

Discover yourself: open up your “Johari window” with “Dohari” Feedback

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ABSTRACT

The Johari window is a psychological matrix that is unique for each person. It is segmented into four panes: “things I know about me”, “things I don’t know about me”; “things others know about me” and “things others don’t know about me”. The panes are not the same in all relationships and are dynamic. Everyone has a “blind spot”, that prevents us from advancing to the next level of development. We should help our students and peers to achieve the “ideal Johari window” with the widest “open area” and help them discover their “blind spot” which will lead them to success and innovations. With feedback culture and self-reflection this area may be discovered and become open which will disclose their inner potential. In this paper, the importance of bidirectional feedback “dohari” is illustrated through the concept of the Johari window. The tips for giving and receiving feedback are summarized.

KEY WORDS

Feedback, Formative assessment, Medical education, Reflection

INTRODUCTION

The psychological matrix, the Johari window, is used to enable self-awareness and understanding of our own behaviors, feelings, and motivation during interpersonal interactions which can be used in medical education reflecting the teacher-student relationship.¹ It is a two-by-two model that gives four squares named windows which is a nice metaphor- “*windows into yourself*” (Fig. 1). The four squares: open self, blind self, hidden self, and unknown self, are differently sized depending upon the relationship between ourselves and others.²

The first window is the “*open self*,” which represents parts of students that they are aware of and are known to teachers. This can be phrased as an “*I know, you know*” window. The second window is called the “*hidden self*” which corresponds to the part of students that is only known to them. “*I know, but you don’t*”. For example, the student may be having some fear, some issues that others are unaware of. They may be keeping it hidden from their peer and teachers because they don’t want to be criticized



Figure 1. The Johari window with four panes

or embarrassed. The key to broadening this area is to offer a safe non-threatening learning environment where the learners can open up and discuss their concerns with their peers and teachers. This way the hidden window for that student will narrow and the open area will expand. (Fig. 2a). This will enhance the deeper connection and trust which

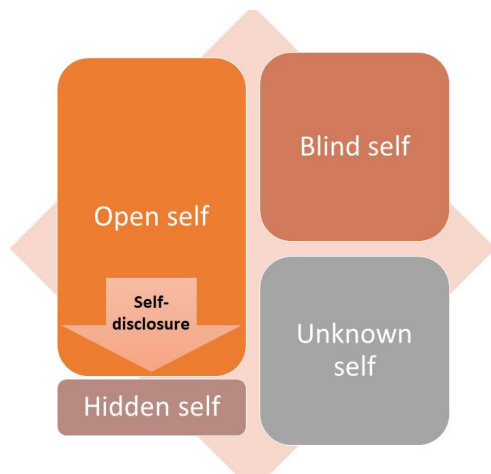


Figure 2a. The expansion of the “open self” of the Johari window with self-disclosure (downwards) and b. effective feedback (towards the right)

enables the students to do better with the help offered. The third window is the “*blind self*”, the part of students that they don’t realize about themselves but others can see. The phrase that describes this window is “*I don’t know, but you do.*” The information hidden from them could be negative or positive. Teachers can help make themselves more aware of their strengths and weaknesses with honest constructive feedback that expands the open area to the right, decreasing the size of the blind self (Fig. 2b).

Once the blind spot is revealed, the students can make significant advancements to meet their goals. Finally, the fourth is “*unknown self*,” “*I don’t know, you don’t know*” waiting to be discovered in the future. This is a crucial area of human potential that is underestimated or untested due to a lack of opportunity, confidence, or training. Students who are naive may have a very broad “*unknown area*” that neither they nor we as teachers are aware of. Giving the students new experiences reveal their undiscovered part and lead to the discovery of their hidden talents.

THE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK DIALOGUE “THE DOHARI”

The term *Dohori*, in Nepali, means ‘back and forth’ where the exchange of lyrical phrases between the two contesting singers occurs. This can be a metaphor for the feedback loop which should be a two-way dialogue with the learner to identify their learning/performance gap and not just convey the thoughts, judgments, and advice in one direction.^{3,4} Usually, the teacher is often the active giver and the learners are the passive recipients of the feedback. However, effective feedback should be a reciprocal learning conversation, where the teacher and the learner both reflect and analyze the learning activity, share their perspective and have mutual insights, and plan for further improvement. Feedback is proven to facilitate learning, however, if given in the wrong way can have deleterious effects instead.⁵ Feedback should not be a synonym for criticism. Leading an effective high-quality

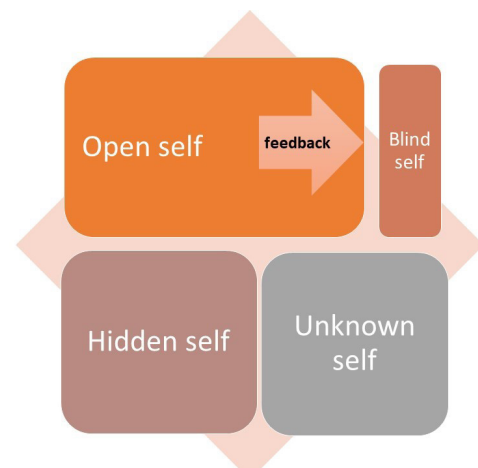


Figure 2b. The expansion of the “open self” of the Johari window with effective feedback (towards the right)

feedback conversation is a critical skill that can be learned and improved.

TIPS FOR GIVING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

1. Establish a psychologically safe learning environment

The feedback process can be emotionally uncomfortable and stressful to the receptor as their performance is discussed, analyzed, and judged by others. The way the environment is created by the teacher leads to the quality of the feedback that follows. Good rapport to enhance trust between the teacher and the learner is a priority. What, when, why, and how of the feedback process should be collaboratively derived and explicitly clear to the learners. A setting with minimal distraction and privacy should be chosen. Relaxing seating arrangements facing each other and promoting eye-to-eye contact allows a collegial atmosphere. Confidentiality is of utmost importance and should not be breached. Mistakes should not be considered a crime to be punished, but an opportunity to improve upon. Once we create a psychologically safe environment for the receivers and provide respectful feedback for learning, they will be more receptive to it and also share their thoughts and feelings without the threat to be humiliated or ashamed, thus narrowing the hidden and the blind self.

2. Encourage self-reflection from the learner

Asking students to self-reflect on the incident and ask to share their frame on why they did it in such a way may narrow down the hidden area of the student to us. Studies have proved that the learning goals stem from a combination of self-assessment and feedback from the teacher.⁶⁻⁸ Some strategies to encourage the learner’s ability to reflect on their own performance and identify the ways to improve on future performance, like using exploring open-ended questions to facilitate the learner to speak up, listening without interrupting, using reflective verbal and nonverbal cues should be practiced. Making assumptions without

listening to the perspective of the learners, criticizing, and judging are the roadblocks to effective feedback. The future improvement plan based on the pre-identified goal should be articulated mutually. Ideal learning experience occurs when both teachers and students seek answers to each of the three questions: 1. where am I going? “feed-up” 2. How am I going? “feed-back” 3. Where to next? “feed-forward”.⁷ Moreover, a chance for the learner to express their feelings after the feedback needs to be given. We should recognize and acknowledge the emotions expressed by the learner during the process.

3. To focus on performance with “good judgment”

The feedback should be specific and actionable based on performance and objective behavior, not attributing to personal characteristics. Vague terms “good, excellent, great” or strong adjectives “never, always” should be avoided. The feedback should be balanced, neither too sugar-coated nor too harsh. A balance between overly kind/positive and harsh/negative feedback with a respectful tone is the key. Feedback should reinforce existing strengths and increase recipients’ abilities to detect and remedy errors on their own. The observed concrete performance should be explicitly compared to the standard of performance. In contrast, comparing the learner’s performance to the performance of other learners can be detrimental. The discussion should not only limit to “what happened” but should go deeper to the problem exploring “why it happened”. Once the source of the performance gap is identified, an action plan for improvement should be collaboratively developed and agreed upon.

4. Develop a feedback culture

Feedback should be a continuous process, not a one-time event. A timeline for reassessment and follow-up needs to be identified before the feedback session is concluded and express our availability. A teacher-student, peer-peer, and student-teacher feedback culture should be ingrained in our daily routine.

Regardless of where we are in our careers, all of us have a “blind and hidden self” that prevents us from reaching the next stage of growth and development. One way to shrink this pane is by seeking and receiving external feedback proactively which can be a powerful initiative towards making improvements by recognizing the strengths and weaknesses in our performance.⁹

TIPS TO RECEIVE THE FEEDBACK

1. Listen actively

This means not interrupting and not being defensive. We can absorb more information if we are concentrating on listening and understanding rather than being defensive and focusing on our response to the feedback being given. Our body language and tone of voice often reflect our minds. Our attentive and receptive behavior indicates

that we value what someone has to say and may ease the feedback environment.

2. Ask for clarification

We should make sure we understand what is being said before analyzing and responding. Paraphrasing key points to confirm we have interpreted the feedback correctly.

3. Take time to ponder on the feedback and be open

We should be open and receptive to new ideas and opinions. Others may have a completely different viewpoint on a given topic which may be worthwhile learning tips. Assess the value of the feedback, the consequences of using it or ignoring it, and then decide accordingly.

4. Close the loop

It depends entirely on us on what we want to do with the feedback but do them courtesy and always appreciate the feedback.

Ongoing performance-based feedback conversation “dohari”, self-assessment, and reflection are essential for opening our self-hidden potential and blind spot (Fig. 3) which will lead to the next target of professional growth regardless of where we are in our careers in the medical profession. Studies have demonstrated that feedback is a skill set that can be taught and a quick teaching intervention can objectively and significantly improve feedback quality.^{10,11}

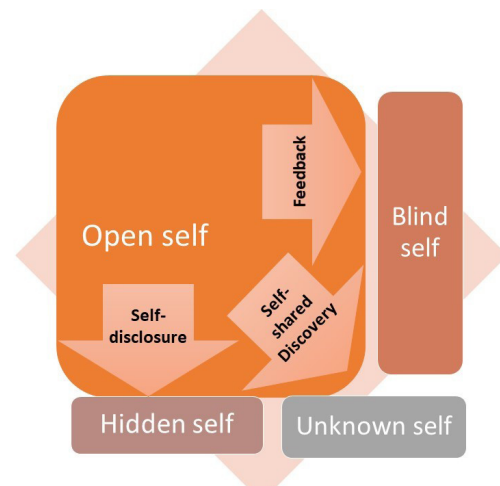


Figure 3. The ideal Johari window with a wide “open self” with self-disclosure, effective feedback, and self- or shared discovery

To summarize, factors that enhance institutional feedback culture, and feedback-seeking/acceptance behavior needs further improvement and the feedback culture should be embedded in the medical curriculum as an integral part of ongoing formative assessment.

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