

# The Johari Window

	What you see in me	What you do <u>not</u> see in me
What I see in me	<b>The Public Self</b>	<b>The Private (or hidden) Self</b>
What I do <u>not</u> see in me	<b>The Blind Self</b>	<b>The Undiscovered Self</b>

**The Public Self** The Public Self is the part of ourselves that we are happy to share with others and discuss openly. Thus you and I both see and can talk openly about this 'me' and gain a common view of who I am in this element.

**The Private Self** There are often parts of ourselves that are too private to share with others. We hide these away and refuse to discuss them with other people or even expose them in any way. Private elements may be embarrassing or shameful in some way. They may also be fearful or seek to avoid being discussed for reasons of vulnerability. Between the public and private selves, there are partly private, partly public aspects of ourselves that we are prepared to share only with trusted others.

**The Blind Self** We often assume that the public and private selves are all that we are. However, the views that others have of us may be different from those we have of ourselves. For example a person who considers themselves as intelligent may be viewed as an arrogant and socially ignorant by others.

Our blind self may remain blind because others will not discuss this part of us for a range of reasons. Perhaps they realize that we would be unable to accept what they see. Perhaps they have tried to discuss this and we have been so blind that we assume their views are invalid. They may also withhold this information as it gives them power over us.

**The Undiscovered Self** Finally, the fourth self is one which neither us nor other people see. This undiscovered self may include both good and bad things that may remain forever undiscovered or may one day be discovered, entering the private, blind or maybe even public selves.

Between the Blind and Undiscovered Selves, are partly hidden selves that only some people see. Psychologists and those who are more empathic, for example, may well see more than the average person.

# About Process Groups

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## ❖ What is a Process Group?

Group therapy is a powerful tool for growth and change. In process groups, 5-10 individuals meet face to face to share their struggles and concerns with the facilitation 1-2 trained group therapists. The power of process groups lies in the unique opportunity to receive multiple perspectives, support, encouragement and feedback from other individuals in safe and confidential environment. **These interpersonal interactions can provide group members an opportunity to deepen their level of self-awareness and to learn how they relate to others.**

Process groups are typically unstructured. There isn't a specific topic for each group session, but some of the groups may be focused on a particular theme or the group may be target to specific group of individuals (e.g., women, men, or older students). Members are welcome to bring any issues to the group that they feel are important, and the primary focus of therapy in the group is on **the interactions among group members**. Members are encouraged to give support and feedback to others, and to work with the reactions and responses that other members' contributions bring up for them.

## ❖ What can I expect from being in group therapy?

The first few sessions of a process group usually focus on the establishment of trust. During this time, the group therapists and group members work towards establishing a level of trust that allows them to communicate openly and honestly. In a climate of trust, people feel free to care about and help each other. New members are often amazed at how much their contributions help other members. Group trust is enhanced when all members make a commitment to the group.

During the group meeting time, members are responsible for talking about what is troubling them. Discussion flows according to what members would like to talk about -- the group leaders do not, for the most part, assign topics for the group to discuss. Members are encouraged to give support and feedback to others, and to work with the reactions and responses that other members' contributions bring up for them. Group members and group therapists may serve as models for effective communication, offer problem-solving strategies, and promote self-acceptance and self-support.

As individuals begin interacting freely with other group members, they usually re-experience or recreate some of the interpersonal difficulties that brought them to the group in the first place. Many of the reasons people seek help with personal issues usually stem from difficulties in their relationships with others. Under the skilled direction of a group therapist, **the group is able to point out troublesome interpersonal patterns by providing feedback and support and offering alternatives**, and in such a way that the difficulty becomes resolved.

Unexpressed feelings are a major reason why people experience difficulties and distress. Sharing your thoughts and feelings in a safe and supportive environment is an important part of group therapy and strongly affects how much you will be helped. The climate of trust provided by the group promotes an environment where members feel safe to share their struggles and work collaboratively to understand one another. As individuals increase their self-awareness, develop new ways of relating to people, and learn new adaptive behaviors, they make progress towards their personal goals that brought them to the group.

# How Can I Get the Most Out of Group Therapy?

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- **Be yourself.** Start from where you are, not how you think others want you to be. This might mean asking questions, expressing anger, or communicating confusion and hopelessness. Change begins with whatever you feel free to disclose.
- **Define goals.** Take time before each session to define your goals for that session. Nevertheless, being flexible about your goals is also important. You may be surprised to find that your goals continue to change throughout the group process.
- **Recognize and respect your pace for getting involved in the group.** Some group members will always be ready to disclose their thoughts and feelings; others need more time to gain feelings of trust and security. By respecting your needs you are learning self-acceptance. If you are having a difficult time with how to discuss your problems with the group, then ask the group to help you.
- **Take time for yourself.** You have the right to take group time to talk about yourself. Many people feel that other's issues are more important, while some have a difficult time facing feelings, or have fears of appearing "weak". By recognizing what the reluctance means, you begin the growth process.
- **Focus on what is most important to you.** Through talking about your concerns the group will help to recognize patterns. With time being limited it is important to try focus on the main ideas, thoughts and feelings. Focusing on minute details is often a way to avoid dealing with the key issue.
- **Recognize and express reactions and feelings.** Pay close attention to what you are feeling as you are sharing or others are sharing. If you are having difficulties recognizing and expressing your thoughts or feelings, ask the group to help.
- **Expect some disruption of your life.** People in your life may not be ready for and immediately willing to accept the new behaviors you practice.
- **Give up the expectation of being totally understood.** The need to be understood and accepted is universal, as is the recognition that what really matters is that we understand and accept ourselves. The truth is that no one in the group can totally understand us, just as no one person outside the group can. Others can know specific things about us and identify with certain feelings or situations, but in the end, we are alone in self-understanding. That is as it should be, since each person has the responsibility for determining and maintaining his or her life's direction. There will be times during the group when you might experience being understood and accepted, and those moments will give you comfort and support. Nevertheless, those moments are short-lived, and such support, understanding, and acceptance from others cannot be continuous realities for any of us. What we can strive for is to increase our own self-awareness so that we can give ourselves understanding and acceptance.
- **Be aware of censored thoughts and feelings.** Learning to express thoughts and feelings, without censorship, enables exploration and resolution of interpersonal conflicts and self-affirmation and assertion. Try and take the risk to let yourself be emotionally available to and vulnerable with others.
- **Give and receive feedback.** Giving and receiving feedback can be a major component of your experience in group therapy. The purpose of feedback is to help others identify patterns, personal presentations, unrecognized attitudes, and inconsistencies. Feedback can be one of the most effective ways to deepen any relationship.
  - **Tips for giving feedback:**
    - Feedback needs to be concrete and specific, brief but to the point, and representative of both your feelings and thoughts.
    - Be specific about what you're responding to (particular remark, gesture)
    - Share both positive and negative feedback
    - Give feedback as soon as possible
  - **Tips for receiving feedback:**
    - The best way to get feedback is to request it from specific individuals, those whose impression means the

most to you. Find out from others in the group how they perceive you. What role do they see you taking on in the group? What are your “blind spots”?

- Seek clarification from the member or verify with other members if the feedback you’ve received matches their perceptions as well
  - Beware of becoming defensive, but if you feel yourself becoming defensive, it might be a good idea to share it.
  - Pay attention to consistent feedback: Feedback that has been received from a variety of people is likely to have a degree of validity.
- **Avoid giving advice.** Sometimes we really want to offer advice to someone who is struggling, but often when we do, we fail to let that person feel heard. Most group members learn that giving advice, suggestions and solutions is seldom helpful. For advice-givers, it takes time to learn how to express personal reactions, communicate understanding, give support, and listen attentively.
  - **Take risks.** Experiment with different ways of behaving and expressing yourself. By taking risks, you can discover what works for you and what doesn't. This may mean expressing difficult feelings, sharing information you usually keep secret, or confronting someone about something upsetting to you.
  - **Ask questions.** If you are wondering about or confused about something that has just been said or has just occurred in the group, then seek clarification from group members or group leaders. It's likely others may have the same questions that you have.
  - **Become aware of distancing behaviors.** All of us have ways of behaving which prevent others from getting close to us. Some of these are remaining silent and uninvolved, telling long involved stories, responding to others with intellectual statements, asking content questions, making hostile or indirect comments, and talking only about external events. Keep in mind that distancing behaviors have had a purpose in the past. The question you will face is whether the behavior is preventing you from getting what you want - close relationships with people.
  - **Try to be as direct as possible and be open to the responses of others.** Telling a story is sometimes a way of being known, but it can also be a way of avoiding dialogue and intimacy. Aim for dialogue that fosters an understanding of your experiences rather than monologue.
  - **Remember that how people talk is as important as what they say.** Pay attention to the non-verbal behaviors in the group—yours and those of other members. Talk about what you notice.
  - **Focus on the relationships you have with the group, other group members and the leader.** Put a priority on noticing what is happening inside the group. What is going on that makes you feel closer or more distant towards others? Try and explore with the group what you notice.
  - **Work outside the group.** In order to get the most from the group experience, you will need to spend time between sessions thinking about yourself, trying out new behaviors, reflecting on what you are learning, reassessing your goals, and paying attention to your feelings and reactions.
  - **Be patient with yourself.** Growth takes time, effort and patience. Changing what has become such an integral part of ourselves is very difficult and slow. By having patience with ourselves and accepting and understanding these blocks to growth, we set the foundation for growth and change.
  - **Give the group time to develop.** It can take a number of sessions before members of a group begin to have sufficient trust and security to be open and honest, to disclose their concerns and feelings. Thus, we encourage you to make a commitment to attend at least four sessions. If you are not getting what you want out of the group, then talk about that with the group members.

# The Group as Laboratory

In trying these new ways of interacting with others, the important thing is to do something that feels difficult. Old, familiar ways of behaving will probably not result in productive experiments. Moreover, a new behavior may seem difficult at first, but with practice, it gets easier. Then the new behavior may be added to your repertoire-your range options-and it's available whenever you need it.

If You Relate To People By:	You Might Experiment With:
Complying, giving in, being self-effacing	Saying no
Resisting suggestions; holding back	Taking a risk; trying something new.
Always talking; filling any silence with words because you feel uncomfortable.	Being silent for a minute; getting in touch with uncomfortable feelings; talking about those feelings.
Waiting for someone to say something, then reacting	Initiating something yourself, for someone else to react to.
Always smiling, even when annoyed or angry.	Talking without smiling
Explaining	Simply responding with what you feel (e.g., "I have an impulse to explain")
Trying to get people to stop feeling a certain way.	Simply accepting the way they feel; at the same time exploring your impulses and feelings
Being polite; not showing anger or judgment	Being judgmental and angry, frankly and outrageously.
Expressing anger easily	Checking to see what feelings are underneath the anger.
Deflecting praise	Accepting praise and agreeing enthusiastically with it.
Feeling bored but being too polite to say anything about it.	Talking about your feelings of boredom.
When attacked, defending yourself.	Not saying anything in rebuttal-but exploring the feelings you have.
Being afraid-and hiding your fear	Being openly afraid; letting everyone know it.
Always complimenting others.	Telling others exactly how you feel about them.
Trying to get everybody to approve of you.	Being what you are and not giving a damn what they think.
Giving advice	Reporting "I feel like giving you advice" – but not doing it.
Always helping other people.	Asking for help, letting yourself be helped.
Always asking for help.	Helping someone else.
Controlling your feelings and suppressing them.	Experiencing your feelings and exploring them.
Keeping things secret.	Disclosing something about yourself that is hard to say.
Playing it safe.	Taking a few risks.

# Myths about Group Counseling

## **I'll have to tell my deepest and darkest secrets to the group:**

No one in group is forced to disclose anything that they are not comfortable with, and in fact some thoughts, feeling or emotions are so personal that keeping them to oneself may be more beneficial than disclosing them to a group. Group members learn to identify their personal boundaries and respectfully communicate those boundaries to one another. They disclose personal information, over time and in a way that feels comfortable.

## **I won't be able to get enough of what I need out of the group if I have to share the time with others:**

Groups operate in such a way that many people are working on their own concerns at the same time. When two or three (or even more) people interact, they are all often learning about themselves and their life experiences from the interaction. One function of a group is to help create a space where all of the individuals are safe and attempt to learn how to meet their own needs.

## **If I don't speak, the group won't be helpful to me:**

Some people fear that they won't have anything to say, or won't know how to respond to others in a group. This is a valid concern because so often group participation in other settings (e.g. class, work, family life) is identified by verbal interaction or input. A therapy group, however, does not hold that same assumption, and allows an individual to observe and reflect, which are powerful learning tools in and of themselves.

## **I'll be forced to talk when I don't want to:**

Participants are often encouraged by one another to share their observations, internal reactions and experiences of the group, but in a way that feels comfortable and supportive. Group members discuss at the outset of therapy how they tend to share information, when they might need some space within the group, and how they can be best supported by others in the group. If a group member does not feel comfortable talking, they simply share this preference with the group, and ask that the group trust them to speak when they are ready.

## **It is so hard for me to talk to people I don't know; I'll never be able to share in a group:**

In reality most people are anxious about being in and sharing with a group. But even within a session or two, most people find that they want to talk in the group. Even the most private

or shy people find that the group is a place where they can trust others and share their concerns.

## **Group Counseling is not as good as individual counseling:**

Individual and group counseling have different benefits and help people in different ways, and research studies have shown that group participants are equally if not more satisfied than people who participate in individual therapy. While neither form is inherently better than the other, there are some struggles that are better suited for a group interaction, such as developing communication skills, getting interpersonal feedback, obtaining social support and understanding relationship patterns.

## **When so many people with so many problems get together in one room, it will all be too overwhelming:**

Coming into a group setting can understandably feel overwhelming, when one's own life circumstances may seem unmanageable. Many group participants, however, have described hearing about the experiences of other members as extremely helpful. Focusing on the life experiences of others helps them to feel less alone in their own struggles, as well as helps them to understand their own difficulties from a different perspective. Many find a sense of relief in knowing that others struggle with similar issues or emotions.

## **Other people will be confrontational and overly aggressive:**

Although there are plenty of stereotypes from movies and television of a group member throwing something or getting angry and storming out of a room, this type of behavior rarely happens. Group members are encouraged ahead of time to put their feelings into words instead of actions, so that they can help others to understand what they are going through, and to help themselves to learn effective ways of managing difficult or intense emotion.

## **The group leaders will be the only ones to help me resolve my problem:**

Although the group leaders will help to define the structure of a group, provide guidance, and help establish a sense of safety, the bulk of the work done in the group is by the participants. They support, challenge, and come to care for one another in a way that deepens over time, facilitating changes that come about for the participants in their personal lives as well as in the group.

# Boynton Health Service Mental Health Clinic

## GROUP THERAPY AGREEMENT

### Treatment Expectations

- **Respect.** In order for group to be a safe place to explore ourselves and our relationships, it is important to have an environment of mutual respect, especially in regards to differences.
- **Work actively.** It is important to work actively and honestly on the issues that brought you to the group. You are encouraged to talk about your feelings and experiences, particularly in areas that are emotionally uncomfortable or risky for you. You will make the most progress if you allow yourself to experience and discuss your true feelings and reactions to others.
- **Goals.** You will develop personal goals with your group leader about what you want to work on in group, which may be revised over time. The more you take the time to reflect on these goals between sessions, the more progress you will make in the group.
- **Put feelings into words.** Within the group, we will be practicing open communication. Thus, feelings should be put into words rather than expressed through physical touch.

### Attendance Expectations

- **Commitment.** By joining this group, you are making a semester long commitment.
- **Punctuality.** Plan to attend each group meeting, to be on time, and to remain for the entire meeting. Should you anticipate a necessary absence or late arrival inform the group leader as soon as possible.
- **Leaving the group.** Should you consider withdrawing from group therapy, please inform the group so that there is an opportunity to say goodbye.

### Confidentiality

- **Group Member responsibilities.** Group leaders are ethically and legally obligated to maintain confidentiality. Maintain confidentiality of your fellow group participants. Do not disclose to anyone outside the group any information that may help to identify another group member. This includes but is not limited to names, physical description, biographical information, and specifics of content of interactions with other group members. This also includes refraining from sharing e-mails or connecting on social networking sites.

### Relationships Outside of Group

- **Socializing.** Agree to not socialize with other members during the course of group therapy because outside relationships can disrupt group cohesion. This includes friendships, dating/sexual relationships, and online relationships (e.g., Facebook).
- **Contact outside of group.** We recognize that members spend their time on the same campus and may interact with one another; therefore, if you do have contact with members outside of group, please discuss the encounter in group.