

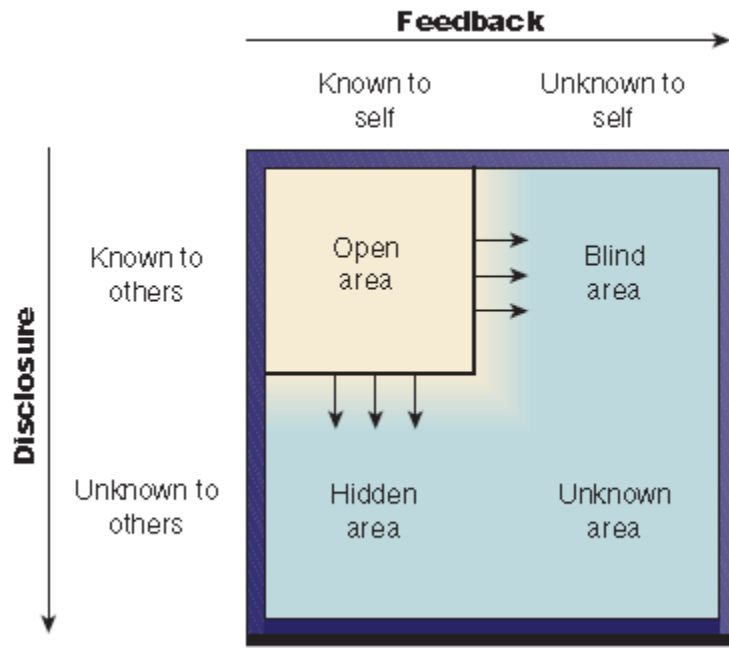
Know Yourself: Applying the Johari Window

Knowing yourself—becoming more aware of your values, beliefs, and prejudices—is a powerful way to improve your perceptions. Let's say that you had an unpleasant experience with lawyers and developed negative emotions toward people in this profession. Being sensitive to these emotions should enable you to regulate your behavior more effectively when working with legal professionals. Moreover, if co-workers are aware of your antipathy to lawyers, they are more likely to understand your actions and help you to be objective in the future.

The **Johari Window** is a popular model for understanding how co-workers can increase their mutual understanding. Developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingram (hence the name *Johari*), this model divides information about you into four “windows”—open, blind, hidden, and unknown—based on whether your own values, beliefs, and experiences are known to you and to others (see Figure 1). The *open area* includes information about you that is known both to you and to others. For example, both you and your co-workers may be aware that you don't like to be near people who smoke cigarettes. The *blind area* refers to information that is known to others but not to you. For example, your colleagues might notice that you are embarrassed and awkward when meeting someone confined to a wheelchair, but you are unaware of this fact. Information known to you but unknown to others is found in the *hidden area*. We all have personal secrets about our likes, dislikes, and personal experiences. Finally, the *unknown area* includes your values, beliefs, and experiences that aren't known to you or others.

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Figure 1



The main objective of the Johari Window is to increase the size of the open area so that both you and colleagues are aware of your perceptual limitations. This is partly accomplished by reducing the hidden area through *disclosure*—informing others of your beliefs, feelings, and experiences that may influence the work relationship. The open area also increases through *feedback* from others about your behaviors. This information helps you to reduce your blind area, because co-workers often see things in you that you do not see. Finally, the combination of disclosure and feedback occasionally produces revelations about information in the unknown area.

The Johari Window applies to some diversity awareness and meaningful contact activities that we described earlier. By learning about cultural differences and communicating more with people from different backgrounds, we gain a better understanding of their

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behavior. Engaging in open dialogue with co-workers also applies the Johari Window. As we communicate with others, we naturally tend to disclose more information about ourselves and eventually feel comfortable providing candid feedback to them. The perceptual process represents the filter through which information passes from the external environment to our brain. As such, it is really the beginning of the learning process, which we discuss next.

Reference: McShane–Von Glinow, Organizational Behavior. (2004).

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