

9 What are some useful tools and techniques?

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Introduction

This chapter describes some tried and tested techniques in coaching and mentoring. We have used all of these in our own work and found them to be valuable. We present them in the order in which you might use them if working with a framework which starts with helping a client to tell their story, then proceeds to ways of helping them to explore possibilities and set goals, and finally develops and manages action plans.

These tools and techniques can be powerful. The less experienced coach or mentor would be advised to familiarize themselves with the techniques in a safe and appropriate context before using them with clients. Each technique or approach is presented by addressing these questions:

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- What is it?
- When should it be used?
- How does it work?
- What skills does the coach or mentor need?
- What are the advantages?
- What are the disadvantages?
- Are there any useful references?

Johari Window

What is it?

The Johari Window (Luft 1970) is a tool for increasing a person’s self-awareness and understanding of how they interact with others. ‘Johari’ is an abbreviation of the first names of its inventors, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. The Window, which represents a person, has four panes or quadrants, as illustrated in Figure 9.1. Each quadrant represents an element of personal awareness:

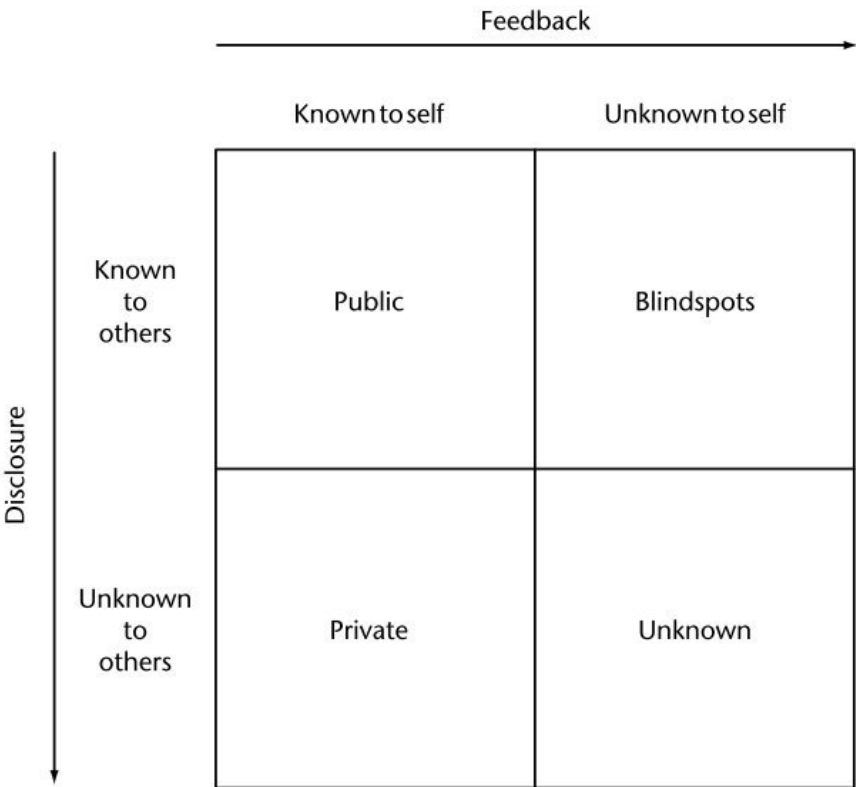


Figure 9.1 Johari Window

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- The public quadrant represents what is known by a person about themselves and which others also know about them.
- The blindspots quadrant represents things a person is not aware of about themselves, although these things are known to others.
- The private quadrant refers to things a person knows about themselves which they do not reveal to others.
- The unknown quadrant represents things about a person that are unknown both to themselves and to others.

A person can draw their own window, reflecting the relative sizes of each panel. Quadrants can change over time and in different situations. When a person seeks information – for example, by asking for feedback, the size of their public quadrant increases and so their blindspot quadrant decreases. When a person discloses information about themselves, the size of their public quadrant increases and their private quadrant decreases. Notice how change in the size of one quadrant affects the others.

When should it be used?

The Johari Window can help clients to reflect upon how they see themselves in relation to others, and how they communicate with others. It can encourage the client to consider, for example:

- The blindspots quadrant: is there any mismatch between their view of themselves and how others see them? How could this be reduced?
- The private quadrant: how much do they share of what they are thinking and feeling? Could more (or less) disclosure improve trust and relationships?
- The hidden quadrant: do they have hidden talents or potential that is currently undeveloped?

How does it work?

The client is invited to draw their window and talk in as much detail as they wish about each quadrant and the relationship between quadrants. They can discuss any changes they would like to make in the relative sizes of the quadrants.

What skills does the coach or mentor need?

The coach or mentor needs to explain the Johari Window and prompt the client to consider the relative sizes of each quadrant, and their

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contents. For example, looking at the private quadrant they might ask the client, either in relation to a particular context (e.g. a work team), or more generally:

- How much about your background and history do you tell others? About your personal and your professional life?
- How clear are you with others about what you are thinking? About what you are feeling? About your expectations of others? About what you want?
- What is the impact on relationships of what you tell others, and what you don't tell them?
- Is there anything you would like to change? How would this improve your relationships and effectiveness?

What are the advantages?

The Johari Window can help a client to increase their self-awareness. They can review their assumptions about what information they can disclose or ask for, and whether they are getting useful feedback from others. They can gain insight into how others see them, and how their behaviour may affect the impression they make on others.

What are the disadvantages?

A client may feel that they 'ought' to disclose more about themselves or 'ought' to ask for feedback. There are risks in inappropriate disclosure and feedback, and clients should be encouraged to evaluate for themselves what might be safe and appropriate. The coach or mentor should avoid creating the impression that feedback and disclosure are always helpful, regardless of circumstances.

Are there any useful references?

- Covey, S.R. (1989) *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. London: Simon & Schuster.
- Goleman, D. (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Luft, J. (1969) *Of Human Interaction*. Palo Alto, CA: National Press Books.
- Luft, J. (1970) *Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics*. Palo Alto, CA: National Press Books.