

# Understanding Yourself and Your Strengths

We are often unaware of how we present ourselves to other people and how we are perceived by them. In fact, we can be unaware of how well we know ourselves. The **Johari window** is a technique that helps people better understand their relationship with themselves and others.

Use this technique as a guide when discussing things with others. Make notes and then transfer your observations into the window worksheet over the page.

## Box 1: Open / Free

What you know about you and others know about you too.

**Objective:** Write down what you know to be true about yourself in terms of strengths. They could be positive traits, for example, "I'm a good listener. I really help people to feel heard". Or it could be more 'negative' traits for example, "I'm a perfectionist but this has begun to upset my partner". As we are looking for strengths, try to stay away from the negatives or reframe things to highlight the positives. Check with colleagues, friends and family to see if they agree that what you have written is accurate. What you think of as a strength may not be what other people perceive. It's important that you deal in reality not wishful thinking.

## Box 3: Hidden

What you know about yourself, but others don't know.

**Objective:** Here we are looking for strengths from behaviours or thought patterns that you know you engage in that others don't know about. You may hide these things because you think people won't like you if you use certain behaviours, skills or share certain thoughts. For example: Waiting, to observe before engaging in something. Some of the things you do might be less positive. In every instance, try to think of ways in which you could refine these behaviours to make them work better for you in a broader range of circumstances.

## Box 2: Blind

Things you don't know about yourself, but others know about you.

**Objective:** Develop this area to raise your own self-awareness and see a fuller picture of yourself. Ask colleagues, friends and family for help to uncover strengths that you have overlooked because they may be things that come naturally to you or you don't notice that you do. Make sure you frame this as an exercise to identify strengths. If others are putting forward negative ideas try to reframe what they are saying as a positive. Once you've done that, you can work with them to identify ways you could develop and grow.

|           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| Open/Free | Blind   |
|           |         |
| Hidden    | Unknown |

## Box 4: Unknown

Things about yourself that are unknown to you and others.

Sometimes called your unknown self, this concept can seem a little strange at first but once you dig a little deeper it makes more sense. Unknown strengths are revealed by thinking about situations which worked well for you but you haven't really explored *why*.

**Objective:** Think back to situations where something positive arrived in your life or a situation turned out well. Examine the behaviours, actions and thoughts you had or you engaged in that led up to the outcome. Identify and label these. Are these generic strengths you have? Can you turn these lessons into identifiable skills you can use again and again? Discuss these with others and clarify your thinking on these new areas.

## Open/Free

*Example:* You know you're kind and others confirm that to you too.

What you know about yourself **and** others know about you too.

## Blind

*Example:* When someone tells you: "You're amazing at ...", and you're surprised.

Things you don't know about yourself, but **others** know about you. Your 'blind spot', positive or negative.

*Example:* A strength that you hide or play down.

What **you** know about yourself, but others don't know.

## Hidden

*Example:* Situations where something positive arrived in your life or something turned out well. Revisit your behaviours, actions and thoughts.

Things about yourself that are unknown to you **and** others.

## Unknown