

How to Improve Your Interpersonal Communication Skills

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Introduction

Successful teachers are effective communicators not only in the classroom but also in their interpersonal relationships with peers, supervisors, and parents.

In this workshop session you will evaluate, analyze, and identify your interpersonal communication skills.

First you will complete a communication preferences questionnaire and plot your responses using “The Johari Window.” You then identify will your communication style. In doing this, you will not only see yourself as others see you; you also will see where improvement in your interpersonal communication skills is needed.

Communication Preferences

Instructions: There are 20 pairs of statements that give you alternative ways of communicating with others. Each pair has a value of five (5) points. Choose your preference in each of the pairs. If, based on your past performance, you feel strongly that one statement of the pair is an expression of the way you would behave in the situation, give that statement a five (5) and the other statement a zero (0). If you feel that your preference is not that clear and that you might prefer to respond in one way sometimes and in the other way at another time, give the stronger statement a three (3) and the other statement a two (2). A third way to respond is to feel fairly strongly about one of the statements, but less strong about the other. Give four (4) points to the stronger statement and one (1) point to the other. You may not be completely satisfied with the way the statement is phrased; however, make a choice anyway!

1. If I found that I had been misquoted and put in a bad light:
 - A. ____ I would go to the person who had misquoted me and tell them how upset such rumors make me.
 - B. ____ I would take such rumors in stride because I know the truth will come out.
2. If one of my co-workers began to act standoffish:
 - A. ____ I would ignore it and wait for the problem to iron itself out.
 - B. ____ I would find out what I did to cause the cool treatment.
3. If I am left out of a group project:
 - A. ____ I would inquire as to how it happened.
 - B. ____ I would go about my business on the assumption that it was an unconscious oversight.
4. If people ask me to do things I am reluctant to do:
 - A. ____ I would let them down easy and explain prior commitments.
 - B. ____ I would simply tell them I don't feel up to what they are requesting.
5. If I am complimented:
 - A. ____ I would accept the compliment in the spirit in which it was given.
 - B. ____ I would explain that the credit is undeserved and should really go to others.

6. If I had plans all made and someone upset them:
- A. ____ I would quietly make adjustments because I know that it wasn't done deliberately.
- B. ____ I would express my disappointment to the party involved.
7. If I had completed a task:
- A. ____ I would want people to give it an honest evaluation.
- B. ____ I would let the work stand on its own merits inasmuch as I did the best I could.
8. If in department meetings my ideas met with opposition:
- A. ____ I would explain my reasons more clearly.
- B. ____ I would welcome the additional insight brought to the matter under discussion.
9. If I got into a disagreement with someone:
- A. ____ I would cool it and hope that the trouble would go away.
- B. ____ I would bring the matter out in the open and discuss the reasons for my feelings.
10. If I made a statement which was subsequently shown to be inaccurate:
- A. ____ I would let the matter drop.
- B. ____ I would acknowledge my mistake and seek correct information.
11. If in department meetings an important issue is discussed:
- A. ____ I would keep the discussion on a reasonable, logical level.
- B. ____ I would tell people how I feel about the matter.
12. If it were reported to me that I had treated someone unfairly:
- A. ____ I would examine my conscience and try to correct the condition.
- B. ____ I would go to the person and ask how he/she felt about it.
13. If people ask my opinion about something they have done:
- A. ____ I would encourage them by pointing out at least one commendable thing.
- B. ____ I would tell them what I feel about it as honestly and as kindly as I could.


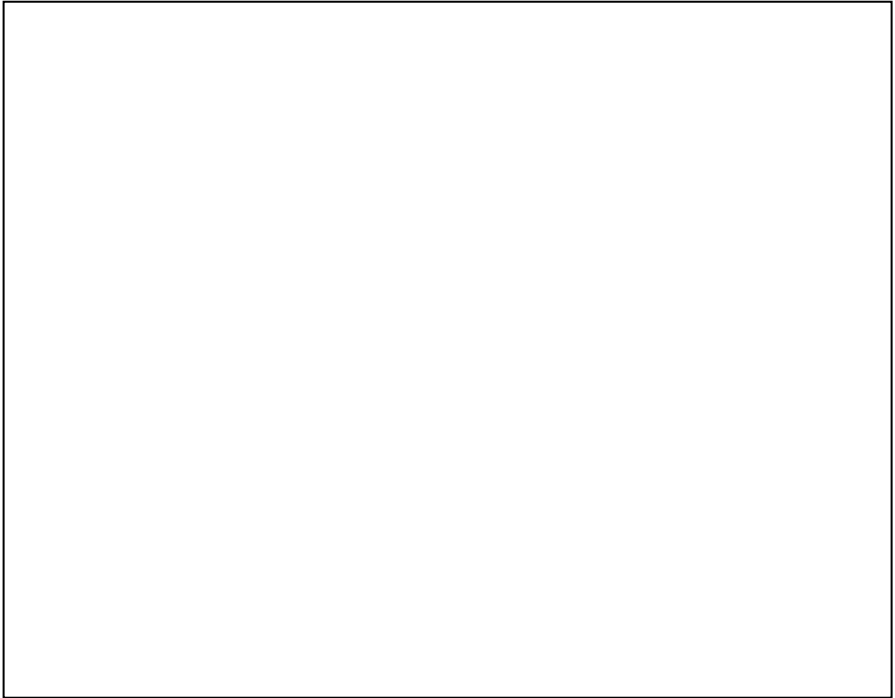



















14. If a certain topic always causes a conflict with one of my co-workers:
- A. ____ I would avoid the topic.
 - B. ____ I would find an opportunity for a thorough discussion.
15. If people got on my nerves by doing inconsiderate things:
- A. ____ I would put up with the situation.
 - B. ____ I would find an opportunity to let them know how I feel about what they are doing.
16. If a person tells me I am doing something irritating:
- A. ____ I would ask the individual to explain more specifically how my actions cause irritation.
 - B. ____ I would explain the reasons for what I am doing.
17. If we talked about departmental problems:
- A. ____ I would bring out reasons why people aren't cooperating.
 - B. ____ I would express how I feel about the situation.
18. If a superior asked me to do something:
- A. ____ I would do what is asked because I know superiors have authority over subordinates.
 - B. ____ I would discuss the matter and explain how I felt about it.
19. If someone enthusiastically proposed an ill-advised plan of action:
- A. ____ I would applaud their enthusiasm and fall in with the suggestion.
 - B. ____ I would try not to throw cold water and, at the same time, explain any hesitancy I may feel about it.
20. If I am passed over for promotion:
- A. ____ I would speak to my supervisor and ask why I was not selected and what I can do to improve my chance for success the next time.
 - B. ____ I would accept it as a part of life.

DIRECTIONS FOR JOHARI WINDOW

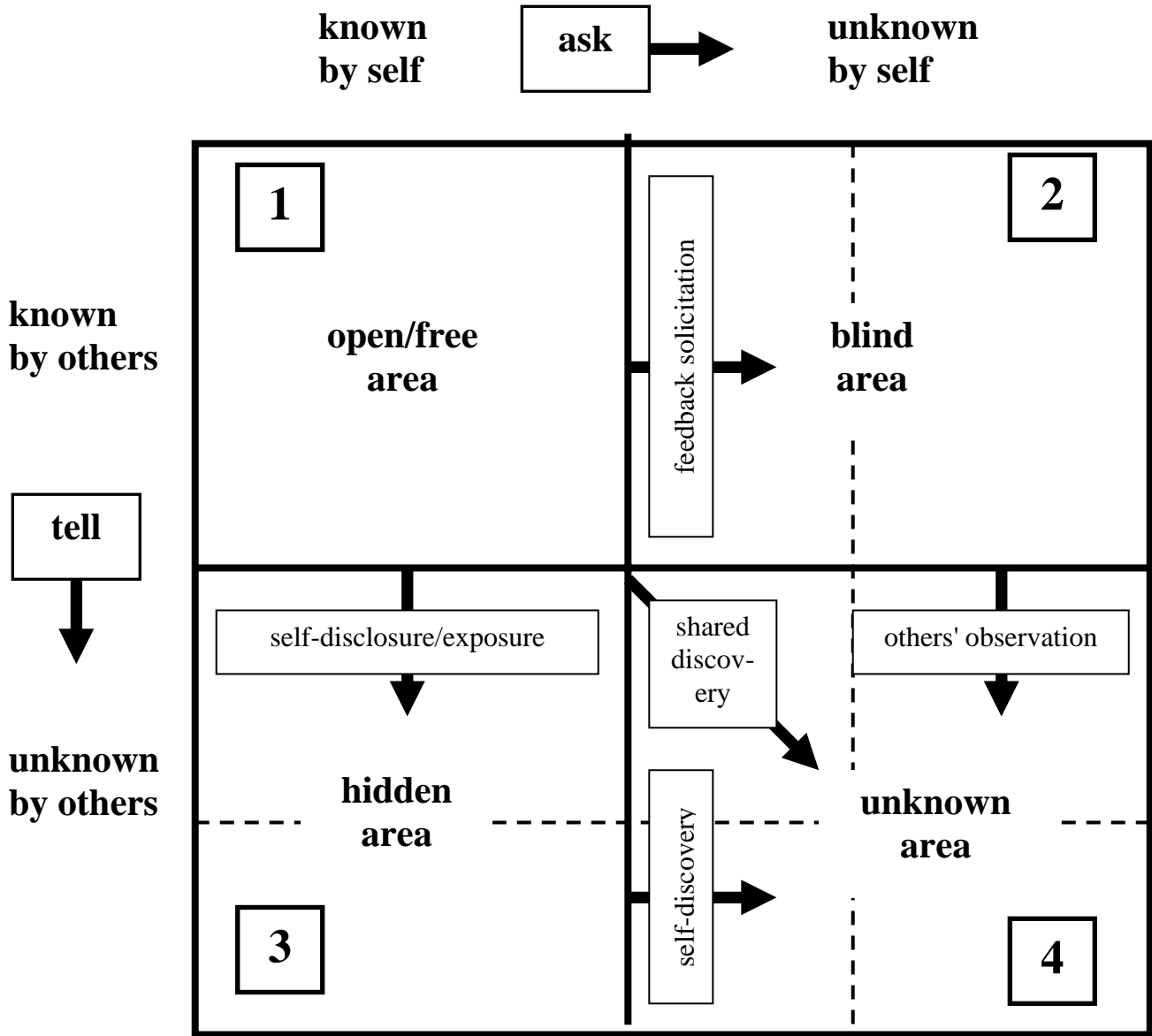
1. Fill in all your answers from the Communications Preference Worksheet.
2. Place numbers from triangles in the left-hand column at bottom and total the column.
3. Place numbers from circles in the right-hand column at bottom and total the column.
4. Plot the Disclosure total (left-hand column) on the vertical axis of the graph.
5. Plot the Feedback total (right-hand column) on the horizontal axis of the graph.

INTERPRETATION OF THE JOHARI WINDOW EXERCISE

Feedback

A	B	Feedback											
		5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50		
1. 	_____												
2. _____													
3. 	_____												
4. _____													
5. 	_____												
6. _____													
7. 	_____												
8. _____													
9. _____													
10. _____													
11. _____												Put Triangles in this column	Put Circles in this column
12. _____												1. _____	2. _____
13. _____												4. _____	3. _____
14. _____												6. _____	5. _____
15. _____												9. _____	7. _____
16. 	_____											11. _____	8. _____
17. _____												13. _____	10. _____
18. _____												15. _____	12. _____
19. _____												17. _____	14. _____
20. 	_____											18. _____	16. _____
		19. _____											
		Total _____	Total _____										

Johari Window Model



© design alan chapman 2001-4 based on [Ingham and Luft's Johari Window concept](#)
 Not to be sold or published. More free online training resources are at www.businessballs.com.
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THE FOUR INTERPERSONAL STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

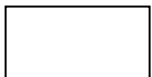
The combination of varying degrees of disclosure and the acceptance of feedback gives us four styles for relating interpersonally. By being aware of our preferred style, we become able to improve our communication skills. It would be a mistake to seek a radical change in our customary behavior. We have developed our style in response to certain personality needs. A preference for introversion or extroversion plays a part here. However, all of us can be more skillful in our interpersonal communication.

STYLE A: THE SMALL SQUARE



This style of communication is the result of minimal exposure and minimal feedback acceptance. Persons whose communication style can be charted as a very small square seem to others to be going around in a bubble. The walls between these individuals and others are kept high. These persons reveal very little about themselves and in addition, seem unconcerned as to peoples' relationship with them. These individuals may have great and hidden depths but they are not readily apparent to others. Because these persons reveal so little of themselves they are largely unknown to others. This may create some uneasiness or suspicion or even fear in the minds of others. If lack of disclosure is joined to lack of acceptance of feedback these individuals may be out of step with other people. They are unaware of how people respond to them, of what people think of them or how they are interpreted and, as a result, they may act in ways that are out of the pattern of the group. If the square is extremely small, the type of behavior of these individuals may be very eccentric. The scholars buried in their books, the scientists with test tubes in their ivory tower, the administrators who live in the executive suite...all of these may find the small square a comfortable space to occupy. However, for most people the small square style of communication is a prison.

STYLE B: THE HORIZONTAL



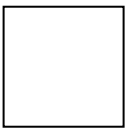
The horizontal style of communication is produced by a small amount of self-disclosure and a constant effort to get feedback from others. These individuals are very wary of letting anything be known about themselves but are eager to find out what others think and feel, especially about themselves. The horizontal style of communication may lead individuals to react much more frequently than act. Because of the lack of self-revelation, others are unsure as to where these persons stand. This may generate fear or suspicion. The horizontal style communicators may find that people are distrustful of them and even avoid them. People probably are not that cautious in expressing their opinions and their thoughts to the horizontal communicator, but since others don't know where the questioner is coming from or what use is going to be made of information they share, they hesitate to be open. It has been found that people in supervisory roles frequently communicate in a horizontal way. Supervisors are often quite eager to find out information but are very reluctant to communicate the background for their request. Communication is a two-way street. Consequently, if we wish to establish effective communication patterns, we not only must have our ears open to pick up the feedback that people give us but we also must give some of ourselves in return.

STYLE C: THE VERTICAL



The vertical configuration, namely, a lot of disclosure and little acceptance of feedback, may be the result of a high extroversion preference. Vertical communicators will tell “all” at the drop of a hat. As a result of this, they are extremely well known to others. Frequently, people find themselves trusting vertical communicators and, unless their loquacity is extreme, liking them. The fault that this style of communication leads to is that vertical communicators talk out of context. Since they don’t pay enough attention to the feedback responses of others they may frequently be out of touch and not know it. The vertical communicators talk much more than they listen.

STYLE D: THE LARGE SQUARE



From the viewpoint of sheer communication, the large square that is created by ample self-disclosure and ample acceptance of feedback is the ideal. These communicators do not hesitate to reveal thoughts and feelings when appropriate and they are aware of the responses of others. While we say that from the viewpoint of the art of communication this is ideal, namely, a balance between disclosure and acceptance of feedback, it may not be ideal for all people. We come back to the thought we previously expressed, namely, that our own style is probably a response to the needs of our personality structure. Yet, it would seem reasonable that in situations when we are called upon to communicate freely with others that there should be a balance between our self-disclosure and our acceptance of feedback.

What the Johari Window exercise does is give us an indication that we may be reflecting a detrimental imbalance. The theory behind this self-discovery instrument, which is a diagnostic tool, alerts us as to what we might want to do in order to improve our communication effectiveness. After all, in terms of being responsible for communicating effectively, we have choices!

FEEDBACK

Feedback is communication to a person or group that provides relative information about what they have said or done that may or may not affect others.

Some criteria for useful feedback:

1. It is **descriptive** rather than evaluative. By describing one's own reaction, it leaves the individual free to use it or not use it as they see fit. By avoiding evaluative language, it reduces the need for the individual to react defensively.
2. It is **specific** rather than general. To be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as to be told that, "Just now when we were deciding the issue, you did not listen to what others had to say, and I felt forced to accept your arguments or face a verbal attack from you."
3. It takes into account the **needs of both the receiver and the giver of feedback**. Feedback can be destructive when it serves only one's own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end.
4. It is **directed toward behavior, which the receiver can do something about**. Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of some shortcoming over which they have no control.
5. It is **solicited**, rather than imposed. Feedback is most useful when the receiver has formulated the kind of question, which those doing the observing can answer.
6. It is **well timed**. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior (depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, support available from others, etc.).
7. It is **checked to insure understanding**. One way of doing this is to have the receiver try to rephrase the feedback received to see if it corresponds to what the sender had in mind.
8. When feedback is given in a training group, both giver and receiver have an opportunity to **validate the accuracy of the feedback**. Do others, in fact, share the impressions of this one person?

Feedback, then, is a **gift**. It is a way of giving help and serves as a useful mechanism for the individual who wants to learn how well their behavior matches their intentions.

Feedback is the Breakfast of Champions!

REASONS FOR LACK OF FEEDBACK

- Don't know the power of the gift
- Don't want to hear the truth
- May confirm suspicions
- Could cause embarrassment
- Don't want to hurt feelings
- Fear of "punishment"
- Others

REASONS FOR LACK OF DISCLOSURE

- Information is power
- Lack of trust
- Been told not to share
- Takes time to process
- Not sure how it will be taken
- Messenger gets punished