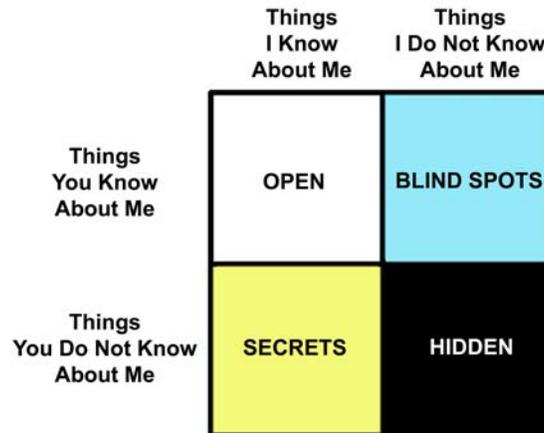


Listen To Joe And Harry!¹

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Over 50 years ago, two men named Joe Luft and Harry Ingham were interested in the way we communicate. They created a device called the “Johari Window”² to help people communicate more effectively.



Their window is just as helpful today as it was in 1955!

Here’s how it works. As we talk to each other, there are some things about me that are known to one or both of us and other things that are unknown to one or both of us. It is the various “unknowns” that often sit at the source of our communication problems.

Look at the Window. The two columns refer to *my* viewpoint—things I know about myself and things I do not know about myself. The two rows refer to *your* viewpoint—things you know about me and things you do not know about me. The combination of these columns and rows gives us the four cells that make up the Johari Window. Each cell has different implications for communication.

The upper left cell is the OPEN cell. It contains all of those things about me that *both* you and I know. What I am doing at this moment. What I am saying. Some of my values and beliefs. Intentions of mine that are visible to you. All of the things we both know about me are not hidden from either of us.

The upper right cell contains those things that I do not know about myself, but *you do*. These are my BLIND SPOTS. Maybe I am unaware that my left eye twitches when I am angry. Perhaps, I unconsciously shift my body when I am anxious. I might use a particular word or phrase over and over again without realizing I am doing so.

The lower left cell contains those things about me that I know, but *you do not*. This cell contains my SECRETS. Things I may be thinking about without telling you. Fears I have. Judgments I am making. Hidden agendas that I don’t tell you about.

Finally, the lower right cell contains those things about me that neither of us knows. These are my UNKNOWNNS. Repressed fears that still influence me at some deeper level. Motivations that I am not even aware are driving me. These are the things about me unknown to both of us.

¹ From: <http://arniedahlke.com/timelytips.htm> —Please take a moment to look at Arnie’s site: www.arniedahlke.com

² Luft, J. and Ingham, H., *The Johari Window: a graphic model for interpersonal relations*, Univ. Calif. Western Training Lab. 1955

The OPEN cell doesn't cause us too much of a problem. No hidden agendas there. You and I may disagree with each other, but we both know where each of us is coming from. This cell gives us the best chance of avoiding misunderstandings and resolving conflicts as they arise.

My SECRETS can be a big problem to you. These are my hidden agendas. They operate behind the scenes as I talk to you—private “motivators” that determine my choice of words, my tone of voice, my body stance, etc. For example, suppose I am angry with you but you don't know it. You hear me speak, and without knowing why, you realize that you are uncomfortable and can't quite figure out what it is. You feel “on guard,” maybe even defensive. You get testy. I get testier. The intensity of our conversation escalates. This results in a chain reaction of poor communication.

My BLIND SPOTS can be a big problem for me. For example, suppose people who have a negative attitude irritate you and I'm not even aware of how negative I am. You get impatient with me and I can't figure out why. Again, the result is poor communication.

My UNKNOWNNS are things about me that neither of us can really do anything about. There may be some things about me unknown to *both* of us that affect our communication—my “givens” on a day-to-day basis. Unaware that they are operating in the background, we don't usually deal with them.

To improve our communication, we need to stretch out the OPEN window—make it larger than the other three. We need to *reduce* the number of SECRETS that drive us. We need to learn more about our BLIND SPOTS. We need to uncover our UNKNOWNNS.

The more open things are between us, the better chance we have of engaging in accurate, effective communication.

Sharing your SECRETS is called *self-disclosure*. Typically, the closer you become with someone, the more you self-disclose. Your self-disclosure tends to stimulate the other person's self-disclosure, and so on. Communication between you becomes more effective.

You telling me about my BLIND SPOTS is called *feedback*. If I want to improve my communication skills with you and others, I need feedback from all of you. I don't mean harsh judgments and criticisms, which cause defensive barriers to pop up that interfere with our communication. I mean genuinely *constructive* feedback—problem-solving feedback. That's what does the trick.

Both self-disclosure (giving up your SECRETS), and constructive feedback (learning about your BLIND SPOTS) enlarge your OPEN window, paving the way to more effective communication.

Stretch your OPEN window!

