

The New Johari Window

#34 Alternative Johari Models II: Stabilized Interaction Model

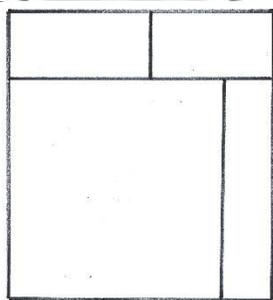
William Bergquist, Ph.D.

When I introduce the stabilized interaction model into our analysis of Quad Four dynamics, several interesting results occur. They all involve the relationship between Quad Four and the two adjacent quads (Two and Three). I identify this as a model of stabilization because all four of the quadrants tend to be “sticky.” They don’t easily move. When Quad Four is activated, the stickiness of the other three quadrants can increase. The “threat” of Quad Four material causes each of the other quadrants to be “on-guard” and not to easily change or cooperate with the other quadrants.

I will first address the option of a large Quad Three and Small Quad Four and of a small Quad Three and Large Quad Four. I will then shift to the other two possibilities: a large Quad Two and Small Quad Four and a small Quad Two and Large Quad Four.

Large Quad Three/Small Quad Four

When there is a large Quad Three and Small Quad Four, the stabilized model will resemble the following:



The basic message when this Quad Four dynamic is in place becomes: “I know much about myself but don’t want to share it.” This dynamic is exemplified by the fully analyzed therapist who shares very little about herself with patients. She has a great deal of access to Quad Four and has moved it into Quad Three—but she doesn’t want to move it into Quad One. The self-insights help the therapist in her work with patients; however, there is still a tension between Quad Three and Quad One—especially if this interpersonal pattern extends to other people in the therapist’s life.

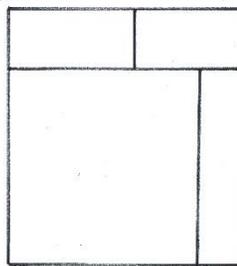
This is where the stabilized interaction model offers some real insights.

In the traditional Johari Window, both Quad One and Quad Two would shift if Quad Three was large and Quad Four was small. In the case of the stabilized model, the first and second quads remain the same size, while Quad Three is growing and Quad Four is shrinking in size. This is part of the tension. From outward appearances (Quad One and, indirectly, Quad Two), everything is the same. But inside the therapist, much has happened. There has been substantial growth in self-insight.

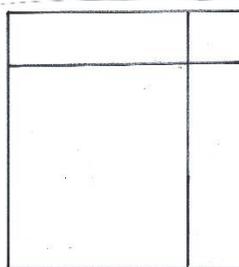
This insight, however, isn't shared with others. Not only are other people unaware of the growth, but they might also be perplexed (as friends and family members) with the seeming lack of change in the therapist despite the insight-rich analysis she has completed. Everything is kept inside. Nothing is out there for significant others to view. Similar tension may exist for people who have participated in a high-impact personal growth workshop that is very private (such as a Progoff Journal Workshop, meditation workshop, or extended stay at a Zen Retreat Center). After participating in one of these workshops, I might pose the following questions: "How much of the new self-insight do I want to share with significant other people in my life . . . especially since little of my new insights have come from other people. Are my new insights 'wacko'? Will other people understand what I have learned, since my insights have been gained in isolation?"

Tension can be reduced by selectively sharing more of one's private self—in an appropriate manner and at an appropriate time and space—thereby increasing the size of Quad One. One can also make use of feedback (Quad Two to Quad One) to determine the appropriate process, time, space and material to disclose. The stabilization model in this instance is transformed into the traditional Johari model:

Stabilized Model

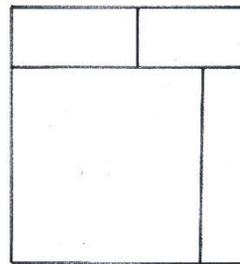


Traditional Johari Model

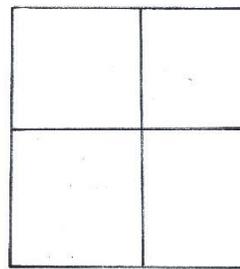


Alternatively, one can begin to ignore Quad Four material or defend against it, thereby keeping Quad Three small:

Stabilized Model

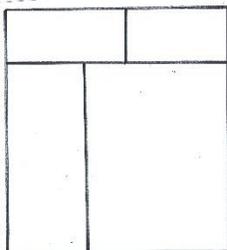


Traditional Johari Model



Small Quad Three/Large Quad Four

When the third quadrant is small and the fourth quadrant is large with a stabilized model, the following representation would appear:

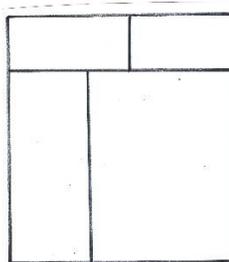


If this Quad Four dynamic is engaged then the following statement would be appropriate: "I don't know much about myself (at least my "unconscious self"), hence don't have much to keep private." Since Quad One remains the same (doesn't shrink in size as it will with the traditional Johari Window), there is tension. I appear to be superficial or uninteresting. Eric Berne suggests that this person is someone who has no "child" in their psychic makeup or no "parent" – they are only "adults" and, as such appear to be "sterile" or devoid of anything that makes them truly "human."ⁱ

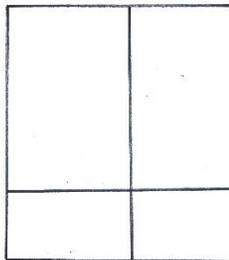
It is also important to note that Quad Two remains the same. This can be an even greater source of tension. People who interact with us would be inclined to say: "I have given you feedback, but you don't seem to be doing anything with it. My feedback has been dropped into a deep well or bottom-less pit." Since other people can usually observe the impact of their feedback through the "leakage" (usually nonverbal behavior) of Quad Three (Private Self) material, the frustration (tension) can be even greater and more justified, when they see that Quad Three remains small.

Tension can be reduced by spending time and devoting attention to learning more about myself—perhaps by asking for feedback from other people:

Stabilized Model

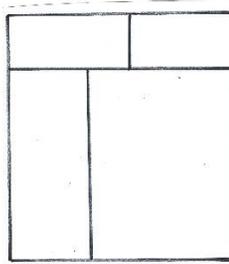


Traditional Johari Model

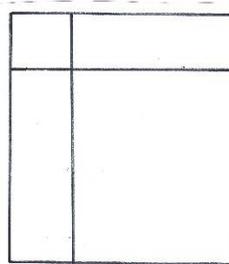


Alternatively, I can further retreat (small Quad One), so that other people don't expect much of me as their retreating colleague:

Stabilized Model



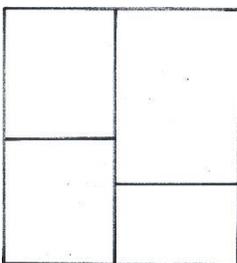
Traditional Johari Model



We now turn to the stabilization models that relate specifically to the shifting relationship between Quad Two and Quad Four.

Large Quad Two/Small Quad Four

With this Quad Four configuration, the following statement is appropriate: “My Quad Four has had a major impact on my behavior and other people are fully aware of these changes, but I am not very aware of the changes myself (large Quad Two/no change in Quad Three).



There is one major source of tension with this configuration. As noted in the statement above, this person’s public (Quad One) and private (Quad Three) panes have not changed. In the traditional Johari Window, Quad One would expand and Quad Three would become smaller. Not so with the stabilization model.

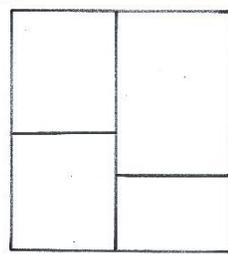
The stabilization model of interpersonal tension may be more accurate than the optimistic model offered by Joe Luft. It may often be the case that our Quad Four

material moves to Quad Two before moving to either Quad One or Quad Three: our “unconscious” life is seen by other people before being seen by ourselves.

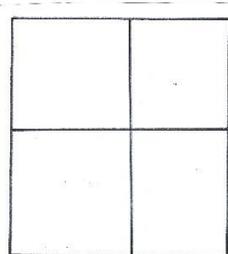
The primary tension is held by the other people who witness the intrusion of Quad Four into our presentation of self. If they are therapists or workshop leaders, these other people typically have our tacit (perhaps explicit) permission to share their observations (Quad Two to Quad One). But what if these other people are family members, friends or even casual acquaintances? How much should they share? “Dare I risk your negative and defensive reaction?” “Is it my ‘job’ to tell you about yourself . . . after all, I’m not your therapist!” “Am I correct in my observations . . . after all, I’m not trained as a therapist!”

The tension can be reduced by the observer if this person ignores and eventually forgets what they have observed:

Stabilized Model

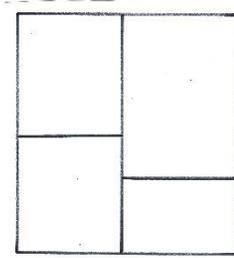


Traditional Johari Model

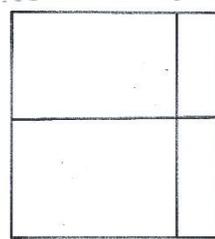


Alternatively, the tension can be reduced by sharing the observation, thereby increasing the size of Quad One:

Stabilized Model

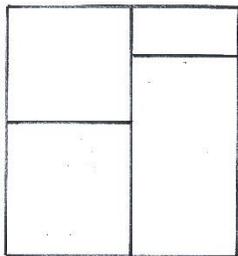


Traditional Johari Model



Small Quad Two/Large Quad Four

When the second quad is small and the fourth quad is large, the following statement would seem appropriate: “I have a large amount of unconscious material that remains ‘well-protected’ from other people.”



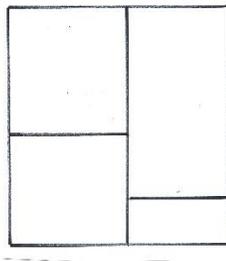
In Jungian terms, this person’s “persona” (mask) is selectively strong (very thick). Nothing leaks out through these strong personal barriers, unless the person with the mask wants the leaking to occur.

The tension in this configuration resides not only in the presence of this selective barrier, but also in the lack of alignment of this large Quad Four and small Quad Two with the size of Quad One and Quad Three. This person remains relatively open (Quad One), but devotes considerable energy to managing this quadrant—and must always be diligent (since Quad Four is large and perhaps even growing in power, given that it is being repressed). This person’s private self (Quad Three) remains fairly large, but doesn’t grow larger, even though Quad Four remains large. Nothing much is being learned about oneself from Quad Four material. Energy must be expended in protecting

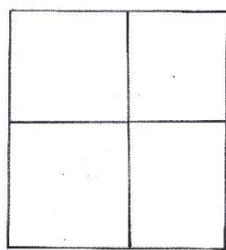
this boundary between Quad Three and Quad One, just as energy must be expended in protecting the barrier between Quad One and Quad Two.

The tension can be reduced by relaxing one's vigilance and allowing Quad Two to expand. This shift can be of particular value if other people will provide us with feedback about what they observe in our behavior, how they interpret what is observed, and how this behavior impacts on their own relationship with us when we have relaxed our defenses. This is one of the values inherent in effectively run human relations workshops.

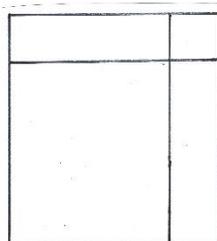
Stabilized Model



Allowing Other People to See Our Fourth Quadrant

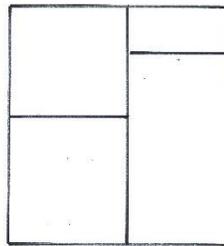


Asking For and Receiving Feedback from Other People

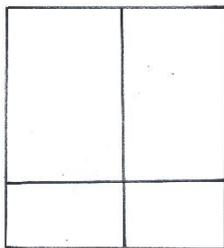


This feedback from other people may, in turn, encourage one's own disclosure of Quad Four material that has moved to Quad Three:

Stabilized Model



Traditional Johari Model



Conclusions

The distorted and often explosive emergence of Quad Four material into Quad One is most likely to occur when there is societal repression caused by the imposition of Victorian" morality or racially-motivated suppression. We find this in the gospel music of African-American societies and in the ecstatic displayed in many super fundamentalistic religions—such as those that feature speaking-in-tongues or the handling of poisonous snakes.

Perhaps the most dramatic (and disturbing) of the explosive displays of Quad Four is to be found in the Nazi rallies at Nuremburg during the 1930s. Recorded on film by Leni Riefenstahl, these rallies manifest a pure regression that was certainly not in the service of any ego—other than the egotism (and narcissism) of the leader. Both Quad Two and Quad Three shrunk to nothing, for there was no need (or room) for feedback from other Nazi participants. Nor was it appropriate to disclose one's own personal thoughts and feelings. The only feedback that matters came from the leader—and it was profoundly distorted and often directed toward some

maligned minority. There were no personal thoughts or feelings—the only thought and feelings that mattered emanated from the leader and these expanded into collective thoughts and feelings.

Our Quad Four is truly a vast wilderness that is not easily tamed –and perhaps should never be fully tamed. It is a source of great wisdom and profound distortion. Our interpersonal relationships are enriched by our fourth quad--and these relationships can be led astray by the ghosts and demons found in our unconscious life.

Collectively, we must be aware of ways in which quad fours among many people can be brought together and unified to create a constructive and compelling future. However, as I have just noted, collective quad fours can lead instead to unspeakable cruelty and tyranny. All of this suggests that our understanding of this quad can never be complete. Nevertheless, the more complex models of the Johari Window that I have just offered in this essay and the previous essay point at least to some of the ways in which we might appreciate and perhaps gain greater understanding of this important and often elusive psychic wilderness.

¹Berne, Eric. *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1986; Berne, Eric. *The Games People Play*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.