

Title

Exercise to the Johary Window

Source

Method presented during the International Trainers Laboratory, October 2001 by Irena Zweifel (Switzerland), original Chilli Team 2000. For further information on the International Trainers Laboratory, please contact IJAB e.V., Kerstin Giebel, Heussallee 30, D-53113 Bonn, Tel.: 0228/9506223, Fax: 0228/9506199, E-Mail: giebel@ijab.de.

Field/Content

“Self-Perception” and “perception of others”

Duration

Input / instructions: 15 mins.

Exercise: 20 mins. (more is better)

Evaluation: 15 – 30 minutes according to size of group

Participants

12 –20 (work with 2 trainers in bigger groups), 12 yrs. onward

Aims

- The recognition that the image of ourselves rarely correspond to the image others have of us
- To get to know oneself better
- To apply feedback

Background

Basic thoughts

The ability to have a clear perception of one’s own personality as well as the personality of others, including their strengths and weaknesses, facilitates the management of conflict situations.

Many misunderstandings and annoying situations stem from a misinterpretation of the inner motivation of others. Basically, one misinterprets their inner motivation as a particular type of behaviour. Hence I might think of someone as ‘jealous and arrogant’ when in reality their own inner feelings are more reflective of fear and insecurity. At the same time, particularly in a conflict situation, it is important to take a clear position/stance. ‘To bubble on about it’ often leads to a deepening of the conflict. If I can clearly recognise and make others recognise what I want and what I feel, this will inevitably in turn lead to clarity in the management of the conflict.

In this respect training of the perceptual abilities of the adults as well as teenagers is of significant importance. Perceptual abilities include ‘self perception’ as well as the ‘perception of others’ (meaning: what do I want / what do I feel and what do others think I want / what kind of impression do I leave on others).

Furthermore: You can’t always read everything off peoples’ faces! This is why a clear and non-insulting give and take of feedback is incorporated in this training.

Theoretical basis

The term 'self perception' denotes how I see myself, how I feel from inside and what impression I believe to make on others. A typical phrase expressing self perception may be 'I feel all small and insecure. But I am sure others won't notice.'

Often, however, there is a fundamental difference between self perception and 'perception of others', meaning how others perceive me, what others might think / feel about me. A typical phrase here would be: 'Paul always comes across as having everything under control, and sometimes he is extremely arrogant.'

The huge complexity of information that people are exposed to requires selection in order to process that information. By far not everything that happens in and around us is consciously taken in and processed. Much remains unclear and blurred, if left unspoken. But nevertheless it influences our behaviour.

Studies have shown that information is first perceived, then in a second step stored and interpreted. It is only after these steps have been taken that one is looking for possible actions to the situations, and finally the execution of these actions. Here are the steps again:

- Perception
- Storage and interpretation
- Search for possible actions
- Selection
- Execution

The Johary Window

The window model was designed by Johary, a communication scientist. It serves the purpose of looking at 'self perception' as well as 'perception of others'. In constructive conflict management the model serves to find clear limits for appropriate feedback. It also serves to judge the significance of one's own feedback. This refers only ever to certain windows, but never refers to the Taboo window.

The Johary window model consists of 4 elements:

1. The Public
2. The Private
3. The Blind Spot
4. The Taboo

The Public

This is what I know about myself as well as what all others, who know me a little better, know about me. Example: 'I adore my little sister.' 'If someone was to insult my mother I would get extremely upset.'

According to the individual group and individual constellation of people, other aspects of personality may fall into this category. For my family and myself this can be entirely different than for my colleagues and myself.

The Private

This is about areas of my personality which are known to me, but which I do not wish to show to others. And this in fact is my 'right', since nobody wants to be 'seen-through'. Things we merely believe others don't know about us belong to this window. This area is, in accordance with the human psyche, often full of fear. I may possibly not like much some of own attributes / character traits, and hence it may take a lot of energy to hide these from others. My fears consist of others not liking me anymore once they uncover the hidden secrets.

Example: I am very jealous of my best friend. She does better than me in every regard, better at school, better at sports, and even with the boys she is doing better than me. Of course I won't show her that, but only show my happiness for her, which I do honestly feel (apart from the concomitant jealousy).

It is however possible that my friend can feel my jealousy nevertheless. In some cases it might help to show a little bit of my 'shadow' and to, for example, say: 'I am so happy for you,

and at the same time I am sometimes jealous.’ Again – the technique of constructive feedback is needed here. Other good examples can be found in the area / realms of ‘being in love’.

I think A. is brilliant, but I don’t want anyone to know about it. OR: I think A. is brilliant, (s)he is aware of this, but nobody else knows.

The 3rd option is: I think A. is brilliant, I am completely sure (s)he knows about it (after all I am always extra nice and extra witty in his/her presence). But A. thinks I find him/her stupid.

In all these cases we actually speak about The Private. Many misunderstandings result from my belief that others would recognise things from my ‘hidden window’ when this is **not** the case. Help can be rendered here via self-expression and feedback.

The Blind Spot

In particular circumstances my environment knows me better than I know myself. A single example can be found in the Lorient sketch: A man is proposing marriage to his girlfriend with spaghetti stuck in his face. His beloved stares at him in disbelief and can hardly listen to him. He, himself, believes that she wants to turn him down.

Another example: I myself consider my behaviour as keen (engagiert) but my colleagues think I always need to have the last word. The Blind Spot, hence, is what we do not realise about ourselves, but what others know about us or believe to know about us.

The Taboo

And finally there is the area of my own personality, which is unknown to both myself as well as to others around me. This area belongs to the unconscious. This is what we do not wish to know for biographic-psychological reasons and hence it is left in the unconscious. In the Johary window model this is called the ‘taboo’ area. For constructive feedback it is highly important to leave this area untouched – that it remains a taboo so to speak. Every (healthy) person rightfully defends him/herself when others start to ‘drill’ in their subconscious or try to interpret it or experiment with it. This is a definite and clear ‘violation of boundaries’. It often happens that people who are touched in this area (without having asked for it) ‘hit back’ straight from the unconscious. The work in this area (if required) is therefore exclusively reserved for psychotherapists.

Materials / Resources

Input sheet with exact description of the columns as well as work sheet, flip chart

Preparation

Prepare a flip chart with the Johary Window:

The Johary Window

Name:		
	Known to us	Unknown to us
Known to others	My own identity	The blind spot
Unknown to others	My shadow, my wall, my hidden parts	The big unknown ?

Methodology

- Explain the flip chart and preferably fill in the columns 'my own identity' 'my shadow', 'the blind spot' with personal information. The column 'the big unknown' remains empty.
- Form pairs, but only with someone whom I would like to 'share with' a little bit of my private life today.
- Everyone fills in on his / her paper the column 'My own identity' ('the Public') and 'My shadow' ('the Private'), so far as he or she wants to.
- Exchange the papers with your partner and fill in your partner's column 'the Blind Spot'. Write 1 or 2 points down of which you think your partner might find them useful. Be careful with the way you articulate yourself.
- Once both papers are filled in the partners sit down together again and exchange their new findings.

Tips:

- Tell the participants to not only jot down superficial things because otherwise nothing new will be learned, neither about oneself nor about the others.
- Encourage the participants to try this exercise with their parents, siblings and friends.
- No personal information will be communicated to the group as not to destroy the trust element.
- Everything which is said remains among the participants.

Evaluation / Debriefing

How was it / what was it like to communicate your own shadow to others?

Has everybody learned something new about themselves?

Was it difficult to write something negative about the other(s)?

Tip to the trainer: Careful not to cross personal boundaries!

Variants