

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

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Like the happy centipede, many people get along fine working with others, without thinking about which foot to put forward. But when there are difficulties, when the usual methods do not work, when we want to learn more—there is no alternative but to examine our own behavior in relation to others. The trouble is that, among other things, it is so hard to find ways of thinking about such matters, particularly for people who have no extensive backgrounds in the social sciences.

When Harry Ingham and I first presented The Johari Window to illustrate relationships in terms of awareness (at Western Training Laboratories, in 1955), we were surprised to find so many people, academicians and nonprofessionals alike, using and tinkering with

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the model. It seems to lend itself as a heuristic device to speculating about human relations. It is simple to visualize the four quadrants which represent The Johari Window.

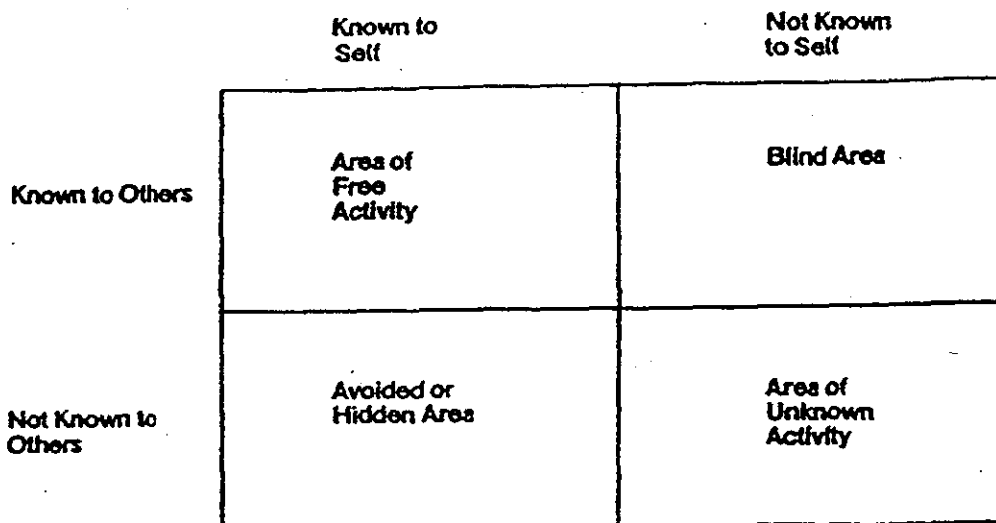
*Quadrant I*, the area of free activity, refers to behavior and motivation known to self and known to others.

*Quadrant II*, the blind area, where others can see things in ourselves of which we are unaware.

*Quadrant III*, the avoided or hidden area, represents things we know but do not reveal to others (e.g., a hidden agenda or matters about which we have sensitive feelings).

*Quadrant IV*, area of unknown activity. Neither the individual nor others are aware of certain behaviors or motives. Yet we can assume their existence because eventually some of these things become known, and it is then realized that these unknown behaviors and motives were influencing relationships all along.

FIGURE 1  
The Johari Window



- \* I can learn more about my BLIND area.
- \* I can expose and share my HIDDEN area.
- \* I can explore my MYSTERY area.

To have all of me available to myself, I need your data about me. I need that part of my totality, my truth that you possess, my BLIND area. Why is it important to have the me that you have inside your head? Because what I believe about me is just that. A belief. It is not reality until I exhibit a specific behavior that defines me. To *know* if I exhibit any such behavior (do my actions show that I am honest, helpful, direct, sexist, callous, lazy?) I must have your "experience-knowledge-experience" of me. What kind of person am I to you?

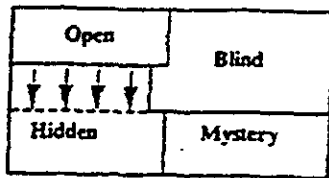
I believe it is healthy for everyone to have a full fantasy life. To limit your fantasy life is to limit your potential. But people do limit their fantasy lives because they mistakenly feel that thoughts equal behavior. They don't. It's okay to fantasize about anything – from being a knight on a beautiful horse to doing physical harm to someone.

I remember as a child feeling angry at my parents and wanting them dead. Did that make me a murderer? No. I would have been a murderer only if I had acted upon my thoughts.

My fantasies do not define me, but your experience of me is part of my definition. You hold part of my total truth, part of the reality of me. I need your data in order to know myself more completely. The more data I give you, the more of me you can share with me.

So to grow me, I need to do three things:

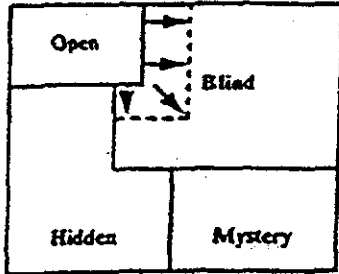
1. I need to share myself with you. This is called "exposure". (I am disclosing myself to you).



\*When I share myself with you, when I expose myself to you, I decrease my HIDDEN area and increase my OPEN area. To decrease my HIDDEN area, I share my fantasies, perceptions, and behaviors with you and make more of my truth available to you and therefore to me. By increasing my OPEN area, I create more commonality between us.

\*By the manner in which you receive my exposing and sharing, you give me information about you and therefore decrease your BLIND or HIDDEN area. Every response, verbal and nonverbal, is data about the you which you allow yourself to be with me.

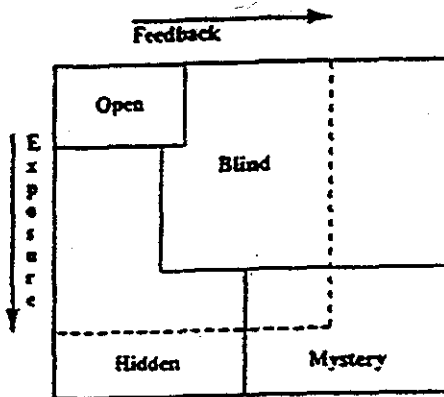
2. *I need to have your information about me. This is called "Feedback".*



• When I ask for and receive feedback, I decrease my BLIND area and increase my OPEN area. By decreasing my BLIND area, I have more of my truth - more of me - available to me. By increasing my OPEN area, I create more commonality between us.

• When you give me feedback, you give me information about you in how you frame the feedback and what in my behavior has stimulated a reaction in you. You thus decrease your HIDDEN area or your BLIND area by saying or doing something that is out of the BLIND part of you and my pointing the response out to you decreases your BLIND area and increases your OPEN area with me.

3. *I need to explore my MYSTERY part, my unknowns.*



• By intentionally doing things I haven't done before.

• By continuing to expand my BLIND and HIDDEN areas, thereby decreasing my MYSTERY area.

• By using untapped skills, talents, and resources I possess.

• By exploring my dreams.

• By paying ATTENTION to what stimulates me.

• By unnumbing myself.

# The Quadrants and Changing Group Interaction

In a new group, Quadrant I is very small; there is not much free and spontaneous interaction. As the group grows and matures, Quadrant I expands in size; and this usually means we are freer to be more like ourselves and to perceive others as they really are. Quadrant III shrinks in area as Quadrant I grows larger. We find it less necessary to hide or deny things we know or feel. In an atmosphere of growing mutual trust there is less need for hiding pertinent thoughts or feelings. It takes longer for Quadrant II to reduce in size, because usually there are "good" reasons of a psychological nature to blind ourselves to the things we feel or do. Quadrant IV perhaps changes somewhat during a learning laboratory, but we can assume that such changes occur even more slowly than do shifts in Quadrant II. At any rate, Quadrant IV is undoubtedly far larger and more influential in an individual's relationships than the hypothetical sketch illustrates.

The Johari Window may be applied to *inter-group* relations. Quadrant I means behavior and motivation known to the group and also known to other groups. Quadrant II signifies an area of behavior to which a group is blind; but other groups are aware of this behavior, e.g., cultism or prejudice. Quadrant III, the hidden area, refers to things a group knows about itself but which are kept from other groups. Quadrant IV, the unknown area, means a group is unaware of some aspect of its own behavior, and other groups are also unaware of this behavior. Later, as the group learns new things about itself, there is a shift from Quadrant IV to one of the other quadrants.

## Principles of Change

1. A change in any one quadrant will affect all other quadrants.
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 Quadrant I is larger and one or more of the other quadrants has grown smaller.
6. Working with others is facilitated by a large enough area of free activity. 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 unknown areas, but this is held in check by custom, social training, and by diverse fears.

9. Sensitivity means appreciating the covert aspects of behavior in Quadrants II, III, and IV and respecting the desire of others to keep them so.

10. Learning about group processes as they are being experienced helps to increase awareness (larger Quadrant I) for the group as a whole, as well for individual members.

11. The value system of a group and its membership may be noted in the way *unknowns* in the life of the group are confronted.

A centipede may be perfectly happy without awareness, but after all, he restricts himself to crawling under rocks. □

# Learning to be comfortable with discomfort

## STEPS TO NEW AWARENESS

- |                             |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Unconscious incompetence | Bliss       |
| 2. Conscious incompetence   | Discovery   |
| 3. Conscious competence     | Application |
| 4. Unconscious competence   | Just do it  |

## INCLUSIVE/EXCLUSIVE BEHAVIORS

### Insiders:

Overprotect, patronize, rescue

Blame individual

Avoid contact

Deny significance of diversity

Collude-go along

### Outsiders

Defensive, escape, attack

Blame organization

Avoid contact

Deny significance of culture

Collude-go along

## INSIDER/OUTSIDER POINTS TO REMEMBER

Exclusion is often unconscious

In the exercise exclusion is both conscious and overt

Whether conscious or unconscious, exclusion impacts productivity and morale

Diversity means inclusion for all

If you are not an outsider, you're an insider

Insiders and outsiders share the responsibility for creating inclusion

## INTENT/IMPACT

1. Forget about your intention and focus on your behavior and resulting impact.

## SELF ASSESSMENT

1. Monitor your responses.
2. Notice if you are competing for the truth.
3. Practice active/passive listening.
4. Acknowledge or repeat back what you heard (reflective listening).

## WAYS TO STOP LISTENING

1. You're too sensitive.
2. That's not my experience.
3. I can't understand why you feel that way.
4. That happened a long time ago.
5. Why do we have to talk about this? Why can't we get along?
6. I'm not like that.
7. I know how you feel.
8. That happened to me.
9. That's not what I meant.

## RESPONSIVE RESPONSES

1. What is it about what I'm saying or doing that you find offensive?
2. I can see how that incident impacted you. Something happened to me along those lines and I'm wondering if they're similar or different.?
3. I can understand how that can be viewed as ———. Can we talk some more about that?

*Source: Dennard Clendenen  
NCORE Conference Workshop  
1999 Memphis Tennessee*