and therefore **unknown**, to others. This hidden or avoided self represents information, feelings, etc, anything that a person knows about him/self, but which is not revealed or is kept hidden from others. The hidden area could also include sensitivities, fears, hidden agendas, manipulative intentions, secrets - anything that a person knows but does not reveal, for whatever reason. It's natural for very personal and private information and feelings to remain hidden, indeed, certain information, feelings and experiences have no bearing on the outside, and so can and should remain hidden. However, typically, a lot of hidden information is not very personal, it is work- or performance-related, and so is better positioned in the open area. Relevant hidden information and feelings, etc, should be moved into the open area through the process of 'disclosure'. The aim should be to disclose and expose relevant information and feelings - hence the Johari Window terminology 'self-disclosure' and 'exposure process', thereby increasing the open area. By telling others how we feel and other information about ourselves we reduce the hidden area, and increase the open area, which enables better understanding, cooperation, trust, team-working effectiveness and productivity. The extent to which an individual discloses personal feelings and information, and the issues which are disclosed, and to whom, must always be at the individual's own discretion. Some people are more keen and able than others to disclose. People should disclose at a pace and depth that they find personally comfortable. As with feedback, some people are more resilient than others - care needs to be taken to avoid causing emotional upset.

4. What is unknown by the person about him/herself and is also unknown by others - **unknown area or unknown self** . Johari region 4 contains information, feelings, latent abilities, aptitudes, experiences etc, that are **unknown** to the person him/herself and **unknown** to others in the group. These unknown issues take a variety of forms: they can be feelings, behaviours, attitudes, capabilities, aptitudes, which can be quite close to the surface, and which can be positive and useful, or they can be deeper aspects of a person's personality, influencing his/her behaviour to various degrees. Large unknown areas would typically be expected in younger people, and people who lack experience or self-belief. Areas for discovery might be:

- an ability that is under-estimated or un-tried through lack of opportunity, encouragement, confidence or training
- a natural ability or aptitude that a person doesn't realise they possess
- a fear or aversion that a person does not know they have
- an unknown illness
- repressed or subconscious feelings
- conditioned behaviour or attitudes from childhood

The processes by which this information and knowledge can be uncovered are various, and can be prompted through self-discovery or observation by others, or in certain situations through collective or mutual discovery, of the sort of discovery experienced on outward bound courses or other deep or intensive group work. Counselling can also uncover unknown issues. Again as with disclosure and soliciting feedback, the process of self discovery is a sensitive one. The extent and depth to which an individual is able to seek out discover their unknown feelings must always be at the individual's own discretion. Some people are more keen and able than others to do this. Trying new things and taking chances are a rich source of developing insight into the self and reducing the 'unknown' area.