

Understanding Self : The Johari-Window

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Principles and Practice of Youth in Development Work

Unit 4 : Understanding Self : The Johari-Window

Unit introduction

In the process of developing a self concept, we entertain feelings about who we think we are and seek confirmation of these feelings through interaction with other people for feedback. It is as if we look into a mirror that others hold up for us. We are pleased or displeased depending on the appearance of this reflection. Such feedback help us to adjust our personalities where necessary. If we do not interact openly, such feedback may be unavailable to us.

Sometimes we hide our feeling from others for fear that we would be rejected by them. It is as if we put on a mask to hide ourselves. We are then unable to learn about what others think about us.

In this unit we are going to study a method which will enable us learn in depth about ourselves in the mirror that others hold for us. The method is called the Johari-Window. We shall learn about the Johari-Window and then attempt selected activities to familiarize ourselves about its application. Hopefully, we could then begin on a journey to improve our personalities.

Learning outcomes for this unit

While you work through this session, you will learn to

- Describe the Johari-Window
- Explain methods to change quadrants of the Johari-Window
- Discuss coping with self liabilities

Johari-Window

Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham compared the human personality to that of a four-paned window, each pane (also called a quadrant or an arena) representing a segment of the total individual. Their theory is called the **Johari-Window**. Figure 4.1 below depicts a typical Johari-Window. It has two dimensions. One is **'known'** and **'unknown'**. The other is **self** and **others**. Each pane or quadrant of this window is given a specific name and represents a segment of our personality.

Quadrant I :	Public (Open) Self	- Known to self and others
Quadrant II :	Blind Self	- Unknown to self, known to others
Quadrant III :	Hidden Self	- Known to self, unknown to others
Quadrant IV :	Dark Self	- Unknown to self and others

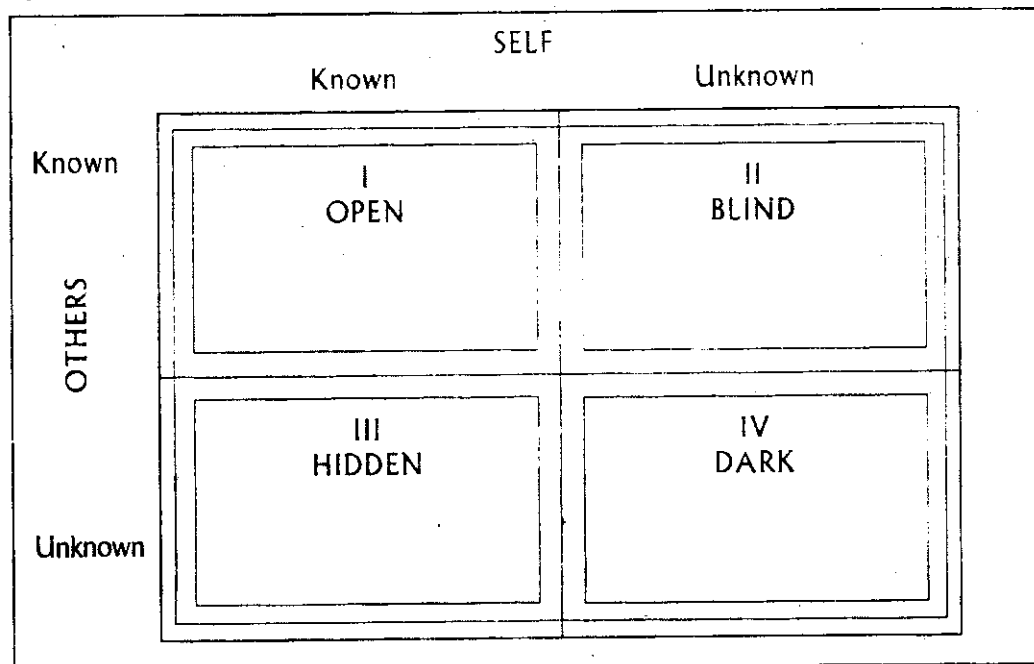


Figure 4.1 The Johari-Window

There are things we know about ourselves and things we don't know. There are things that others know about us and things they don't know. There are things that neither we nor others know about, such as our psychological health. The four panes of the window depict these situations. A change in one pane is bound to change the others.

The ideal Johari-Window would be one where the Public self occupies a large area with all other panes being reduced in size (see fig. 4.2). This type of window indicates a good communicator who has confidence in himself/herself. He/she would not be fearful of rejection by others and would not be afraid of making mistakes. We should therefore learn how to achieve a window with a large Open/Public self.

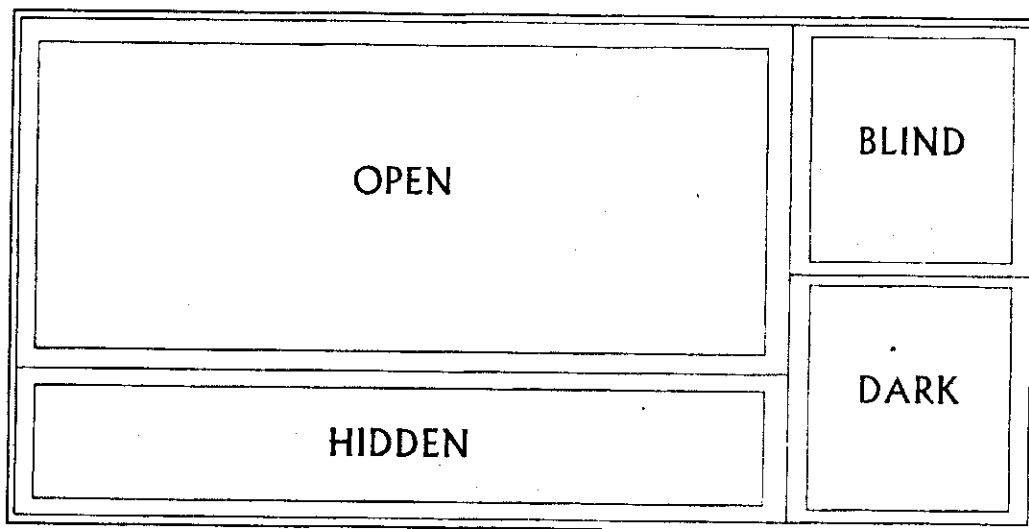


Figure 4.2 An Ideal Johari-Window

Open/Public self

The size of the Open Self varies from person to person. It represents information which are known or could easily be know to anyone who associates with a person. These include information such as name, family history, educational background, desire, beliefs, attitudes etc. Of course you would reveal some of this information only to people with whom you have a close relationship. Mutual trust would be important for such revelations. Sharing personal information would lead to feedback as to how others feel about you. The larger the amount of such information that is shared, bigger would be the Public Self.

Some people do not readily reveal themselves to others. They are poor communicators. Others too would not be ready to share information about themselves with such people. Thus the amount of interaction would be little and such people would have comparatively smaller Public Self.

Blind Self

Blind Self represents things about ourselves that others know but we ourselves are unaware of. Others may not want to tell us about these things for many reasons. One may be the fear that telling may cause us pain or embarrassment. It is similar to a situation of bad breath. If you have bad breath, hardly anybody would tell that to you as it can embarrass you. A person may have irritating habits such as nose picking, nail biting, tone of voice, dominating behaviour and other mannerisms and attitudes which cause friction in relationships. Yet he/she may be unaware of these. Perhaps if there is feedback on them they could well be adjusted.

There may even be good qualities which are unknown to you, such as being a good listener, control of anger, and concern for others which if developed further may give the person better potential in life.

Hidden Self

Hidden Self represents information that the individual knows about himself/herself but does not want to reveal to others. These are personal

secrets. Think of the expression 'hiding skeletons in the cupboard'. These may be things one likes to do but which might attract social disapproval. So the individual may be indulging in them secretly. He/she would not want to confide about these with anybody. They may even be things like lack of confidence, irritation with others, inner conflicts, jealousy, hurt, shame, or sex problems to mention just a few.

The lack of confidence or a feeling of inferiority can lead to shyness. Irritation with others or with oneself can lead to anger. Inner conflicts may be due to interpersonal or intra-personal conflicts. All these affect the way you communicate with other people. Later in this session, we shall look at some simple ways to help cope with shyness, anger and conflict.

The reason to keep some things hidden may be due to cultural needs. One example may be the accepted norms of male and female behaviour or codes of dress in the context of some societies.

One has to be cautious about revealing the hidden self. The listener must respond with trust and concern and ensure that the revelations do not cause self damage to the individual who reveals. Where there can be help, as in the case of sex problems or psychological health, one may be advised to seek further counselling with a professional.

The Dark Arena

The Dark Arena contains things unknown both to the individual as well as others. It contains hidden potentials, abilities, or even psychological maladies that may relate to a person's behaviour. An example from Hindu mythology may illustrate this. In the story of Ramayana, Hanuman was asked to cross a vast ocean to deliver a ring to Lord Ram's wife Sita after she was kidnapped by the powerful demon king Ravana. Hanuman was rather apprehensive as to whether he was up to the task. Jamwant then made him realize his potential. He was reminded that he was the son of the Wind God and that as a child he had swallowed the sun. Once he was aware of his hidden potential, Hanuman fearlessly carried out the task. Of course the example is mythical, yet provides an insight into what potential the dark arena may hold. However, getting to know the dark arena may need professional help. Psychologists have developed many techniques to explore the Dark Arena. Use of these techniques requires lengthy training and know-how and therefore they are not dealt with here.

Changing the quadrants

For the development of a healthy personality, it is essential to enlarge the Open Arena. This is achieved through the reduction of the Blind, Hidden and Dark Arenas. As mentioned earlier, probing the Dark Arena is best left to professionals. However, there are simple techniques to help reduce the Blind and the Hidden Arenas. A technique called **'feedback'** is used to reduce the Blind Arena. **'Self disclosure'** is used to reduce the Hidden Arena. Let us now study each of these two techniques and attempt an activity based on each.

Feedback

In the context of our study, feedback means what others tell about you. If feedback is to help improve your Johari-Window, they must be positive and constructive. The person who gives as well as receives feedback must feel satisfied that some good has been achieved.

Feedback must be correct. It must try to clarify why somebody reacts in the manner described. It must not try to pass judgement but only indicate reactions of people.

Feedback, if immediate, can relate to situations. Otherwise people tend to forget what led to the feedback. The possibility of misunderstanding the feedback is real. One's feedback must be honest but courteous. It must be aimed to help a person and not to embarrass and must be appropriate to the situation. It must be informative so that it tells something that was not known earlier by an individual.

It may not be perhaps as easy as said. Therefore attempts at feedback needs careful thinking. It must be carried out in an environment which leads to mutual trust and confidence.

Let us now attempt an activity on feedback.



Activity

This is best attempted in a group of people who are acquainted with one another and who feel comfortable with one another. The number of participants in the group may vary. You may need a facilitator. Even two to three people in a group may be adequate although larger groups (5-10) would provide more information. It will depend on how open the participants would wish to be with one another. It is best to form a circle or U-shape to give a sense of equality.

What is needed

Three types of data sheets would be necessary, namely

- i) the Feedback Sheet, (see Fig. 4.3)
- ii) the Self Knowledge & Recording Sheets, (see Fig. 4.4)
- iii) the Johari-Window sketch. (see Fig. 4.1)

Participant's Name		
S. No.	Assets	Liabilities
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Fig. 4.3 A Feedback Sheet



Activity (contd.)

	SELF ASSESSMENT	OTHERS' ASSESSMENT
ASSETS		
LIABILITIES		

Fig. 4.4 Johari-Window Self Knowledge & Recording Sheet

Assets here mean good qualities or strengths of a participant. Examples may be characteristics such as friendliness, jovial nature, honesty etc. Liabilities would indicate weaknesses as one would perceive them. Example may be snobbish nature, tendency to lie, showing disrespect to colleagues etc.

How to Proceed

Self assessment

Step 1 : Each participant fills the 'Self Assessment' column of the Self Knowledge and Recording Sheet where both assets and liabilities known to oneself are recorded.

Feedback

Step 2 : Each participant fills in his/her name on a sufficient number of Feedback Sheets so that one sheet with his/her name could be distributed to each member of the group. They are then asked to fill in assets and liabilities of the participant whose name in one the sheet. These are then folded and passed back to the name-holder.

Completing the self knowledge and recording sheet

Step 3 : Each participant transfers the feedback to the 'Others' assessment, column of the Self.

Knowledge and Recording Sheet that is his/her own.

Building the Johari-Window

Step 4 : Identify the assets and liabilities that have been reported both by yourself and other participants.



Activity (contd.)

These constitute your Open Self. Transfer these to Quadrant I of your Johari-Window sketch.

Step 5 : The assets and liabilities others have given to you, but of which you had no idea, constitute your Blind Self. Transfer them to Quadrant II.

Step 6 : You are left with assets and liabilities which you had listed yourself of which others have not reported on. They constitute your Hidden Self. Transfer them to Quadrant III.

The Result

Your Johari-Window may look like what's given below.

Known to both Self and Others	I - Open	II - Blind	Known only to others
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Friendly 2. Confident 3. Singer 4. Joyful 5. Extrovert 6. Entertaining 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Snobbish 2. Talkative 3. Too loud 4. Dominating 	
Known only to self	III - Hidden	IV - Dark	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Irritated by many people 2. Feel inferior to others 3. Feel afraid of being hurt 4. Jealous 	Unknown	

The result may now help you to adjust your weaknesses, expand on strengths and thus expand on your Open Self. The awareness gathered would reduce the Blind Self as you have been exposed to what you were not aware of. Quadrants I and II would merge together now. However, your Blind Self is not fully reduced yet. Many others from whom you did not ask feedback may have many things to say about you of which you are unaware of.

Self disclosure

Self disclosure is a means of reducing the Hidden Self. We have already discussed what the Hidden Self is. We have learnt that self disclosure or revealing one's secrets is not easy. The extent of disclosure would also depend on the mutual trust and confidence that one can enjoy with the person to whom the disclosure is made. Mutual sharing of fears and doubts would lead to strengthening of relationships and allows for better two-way communication between people. However, one must exercise caution in revealing things that may cause self damage. Confidence and concern on the part of the listener is therefore important.

The advantage of self disclosure is that one can seek help to solve doubt and alleviate fears. This in turn would build up self confidence enabling you to be more open with others. The result would be a healthier personality. Let us attempt an activity to understand more of this process.



Activity

This is a group activity. It is better to have participants who are acquainted and comfortable with one another. This would reduce hesitations about disclosing hidden traits pertaining to self. The group may be as large as ten people. You may need a facilitator.

Step 1 : Participants are given a 'Who Am I' Sheet to fill. A sample is given below in Figure 4.5.

1.	I AM.....
2.	I AM.....
3.	I AM.....
4.	I AM.....
5.	I AM.....
6.	I AM.....
7.	I AM.....
8.	I AM.....
9.	I AM.....
10.	I AM.....

Figure 4.5 'Who Am I' Response Sheet

Participants are expected to write down at least ten traits which they have kept hidden until then.

These traits may be things like.

I am jealous of others; I am indecisive; I am shy etc.

Step 2 : Participants will then display their completed sheets either by pinning them into their chests or by pasting them on the wall.

Step 3 : They are then encouraged to read what others have written. During this period of time, they may be advised to hold hands. This increases the feeling of intimacy of what is being shared.

Step 4 : Each participant is then asked to relate how he felt about writing down the traits.



Activity (contd..)

Step 5 : They are then encourage to discuss amongst themselves about their fears and doubts and how to overcome them.

The result would be that what was earlier in the Hidden Arena can now become part of the Open Arena.

Coping with self liabilities

Our experiences with about ninety Commonwealth Youth Trainees with Johari-Window activities during the period 1990-1996, reveal many characteristics that are commonly perceived as liabilities. They are set forth below in Figure 4.6 for comparison with results of your activity concluded earlier.

Characteristic	Percentage (%)
Gets angry easily	82
Emotional	79
Gets upset quickly	75
Hyper-sensitive	55
Lonely/shy	49
Indecisive	49
Lack of confidence	30
Lazy	27
Careless	27
Can't say 'No' to others	25
Submissive	15

Figure 4.6 Common liabilities

The first three of these characteristics deal with various forms of anger. The next two relate to shyness. Indecisiveness and lack of confidence could be a result of conflict. All these may be considered negative emotions which trouble many of the youth trainees. There were many requests by them to provide some training to cope with these liabilities. It is therefore felt that this session should devote some time to discuss anger, shyness and conflict. We shall also discuss how one could cope with them.

Anger

Karstein (1986) suggests that 'emotions' are a strong stimulator. He goes on to say that emotions are stronger than will power and can cultivate a positive mental attitude. Anger however, is an unpleasant feeling and a negative motivation. Anger clouds thinking, leads to poor decisions and may even provoke rash action.

Criminal Law in many countries accept the power of anger and provide clemency for assault committed under provocation. Some selected causes for anger may be listed as follows.

- a) Unfulfilment of expectations from other people or situations
- b) Personal incompetency to cope with other people or situations
- c) Fear of failure and facing ridicule
- d) Righteous anger where values are violated

Coping with anger can come only through finding reasons why you become angry about something or with someone. Once the reasons are known, you could deliberate on them and try to come to terms with them. The following activity to cope with anger is based on this spirit.



Activity

Group work is recommended as you can then learn about others' experiences and interact with them on how to cope with anger. You would need a facilitator for group work.

- Step 1 : Participants are requested to write down situations which cause anger.
- Step 2 : The situations are then discussed openly. They are then charted on paper.
- Step 3 : Participants are then asked to search for reasons why they become angry in the situations identified earlier by them. They then write them down.
- Step 4 : The causes are then enumerated and the frequency of identification of each cause by participants is noted. They will then rank the causes according to decreasing frequency.
- Step 5 : The participants are then asked to think of strategies to cope with each cause beginning with the cause most frequently identified and then moving on to others with lower frequencies.
- Step 6 : A discussion will then be facilitated to look into merits and demerits of strategies proposed by participants.
- Step 7 : The facilitator will summarise causes of anger and acceptable strategies to cope with them.

Shyness

Shyness manifests in various ways. A person may just withdraw in the presence of others; may become tongue tied; suffer anxiety when asked to address a group; or show reluctance. A person may suffer from a feeling of inferiority and loneliness.

Some selected reasons for shyness are given below.

- a) A feeling of inadequacy due to lack of knowledge or skills
- b) Fear of ridicule
- c) Fear of being hurt by others
- d) Awe or fear of other people
- e) Not being sure of oneself and the need for social approval

Coping with shyness can come through finding reasons why you are shy. Once you identify the reasons, you can deliberate on them and come to terms with them. The following activity is based on this spirit.



Activity

Group work is recommended. Sharing experiences may be important for your own emancipation. A facilitator would be necessary.

- Step 1: Participants are asked to write down individually about situations which make them shy.
- Step 2: Participants get into groups of 5-6 persons and discuss and identify common situations.
- Step 3: Each group is then asked to identify reasons for shyness in such common situations.
- Step 4: Groups write down common situations and reasons identified for shyness and display for all to see. They are then discussed.
- Step 5: Individuals then write down strategies that could help them to come to terms with the reasons identified.
- Step 6: Small groups are reformed. They compare strategies proposed and enumerate the frequency of proposition for each strategy.
- Step 7: Groups display their findings.
- Step 8: The facilitator summarises situations which make participants shy, reasons for shyness and strategies proposed to cope with them.

Resolving Conflicts

Conflict is the simultaneous presence of two or more response alternatives. An example would be a love-hate relationship with a person. The hidden self often contains many such conflicts which trouble us. The process of deciding between such response alternatives can create tension. These conflicts are called intra-personal as they reside in an individual.

A case study may clarify what this means.

CASE STUDY

A young boy of 23 years came for counselling. During this counselling session, it came to light that his father was hostile both to his mother and to him. The father was prone to drunken violence. The boy was terrified of such outbursts. One part of the self hated his father and it harboured the desire to kill him. The social self in him made him guilty of such thoughts and he wanted to love his father. The conflict between latent hatred and the superficial show of love led the boy to a nervous breakdown.

We said earlier that there are emotions which can act as positive and negative motivators. Conflict exists between these. A list is given below in Fig. 4.7 for study.

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Enthusiasm	Frustration, depression
Faith, belief and hope	Doubt
Trust, confidence	Suspicion
Love, friendliness	Hate, anger, hostility
Courage	Fear, anxiety, worry
Joy, cheer, humour	Gloom, sorrow
Optimism	Pessimism
Generosity, forgiveness	Greed, selfishness

Figure 4.7 Some positive and negative motivators

Conflicts of faith-doubt, love-hate, joy-gloom, optimism-pessimism etc., can trouble an individual causing inconsistencies of behaviour.

Some conflict situations are given below as examples :

- a) When one has to make a choice between alternatives which have attraction or repulsion.
- b) When one's needs conflict with one another. A simple example would be the desire to eat sweets but doing what may create health problems. (eg. dental decay)
- c) When one's inner values, moral codes, standards or beliefs are in conflict with comfort, pleasure and material gain.
- d) When one has to choose between one's own convictions and social or peer group pressures.
- e) When multiples roles that one play conflict with one another. An example may be the role of mother against role of working woman.

Lewin (1935) classified conflicts into three types.

- **Approach-Approach conflict**

The person is confronted by two equally desirable alternatives and finds it difficult to decide between them. An example may be choice of attitude on some issue advocated by the mother and the peer group.

- **Approach-Avoidance conflict**

Here, a positive alternative competes with a negative. Both are of equal intensity. An example may be when one has to change residence to go to a better school. The desire to attend a better school is attractive but leaving behind friends in the old neighbourhood is painful.

- **Avoidance-Avoidance conflict**

Here the alternatives are equally negative. The individual wants to avoid both but is compelled to make a choice. A situation which reminds us of the old proverb "*between the devil and the deep sea*".

Resolving conflicts alone may not be very easy and therefore counselling may be required. If one is troubled by conflict, it suggests that the method used by an individual to resolve conflict may not be sound.

Usual methods for conflict resolution adopted by individuals are

Flight, Fight, Confrontation

Flight suggests avoiding the issue. Several ways are adopted to avoid the issue.

- a) Suppressing resolution temporarily
- b) Not recognising the existence of a conflict
- c) Withdrawal from the situation

Fight suggests transferring responsibility of the conflict to others. This is usually done by

- a) Blaming others for one's own condition
- b) Dispensing one's anger on someone else

Confrontation involves two aspects. Facing the issue and trying to deal with it. This is perhaps the best way to resolve conflict. It needs careful analysis of how it could have come about and deciding on the most acceptable way one could adjust to the situation avoiding both flight and fight.



Activity

A group discussion is recommended with a facilitator

Step 1 : Ask each participant to write down a conflict that troubles him/her and ways in which he/she has tried to resolve it.

Step 2 : Each participant is then asked to present it to the group.

Step 3 : A discussion should ensue on merits and demerits of strategies presented. Definite conclusions may not be possible. The activity can only direct participants to think about conflict situations and encourage adjustments after confrontation.

Unit Summary

In this unit there was a further exploration of the concept of 'self' through Johari-Window. The four panes of Johari-Window - the open or public self, blind self, hidden self and dark self are analysed in relation to self and others. The ideal Johari-Window is described as the one which has a large open or public self pane and a much reduced area for other panes. The enlargement of open and public self area could be achieved by techniques such as 'feed back' and 'self disclosure', the former helping to blind area and the latter the hidden area. A number of measures that would help overcome personal liabilities such as anger and shyness are discussed. The phenomenon of 'conflict within self', Lewin's classification of conflict situations and the attitude of different individuals towards conflict situations form the final part of the unit.

References

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