

2.9 The Johari* Window: A Graphic Model of Awareness in Interpersonal Relations

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In every human interaction, in every conversation, there is an element of mystery. Why? We are not only different, one from another, but every person knows something which no one else knows. To add to the drama, each of us lacks awareness of certain aspects of our own behavior or feelings which others can clearly see, which is another reason why human interaction is the most challenging and rewarding adventure that we

can experience. The risks and rewards of predictable and unpredictable dialogue help us to create meaning in our daily lives. Negotiated intelligibility is possible.

The four windows shown in the model (Figure 1) are: The Open, window 1, contains awareness of behavior, feelings, intentions and motivations, known to self and to others;

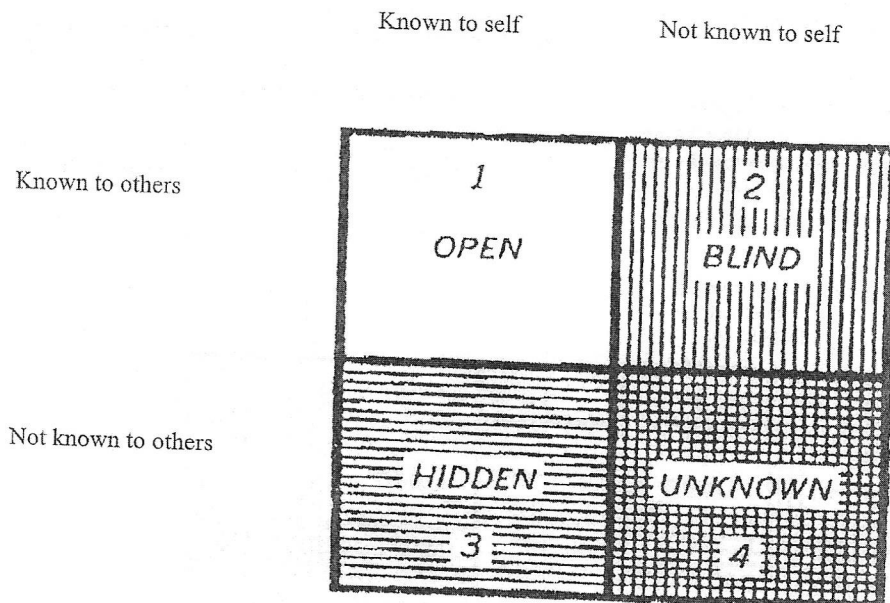


Figure 1

* The word, Johari, comes from the names of Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (Joe and Harry) who, together, developed the model as staff members of the Western Training Lab in the 1950s. Joseph Luft coined the word, Johari, in the early sixties, without realizing the word had important meanings in Sanskrit and Swahili. In Sanskrit it means, "The God who sees within." In Swahili it means, "The essence of things."

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The Blind, window 2, refers to behavior, feelings and motivations known to others but not known to self;

The Hidden, window 3, refers to the private realm, where you are aware of some behavior, feelings or intentions, and others are not aware; and

The Unknown, window 4, refers to behavior, feelings, or motivations, known neither to you nor to others, (sometimes called the unconscious), which may become known at a future time. In the model, we are each represented by four windows in a large frame.

Each window is different based on awareness of behavior, feelings and motivation or intention and on who knows about it. For example, if I share something with you that is relevant to you but you did not know about it, that could be pictured as coming from my Hidden area out into the Open area. Now we both know about it, and the first window, the Open area has grown a little larger.

To show two people interacting (Figure 2), we have the windows face each other.

People vary with respect to their degree of openness. Some people may be characterized as more closed and guarded. They tend to avoid risk and spontaneity in exchange with others; their Open window is smaller.

Can a person be unaware or blind to his or her own behavior? Upon meeting someone for the first time, we often see things of which the other person seems unaware. For example, one person smiles all the time regardless of what's going on. Another scowls, or fidgets with his or her hands, or completes your sentences repeatedly. The same applies to ideas or attitudes which are verbally espoused and then contradicted in behavior—all without awareness.

We also tend to resist seeing our Blind area because we may have deeply ingrained habits or conflicts about the feelings or behavior involved. Ironically, there is a better chance for us to learn about our blind spots when we are with a person or persons who can accept us the way we are. As trust increases, we can afford the risks involved in being a bit more spontaneous and open.

On Self-Disclosure

Because we are in charge of our Hidden or Private area, window 3, we can choose to bring out more of ourselves through disclosure. Appropriate disclosure is the challenge we all face in every relationship. Some rough guidelines about appropriate disclosure follow:

1. **Fitting:** what you reveal fits with what is going on in a particular relationship.
2. **Timing:** the flow of ongoing events determines the appropriate time to disclose.

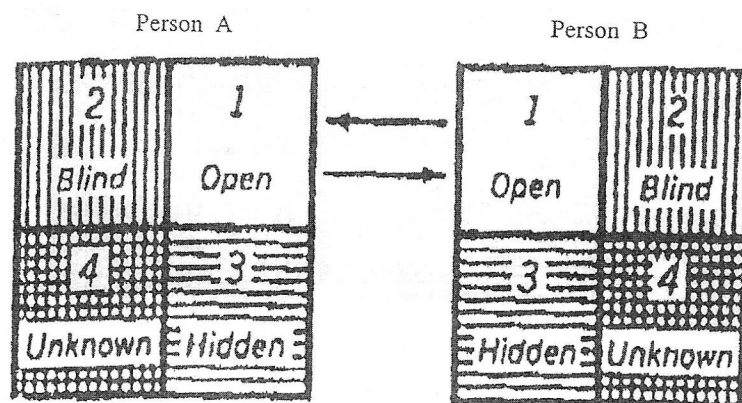


Figure 2. Interaction Between Two Persons.

The Johari Window

3. **Reciprocity:** disclosure by one party tends to evoke equivalent kinds of disclosure by the other.
4. **Emerging relationship:** taking account of the state of the relationship as well as of the individuals involved.
5. **Gradual:** disclosure tends to move by small increments, especially in a beginning relationship.
6. **Confirmable:** the other person understands what is being disclosed and its relevance.
7. **Effect:** account is taken of the effect your disclosure is having on the other person.
8. **Reasonable risk:** depends on the present state of the relationship.
9. **Crisis disclosure:** under certain conditions, especially in emergencies, disclosure may take quantum leaps.
10. **Mutuality:** there is a fair degree of mutuality in appreciation of persons involved, as well as in the kinds of exchange.

Interaction in Groups

In a new group, the Open area is small; there is not much trust, people do not know each other. As the group develops and matures, the Open area grows in size. Participants feel freer to express themselves and to be a bit more spontaneous. As a sense of safety increases, people take more risks—that is, they tend to be themselves more and to drop some of the learned guises and facades. Hence, more and greater differences may emerge in the developing interaction.

Conflicts inevitably develop with increased openness and spontaneity, and the group may be enriched as real feelings and differences are confronted and dealt with. Teamwork and new learning actually improve.

Interaction Between Groups

The Johari Model may also be applied to relationships between groups. Families, work teams, gangs, committees and social clubs are examples of everyday collectives, that in some ways act as wholes or units.

Open Area 1. Groups know things about themselves as groups which they may share with other groups.

Blind Area 2. Every group has blind spots, apparent to others but not known to the group members.

Hidden Area 3. Some things are not shared with other groups. Every family or executive board knows certain things which are not disclosed to other groups.

Unknown Area 4. Groups can be totally unaware of certain attitudes or behavior, and other groups are also in the dark about them. Some time later, the group may learn about their unknown area, often depending upon unexpected events, or by accident.

Principles of Change

1. A change in any one area will affect all other areas.
2. It takes energy to hide, deny, or be blind to behavior which is involved in interaction.
3. Threat tends to decrease awareness; mutual trust tends to increase awareness.
4. Forced awareness (exposure) is undesirable and usually ineffective.
5. Interpersonal learning means a change has taken place so that the Open area is larger, and one or more of the other areas has grown smaller.
6. Working with others is facilitated by a large enough Open area. It means more of the resources and skills in the membership can be applied to the task at hand.
7. The smaller the first quadrant, the poorer the communication.
8. There is universal curiosity about the unknown area, but this is held in check by custom, social training and fears.
9. Sensitivity means appreciating the covert aspects of behavior in areas 2, 3 and 4, and respecting the desire of others to keep them so.

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10. The values of a group and its membership may be noted in the ways that the unknowns in the life of the group are confronted.
of freedom—free to interact with people, nature and the arts, including the unknown.
11. Openness to the world including the self, is a rare and precious human resource. This is the meaning
12. "Minds are like parachutes," I recently read on the bumper strip of a passing truck, "they only function when they are open."

References

A more complete exposition of Johari Window concepts may be found in Joseph Luft's, *Of Human Interaction*, Palo Alto, CA: National Press Books, 1969 and his *Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics*, 2nd ed. Palo Alto, CA: National Press Books, 1970, 3rd ed., 1984.