

# The New Johari Window

## #35: A Final View

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We are about to bring to a close our transformation of and full appreciation for the interpersonal relationship model first offered by Joe Luft and Harrington Ingram at a seminar in Ojai California. As we end this journey, I wish to restate Joe Luft's initial set of assumptions. Following are these primary principles of change offered by Luft with regard to the Original Johari Model. I offer Luft's original statement about each principle. These principles have informed the New Johari Window. However, each of these principles has been expanded or revised as a result of the new analysis. I follow my own tracing out of the changes and revised implications of each principle with a case study that illustrates the way in which the New Johari Window might be engaged when seeking to understand what has occurred in particular interpersonal dance.

### **1. A change in any one quadrant will affect all other quadrants.**

As we have seen, the quadrants are usually closely linked to (even locked in with) one another. All other quadrants are usually affected, but to varying extents when any one quad expands or contracts. Furthermore, there can be direct crossovers between opposing quads. We have also shown, however, that at times the four quadrants operate in a manner that belies direct linkage.

At times, one or more quads can expand or contract without changing the size of one or more of the other quads. This will usually create a heightened level of tension within the person experiencing this distorted rearrangement. A defensive maneuver usually is required for the distorted adjustment to take place—suggesting that an important investment is being made to ensure that something important is not changing. This defensive maneuver often is required because of a threat (real or imagined) posed by another person.

*Case Example: Jim is about to receive his annual performance review. He has received this same type of review during the past five years when he has served as manager of a distribution center. However, something is different this time. Jim has a new boss that he doesn't particularly like and does not trust. His new boss also reminds Jim in certain ways of his own highly judgmental father. Jim's Quad Four has sprung a leak and images as well as memories of his father that have been buried for years are now flooding into Jim's third quadrant. Thus, with*

*regard to Jim's window, the third quad is growing larger while the fourth quad is shrinking in size.*

*What about Jim's first and second quad. They haven't changed at all. Jim is prepared to receive feedback from his boss and his public self will remain the same. However, Jim's warped window (with two quads changing and two not changing) creates consideration tension in Jim's internal life and in the relationship that he engages with this boss. First, his quad one becomes quite rigid. Jim is "armed" for combat with a strongly defended persona. His mask is thick and rigid. While he will receive feedback from his boss, Jim is not likely to accept this feedback as "legitimate" (given his lack of trust in his boss's intentions and even his boss's competency).*

*Furthermore, given his large (and growing) third quad that is filled with old ghosts and feelings about his father, the content received by the boss is likely to be re-interpreted and "stored" in a highly distorted manner. Jim is likely to view his boss through lenses from his own childhood. A cycle of self-confirming hypotheses will be established between Jim and his boss. If Jim's boss is at all sensitive to non-verbal cues (the leaking of quad two material into quad one), then he will conclude that Jim is NOT open to feedback.*

*The boss's own level of trust in Jim's intentions and competency is likely to drop down several notches. Jim will notice the leaking of his boss's quad two lowering of trust in their relationship. As a result, Jim is himself likely to lower the level of trust in their relationship. A perfect storm is created as a result of the unlinked interplay between Jim's four quadrants. Warped windows tend to create warped relationships—and a failure for any of us to learn from other people (feedback) or even our own psyche.*

## **2. It takes energy to hide, deny, or be blind to behavior that is involved in interaction.**

The energy operating in a window of interaction is often directed not just to hide, deny or be blind to the potential consequence of the interaction, but also to the management and reduction (metabolism) of the anxiety associated with this interaction. Blindness is often partial—at some level we might be aware of what is actually taking place – which helps to trigger the accompanying anxiety. Quadrant Four is often the source of this anxiety, though it might be triggered by an alignment between Quad Four content and content brought to the fore in one of the other quadrants—usually activated via interactions with other people.

Anxiety reduction often takes place by ensuring that specific quadrants are locked in place. This reduction can also take place by selective incorporation of material from another person or group of people as taken in through Quad One. This material is then distorted as it passes into

Quads Two and Three. For instance, blame for the anxiety can be placed on the behavior or assumed intentions of another person. Or the anxiety can be exported to other people – they suddenly are the anxious ones. We can now serve as the “helper” who eases their anxiety and resolves their problems.

*Case Example: Nancy is a registered nurse who has worked in a Metropolitan hospital for the past fifteen years. She primarily works in the unit where patients are “prepped” for surgery. She is admired by other nurses, doctors and administrative staff for her caring attitude. Nancy is always there to sit beside an anxious patient waiting for their operation. The only problem is that Nancy can be too “caring” at times and can fall far behind in her duties. Furthermore, she is often complaining about hospital policy and about the understaffing of her unit. “No one seems to give a damned and I am running around putting my thumb in our leaky medical service dike!” In sum, Nancy is a frustrating mixture of care and contention. She is beloved and belated.*

*How might the New Johari Window help us make sense of the dynamics operating in Nancy’s professional life. First, she is operating in an anxiety-saturated environment. As Isabel Menzies-Lyth has noted, hospitals are places where patients face existential challenges. The staff are not immune to the anxiety evoked by these challenges. Nancy can absorb the anxiety herself; however, she chooses instead to assign it out (with some justification) to her patients that are waiting for surgery.*

*Nancy “metabolizes” her own anxiety by taking care of her patients’ emotional needs. Her own anxiety is likely to decline if she can help someone else. By doing “something” rather than sitting there passively doing nothing. Nancy is able to confront her own traumatizing “tiger” and tame it (or at least get it to lie down and not bother her for a while). For Nancy, the priority is not getting to all of the patients for whom she is responsible. Rather, her priority is to spend some quality time with one patient—to the extent that her own anxiety and that of her patient is reduced.*

*Nancy may be aware that she is neglecting other patients assigned to her. However, she has a great excuse. There is insufficient staffing!! This is probably a legitimate complaint given the shortage of qualified health care workers in most hospital systems. There is more to the story here, for Nancy’s complaints about understaffing also enables her to transform her anxiety into anger. She can project the source of her anxiety outward and assign it to hospital leaders and various funding agencies. It might go something like this in Nancy’s head and heart (though this is an internal conversation that usually is not recognized let alone acknowledged by Nancy):*

*I am anxious about having to set priorities regarding my work with patients. I don’t like being the source of my own anxiety. I can move the source outside and blame the “%\$\*^&\*\$\*^” idiots who supposedly are “running” this hospital. I can complain openly about this matter because I will never be fired: I am “indispensable.”*

*Nancy might even get other people working in the hospital to agree with her. Their agreement serves as wonderful, confirming feedback that Nancy can store in her second quad. She can interpret this agreement as feedback to her that she is smart and accurate in her assessment of the medical world in which she operates. A perfect, affirming storm for Nancy produces self-confirming hypotheses about herself while reducing her personal anxiety.*

### **3. Threat tends to decrease awareness; mutual trust tends to increase awareness.**

When we are anxious, it is hard to see things out in the world clearly –especially when we are viewing relationships with significant people in our life. When we are threatened, attention is primarily directed to the source of the threat and to the nature of the threat. We devote most of our energy to discerning the extent to which the source of the threat is aligned against our welfare and if it is active and strong. Other matters and other characteristics of the threatening source receive little attention. We care very little about the good side of the source, or about the potential lack of strength or resolve on the part of this source. There is only black and white.

Mutual trust must be based on a discerning assessment by each party of the other person's competence, intentions and perspectives related to the interaction. Trust that is wrongly accessed can provoke lingering trauma and associated triggering of anxiety (that can further hinder accurate appraisal of future interactions).

*Case Example: Kurt is participating in a session on intercultural sensitivity. This training is now required of all employees in his company. He is to attend a one day "tune up" program every six months. This program was introduced when Kurt's US-based company acquired two other companies within an eight-month period of time. One of these companies is located in Mexico. The other is located in Indonesia.*

*This purchase has involved not only a rapid (and often stressful) expansion in the size and complexity of Kurt's company but also the transfer of many Mexican and Indonesian employees to the home, American office. These "immigrants" are invited to learn about American operations (that they can bring back to their own home office). They are also being asked to share their own insights with C-Suite executives so that the merger can be as smooth as possible.*

*It is interesting (and important) to note that the Mexican and Indonesia employees are not asked to participate in the intercultural sensitivity program. Only the American workers have to*

*attend (which has produced some resentment). Furthermore, the “immigrant” workers are primarily working in the marketing and new product development divisions of the company. Kurt rarely interacts with any of these folks. He only sees them entering the main administrative building down the block from his own facility.*

*We might ask Kurt how the intercultural sensitivity training is going. He will first hesitate and then declare (with some anger) that it is a waste of time and “frankly an affront to me and the other folks working here!” Kurt believes that he has “always” been (or at least “recently” became) “sensitive” to cultural issues. Kurt and his wife have often traveled to other countries during their annual vacation. While he has never been to Mexico or Indonesia, Kurt believes that he doesn’t need semi-annual “tune up.” He is not an automobile nor is he an “ugly” bigoted American. Apparently, the sensitivity session isn’t very sensitive to the self-perceptions of those attending the training nor was the design of this program and restriction in invitations sent out sensitive to the politics of Kurt’s organization.*

*How might a review of the New Johari Window assist us in the redesign of this sensitivity program? First, there is no evidence that any assessment was done regarding the current level of inter-cultural competence among those already working in Kurt’s company. Without this assessment, judgements that are made about competency can lead to offensive decisions and to reduction in trust between those preparing and providing the training and those attending these required sessions.*

*We find yet another example of self-fulfilling prophecies. If attendees are forced to attend a session that does not acknowledge (let alone honor) their current level of sensitivity, then trust drops off—and sure enough no one is acting in a very “sensitive” manner. There is even growing resentment directed toward those “immigrants” who don’t have to attend: “what makes them better than us!”*

*There is even the matter of trust in intentions. Is this program actually being offered as a way to improve intercultural exchange between the American, Mexican and Indonesian employees, or is it nothing more than “window dressing” for a merger that undoubtedly will be stressful for all involved? And why is Kurt and most other employees in his company isolated from the new “immigrant” employees: “Are we not good enough for them?” “Do the leaders of our organization think we will botch up any interaction with folks from other countries?”*

*A perfect storm is produced that leads only to diminished trust and an emerging “insensitivity” to the unique perspectives offered by an increasingly diversified workforce in Kurt’s company. Sadly, the opportunity for increased diversity to yield creativity and improved problem-solving*

*has slipped out of the hands of those leading Kurt's company. Joe Luft could have provided some important insights to these leaders with regard to awareness, sensitivity and trust.*

#### **4. Forced awareness (exposure) is undesirable and usually ineffective.**

Forced awareness tends to trigger reduction in the level of trust regarding intentions (and even competence), which in turn leads to increased anxiety. Forced awareness also tends to be interpreted as an evaluation of our own competence by another person or group of people. We can resist this interpretation by showing that we are competent. This usually produces an increased level of stress in us that, in turn, produces incompetence—a closed loop “deskilling” process that yields self-confirmation (“I told you he was incompetent”).

*Case Example: Molly has been identified as an incompetent manager. She has been in charge of a department that prepares and prints many different kinds of forms for her large corporation. While the work gets done, there are often major delays in getting new forms printed and the turnover in her department is quite high.*

*Molly often gets unfavorable reviews from those reporting to her as well as her colleagues in other department who must coordinate activities with her. She is often described in annual reviews as being “stubborn” and “in denial” about her managerial dysfunction. Even with all of these bad “grades”, Molly remains on the job. Most people say she remains because the man who is her boss is “soft-hearted” and hates to fire anyone. Furthermore, he seems to be “blind” when it comes to an evaluation of Molly’s behavior. Other people in the corporation who know both Molly and her boss note that they often go out for a “drink” following work and have become good friends.*

*The managerial dysfunction crisis has come to “a head” with Molly’s boss being pressured by many of his own C-Suite colleagues to remove her from her managerial position. The soft-hearted boss can’t bring himself to confront Molly. Instead, he asks a member of the HR Department to confront Molly. This HR specialist (Doug) is noted as something of a “hard-ass” who doesn’t hold back when meeting with someone who is “not doing their job.”*

*Doug sets up a meeting with Molly and brings along all of her negative ratings over the past 3 years. He throws them down on the table in front of Molly and asks her several very difficult questions: “Tell me why these negative reviews are justified. Why should you remain as a manager? What are you going to do in order to keep from getting fired?” Doug has placed responsibility for improvement on Molly’s shoulders (knowing that Molly’s boss is not likely do anything about her dysfunctional behavior).*

*How did Molly reaction? She got very angry and accused Doug of abusive behavior. Molly walked out of the room and soon filed a report accusing Doug of hostile behavior. A review took place and churned on for several months. Molly is still serving as manager of the same division.*

*She is now defiant regarding her performance and threatens new actions against anyone seeking to get her fired.*

*We can apply the New Johari Window – and actually refer back to Joe Luft's original principle in seeking to better understand what took place. While Doug was probably right in putting the “monkey” on Molly's shoulders, he was forcing her to disclose something about her own behavior (quad three)—and to disclose any of the fears and concerns she has about her own dysfunctional behavior.*

*As we have noted, the second quad is actually filled with content about which we are at some level aware (opaque). We are rarely completely “blind” about what is actually happening in our relationship with other people. We know at some level that we are not doing a good job. Levels of anxiety are likely to be particularly high for Molly given the long-standing challenges she is facing. Perhaps, when she goes out for “drinks” with her boss, the focus of their conversations may be about reassurance that she is “ok” and should keep trying to “do better.”*

*Doug's confrontation evoked this resident anxiety in Molly. While Molly's anxiety might usually translate (be metabolized) into her “stubbornness” and resistance to change, the challenge mounted by Doug led Molly to translate her anxiety into anger. Doug became the enemy and represented everything that Molly hated (and feared) about people other than her boss who are uncaring and biased in their appraisal of her work. Doug, in particular, is an insensitive “bully” who knew nothing about Molly other than some numbers and brief negative comments contained in an HR file.*

*Doug was trying to be an effective “change agent” on behalf of Molly. He was looking after her ultimate welfare either as an improved manager or as someone working in a more appropriate position in the corporation. Yet, he created a perfect storm that produces not only Molly's wrath but also a stressful and time-consuming review of his own performance. Doug was declared “not-guilty” – but the damage was done. He soon asked to transfer to another department in his corporation. Molly remains in her position—as does her boss. Doug actually soon leaves this corporation.*

## **5. Interpersonal learning means a change has taken place so that quadrant one is larger, and one or more of the other quadrants has grown smaller.**

A context must be set for the learning to take place. Sustained interpersonal learning requires meta-level reflections. Two or more people talk about not just the content of their conversations (verbal and nonverbal) and the nature of their relationship, but also the reasons why these specific conversations have taken place and why their relationship has taken on its current structure and dynamics. Meta-level reflections also require a sharing of the emotions,

assumptions, hopes and fears associated with the conversations and relationships.

Quad One expands precisely because this reflective process generates new insights arising from both one's own self-examination and the feedback received from the other person.

*Case Example: Gib is the owner of a small business that has gone through hard times in recent years—in large part because the product he has been selling for about a decade is now pretty much “out of date” and faces strong competition in the marketplace from “newer” versions (that essentially were “copies” at first of what he had invented). Gib could have thrown in the towel and retire—for he had set aside funds he earned during the early years precisely in anticipation of this potential decline in business prosperity.*

*Gib decided that he wanted to venture down a different path. He wanted to shift to a new product line—making use of his still-active inventive mind. The challenge was going to be his work with the loyal employees in his business. They were accustomed to the “normal” way of doing things. Members of the sales department had their usual customers. Production staff were “married” to the machines used to produce the current product.*

*Folks in finance knew that new product development would be expensive and wondered what would be done with the very costly machines that would suddenly become expendable (“We could do a write-off, but this is still a big financial hit that this company might not be able to absorb”). Most of Gib's employees had worked with him for many years and greatly admired his brilliance as a designer of innovative products. They now wonder if Gib has lost some of this brilliance and is asking them to steer the ship into very stormy weather.*

*It seems that Gib has never had to confront widespread resistance on the part of those working in his company. He had always taken pride in the “staying power” of his employees. Most have been with him from the start. Now he has to push them and find new ways to convince his “long-termers” that they can learn and change. His company can survive the storm, but Gib needs “all hands on deck.” He also realizes that he must be open to new learning and that he will have to change (at least temporarily) the ways he relates to members of his company whom he considers “friends” –and even members of a very special family-of-workers.*

*Gib decides to hire an executive coach. He had read a bit about this coaching process and had listened to an executive coach speak at a luncheon meeting of his local business group. Gib gave her a call. Cynthia received his call and indicated that she would be pleased to set up a coaching engagement with Gib. Cynthia felt that she could be particularly helpful because she tends to specialize in small businesses and in helping businesses (and their leaders) become more “agile.”*



*Once he met with Cynthia, Gib tended to agree that she could be just what he needed. They set an agenda for her work with Gib.*

*Gib and Cynthia focused on three initiatives. First, Cynthia was going to conduct interviews with virtually all of Gib's employees to gain a clear sense of their concerns and feedback that they would like to give Gib about his recent decisions. In other words, Cynthia was gathering information for Gib's second quad. The second initiative focused on Gib's third quad. Cynthia was to conduct probing conversations with Gib himself, regarding where he was in his own life and what was really behind Gib's decision to move toward a new product line. Gib agreed that he needed a "clear mind and heart" if he was to navigate his "ship" into "storming seas." Cynthia and Gib actually decided to do their work while walking through a forest located near Gib's plant. They even stopped during each session by a stream where Gib (and later Cynthia) skipped stones while talking about Gib's inner life (and movement of material from quad four into quad three).*

*The third initiative involved planning a two day retreat that Gib would lead. Running a small business, Gib could actually request that all of his employees attend this retreat. Cynthia came—not as someone who facilitated the retreat (this was Gib's job) but as someone who could periodically make some observations and confer with Gib. She was the "coach" and not the quarterback. In preparation for the retreat, Cynthia provided Gib with the results of the interviews she conducted with his employees and prepared a summary set of findings that she wrote on flipchart pages (Gib hates power point).*

*Based on his reflections with Cynthia, Gib came to the realization that he can no longer be a "one-man band" when it came to designing the new product. He needed the expertise to be found among his current employees as well as expertise and fresh perspectives to be offered by several new employees that would be carefully selected. Gib realized that there was both good news and bad news here. On the one hand, he was turning to existing employees for their assistance (thereby hopefully reducing some of their resistance while also accessing their expertise). On the other hand, he was also looking outside his existing workforce—suggesting that currently existing expertise is not sufficient.*

*The retreat was a big success. Gib demonstrated that he was still in full command of his faculties and was sensitive to the feedback offered by his employees. There was full appreciation of the need for outside expertise—even relief that the "burden" for invention was not solely on those already employed in Gib's company. Gib demonstrated his candor and willingness to engage in some change himself what it means to be "agile" and open to new learning. With Cynthia's assistance, he had moved a considerable amount of material from both quad two and*

*quad three to his first, public quad. Gib and his company would be headed into a storm, but he and his loyal employees were equipping themselves (even if not “perfectly”) for this storm.*

**6. Working with others is facilitated by a large enough area of free activity. It means more of the resources and skills of the persons involved can be applied to the task at hand.**

An expanded area of free activity is associated with the creation of a sanctuary—one that allows for forgiveness (recognizing interpersonal mistakes while exploring alternative ways of relating to one another), as well as new learning. This area can be expanded by providing structures that encourage and support safety.

These structural sanctuaries might be physical locations (such as retreat sites), temporal locations (such as the extended duration of a specific session) or personal locations (physical isolation from outside observation or interruption). Processes can also be put in place to ensure personal safety. These processes might include skillful facilitation by a group relations expert or the coupling of an open sharing session with training in the use of helping skills or active listening.

At a third level, safety and the expansion of opportunities for free activity can be achieved by building a culture of trust. This is done by setting firm ground rules regarding the way(s) in which occupants of this exploratory area relate to one another. While these ground rules will never prevent the abuse of trust, they can make explicit the expectations regarding how interaction is to take place and can lead to the internalization of these ground rules in the ongoing building of supportive relationships and a nurturing community (however temporary this community may be).

*Case Example: Nadine is burned out. She has served as head administrator at a community hospital that was recently absorbed (called a “merger”) by a large urban health center located elsewhere in her state. Nadine has received a generous severance package. However, money doesn’t make up for betrayal. Nadine decides to do something about her negative feelings. She takes some of the tainted money (the “30 coins of Judas”) she received and enrolls in a month-long mediation and “renewal” program being offered by a noted Zen Center on the California coast.*

*When Nadine arrived at the center, she was asked to replace her “street clothes” with a simple robe and sandals. Not a problem—great to get rid of the belt and the painful memories associated with coming to the office every day. Nadine also attended her first mediation session and dined on some very simple but tasty food at lunch. The afternoon was spent in quiet contemplation and walks through the California Redwoods on the center property. After*

*another simple dinner (salad and soup), there was an early evening mediation session and then a long night of sleep in a Yurt. A peaceful and nourishing first day.*

*The rest of the days played out pretty much like the first day. This was all well-and-good. However, something else was also occurring. Nadine began writing in a diary she brought with her (having read Ira Progoff's book on journaling before coming to the retreat). A whole "soulful" ladle of unconscious material was coming to the fore. Not simple like the soup she was served, but certainly quite "tasty" (rich metaphoric images and narratives from much earlier in her life). Furthermore, Nadine was joined on her daily walk through the Redwoods by another middle-aged woman. They agreed that conversations about past work experiences was out of the question. Rather they talked about their childhood and, in particular, their mothers. What a different world this was for these loving and nurturing women of another era.*

*After a few days of walking, Nadine and her new friend also began to talk about their future. Without knowing any of the details, Nadine discerned that her walking companion had also been through a hard time—perhaps a divorce or loss of a job. The Redwoods represented resilience and longevity. Some of the trees had been assaulted by fire and their core was burned out. Yet, the trees survived and have grown around the burned-out area—they are stronger and taller. Nadine has even been told by some of the staff at the retreat, that fire actually is good for Redwoods.*

*Without saying anything directly about the analogy between their own life and that of the trees, Nadine and her new friend seems to be inspired (even if unconsciously) by what they saw regarding resilience in the forest. Nadine remembers reading several years ago about how a forest is actually comprised of deeply interconnected root systems and legumes that transfer information and nutrients from one tree to another. Redwoods were not just independently resilient, but also INTER-dependently resilient.*

*At the end of the month, Nadine bid farewell to her new friend and the center staff (including the cooks!). She was not sure what she would next do in her life and wasn't even sure that she would stay connected to her friend of the walk and the forest. However, she was convinced of one thing. Like the redwoods, she would recover and would turn for support to many people she loved (including some of her old colleagues at the community hospital).*

*Joe Luft might have met her in the forest. He might have sat with her on a stump and draw (or carve) a window on one of the other nearby stumps. After all, the original window was drawn on a stump by Joe and his colleague, Harrington Ingram. Joe might have shown Nadine that material from her fourth quad was pouring into her third quad. He would note that Nadine had found expanded, safe space that not only allowed, but also encouraged, the movement of this unconscious material and early life experiences into awareness. This space was provided by some high-quality time devoted to meditation and reflection. Nadine's mind was also cleared by*

*good nights of sleep that were accompanied by her consumption of nutritious, non-toxic food. Her brain and gut were not distracted by stressful days, listless sleep and a digestive system that was trying to ingest “artificial” and quickly consumed meals.*

*The trusting relationship that Nadine build with her walking friend enabled her to move some of the newly acquired material from quad three to quad one. She could share something of herself with her new friend and the forest. As Nadine shared with Joe what she was doing, Joe pointed out that she was quite wise in not sharing everything with her friend. Journal-writing was a wonderful way to move material from quad three into quad one without it having to be conveyed to anyone else.*

*Sitting on one of the stumps, Joe also suggested to Nadine that she was privileged to receive some high-quality quad two material from not only her friend but also the forest in which she walked. The trees were teaching her about herself—both past and future. As Joe talked, Nadine was reminded of the movie about an octopus “teaching” the diver. Here she is learning from some very old, resilient trees.*

*Joe was right. This is a real privilege—as is all of the safe space in which she has chosen to send the last month. Nadine has received the blessed and soulful “perfect forest storm.” The Redwoods talk to Nadine. They know how to align with the rich images and stories emerging from Nadine’s own unconscious (quad four). The storm brings together what is best about Nadine and teaches her where to find the courage she needs in order to lean and learn into her own personal future.*

## **7. The smaller the first quadrant, the poorer the communication.**

Quad One is the portal for both disclosure to other people and receiving feedback from other people. A small quadrant one is closely associated with Jung’s persona. A mask is constructed as a way for each of us to protect ourselves from the outside interpersonal world.

The mask is likely to play an increasingly important role in one’s life and in one’s relationship with other people if one acquired more power. When we are powerful then little is shared with other people and other people are likely to share very little with us. Most of what other people “know” about us as powerful people comes from their assumptions about what it means to be a “powerful” person—these assumptions ultimately arising from their own fourth quad.

This mask can lead to increased rigidity of interpersonal behavior. We are trapped in a role—as I noted earlier in recounting George Orwell’s *On Shooting an Elephant*. The deeply embedded second quad of those people over whom we have “power” is not easily changed and our highly restricted behavior is set to confirm whatever assumptions other people are making about who

we are and what we truly care about. Our mask is permanently placed over our face—and we play out a major role in a highly scripted leadership play.

We know that the Mask can eventually become a permanent fixture. The play might no longer be the same but the character being played by our masked leader never changes. Furthermore, as Wilhelm Reich notes in describing “character armor”, the mask can expand into full body armament. Substantial energy must be devoted to the preservation of this armament. This is usually energy that is pulled away for relationships with other people. The first quad remains small. The well-armored holder of this quad is rarely motivated to do anything about this quad or this armor. Nor are other people likely to encourage any change, given their deeply entrenched image of this armored leader.

*Case Example: Derek is certainly aware of the restrictions that come with power. He is a supreme court justice in a New England state. While he had always dreamed of being a judge and is truly honored to have been appointed to the supreme court of his state by the previous governor, there are many times when he feels suffocated. He is trapped in his judicial robes and becomes fully armored when presiding over his court. Quad One is small and of little use to either Derek or the people with whom he affiliates.*

*Much has been sacrificed in Derek’s professional life. When he was appointed to his first position as a judge twelve years ago, Derek had to give up his close friendships with many colleagues who served as lawyers alongside him. Then, six years ago he was appointed to his current position and now had to give up his friendship with other judges in the judicial system of this state. No more mid-morning coffee breaks with other members of the legal profession. Even frequent informal contact with other members of the supreme court was discouraged—particularly given the now polarized positions of these justices.*

*His personal life away from the court is even more restrictive. Imagine Derek and his wife, Gwen, having a beer at a local bar (one of their former pastimes). Furthermore, his wife and three children must be cautious about their own behavior. It is as if they come from a “church family” where everyone must behave themselves given that the old man is a pastor. Derek and Gwen finally came up with a solution (though an expensive one). They bought a condominium in a city far away from their New England home. They travel to this “sanctuary” about five times a year and freely go out to bars. Derek and Gwen attend concerts, eat at a highly rated restaurants, and spend time reading and wandering down to the river that runs through their “sanctuary” city.*

*This decision to find a second home to which they can escape was not only expensive for them*

*(they needed Gwen's second income to afford their second residence as well as travel expenses), Their second home also caused major tensions in the relationships they had established with their children. Though their two sons and one daughter were now in their early teenage years, it was hard for Derek and Gwen to leave them behind. School attendance prevented their kids from joining them as they escaped from New England.*

*Derek is also facing the challenge of working with his administrative staff. They are very deferential to him—having been serving in most instances for fifteen to twenty years in the supreme court offices. While they considered it an honor to be serving at this high level—and often were a bit arrogant when working with administrative staff from “lower” courts—they bestowed even greater honor on the men and women they serve. Derek is always addressed as “Your honor” or “Mr. Justice”. He would rather be called “Derek”, but this simply is not allowed! At an even more important level, Derek doesn't really know much about management (having originally worked in a very small, though prestigious, law office). He doesn't have anyone that he can turn to when confronting a managerial issue with one of his administrative assistants.*

*Put quite simply, Derek is feeling very lonely in his job. He is unqualified and unprepared to oversee a relatively large administrative staff. A perfect storm of solitude and performance-related anxiety swirl around the head and heart of this “honored” adjudicator. His first quad has shrived away (at least on the job). As Joe Luft noted, this leads to poor communication and to a whole host of assumptions that other people make about Derek's motives and behaviors. He wants to be kind and modest in his relationships with those who work for him; however, he is often viewed as indecisive and “soft” in his management of the staff. Most of the old-timers think that Derek is still uncomfortable in his role – even after six years. They are accurate in their assessment and their own cautious interactions with Derek seems to exacerbate his “clumsiness” as a judicial leader.*

*Is there any way to rescue Derek from this storm? When he first became a member of the supreme court (or even when he was first appointed as a judge), Derek might have been given the opportunity to be “mentored” by a very senior-level judge (or perhaps a judge who had recently retired). This probably would not help much now. At the present time, Derek could be assisted by an executive coach who knows something about the solitude and sense of restraint that many professionals experience when they move into leadership roles – whether this be in medicine, law enforcement or the judiciary. In each of these instances, the professional wears a uniform and is addressed by other people with a title: “Doctor”, “Officer” or “Your Honor.”.*

*Other people treat them in a “special” way with a strong dose of respect (and sometimes anger or envy). The uniform and title help to create and reinforce isolating and restricting roles.*

*Character armor is soon built and quad one shrinks in size and becomes stagnant. When the professional moves into a leadership role, then the restrictions, projections and de-skilling become even greater.*

*An executive coach who is sensitive to these painful dynamics can assist a professional, such as Derek, to recognize these powerful dynamics and to “forgive” themselves for not always being able to “manage” these dynamics. New ways in which to disclose and receive legitimate feedback from other people can be explored and tested. The process of casting off the character armor is not easy—especially since other people are colluding in keeping the armor in place. As Derek’s executive coach, Joe Luft might have been able to assist with this challenging change. We wish Derek success in expanding his own Quad One. As a dedicated servant in our society, Derek deserves to be set free.*

### **8. There is universal curiosity about the unknown area, but this is held in check by custom, social training, and diverse fears.**

The fourth quadrant is compelling, yet frightening. I have described it as a dynamic phenomenon that is aligned with what Carl Jung described as a numinous experience—the kind of awe-fullness that was first identified by Rudolph Otto. I have also noted that this thunderous and swirling numinous is somehow attractive. We are lured to the tragedy of an auto accident and to the death of many people during a seemingly endless war. Our own nightmares, daytime fantasies, and negative life narratives keep tugging at our conscious sleeves.

The researchers and theorist in the field of complexity and chaos studies write about strange attractors that pull in resources and energy. I would suggest that our fourth quadrant often operates like a strange attractor. It is not just a matter of curiosity. There is something much stronger operating that influences not only our unconscious life but also our third quadrant and indirectly our second quadrant. Ultimately, it even influences our first, public quadrant and shows up as Sigmund Freud noted many years ago in our slips of the tongue and most importantly in the way we view and interact with other people.

*Case Example: Dianne is a very successful advertising executive who operates out of an office in Manhattan. She is at the “top of the world” in terms of both income and prestige. Married to an editor at one of the major publishing firms and the mother of two children (who are now adults and living elsewhere in the United States), Dianne feels that her dreams have been fully realized. She should experience nothing but “Bliss.” Yet, there is something that is nagging and snuffing out her “bliss.”*

*This something shows up in strange places and at inappropriate times. For instance, Dianne recently received a major award from a New York Based Advertising Association. She was*

*delighted about receiving the award and knew that she deserved it. Yet . . . at some level Dianne felt like a “fraud.” She was accustomed to pumping up the products she was paid to advertise. At this moment Dianne feels like she is pumping up herself or perhaps being pumped up by her colleagues. Is she really “this good” or is she actually a “mediocre” product that needs a whole lot of “pumping up.” Dianne leaves the award ceremony with her husband and begins to cry. He asks if she was crying out of gratitude. “No . . . I am crying because I am terribly sad right now and I am terrified. I don’t know why I am feeling this way or why I am so afraid. God. This is horrible. I want to return the award!”*

*There was another recent moment in Dianne’s life that was shocking and shattering of her sense of self-worth. Dianne had flown to the West Coast with her husband in order to be with her daughter who was about to graduate from college. While Dianne was very proud of her daughter and wishes nothing but the best for her daughter as she ventured into adult life, she finds herself envious of her daughter. Dianne decides to write down what is going through her heart and mind: “My daughter is young, intelligent and beautiful. A life of great promise is in front of her. By contrast, I am getting old, may be losing some of my critical and creative faculties, and feel like most of my life is behind me.”*

*Dianne was shocked when she read what she had just written. She wanted to crumple up the paper on which this horrible statement was written but decided not to do so—for this statement was one of the most honest things she had said to herself in many years. Instead of being the slick Ad executive, Dianne was a vulnerable woman who was afraid of growing old. Dianne tucked this piece of paper in a safe hiding place when she kept several mementos from her wedding, a copy of her first employment agreement—and a copy of her own graduation program.*

*A perfect storm was swirling around in Dianne’s unconscious and has spiraled out into her third quad. It was now spilling over into quad one. In some instances, as I noted when presenting the variants on the Johari Window, the material was crashing directly into Quad One. Why was this occurring? As Joe Luft noted, we are curious about the contents of quad four. I suspect that Dianne was particularly intrigued with this content and without knowing it explicitly she might have found a way to link quad four hopes and fears that all of us possess into her compelling advertising campaigns. Perhaps Dianne was not only intrigued but also conversant with the unconscious—even a collective unconscious.*

*Obviously, something more was operating here. How do we account for the “breaking out” of quad four at this point in Dianne’s life? Why did Dianne cry and become fearful after being acknowledged for her work? And why did she keep the statement of envy regarding her daughter? Jung’s numinous keeps its own schedule and can appear before us at any time. It often is represented in our fear regarding growing older—and dying. The existentialists made*



*their living for many years during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in pointing to the ways that Death holds dominion over our lives.*

*The numinous also may appear when we reflect backward on the life we have (and have not) led. Profound regret can be awe-full. As the behavioral economists have noted, regret is a strong motivator (stronger than the motive to achieve and the motive to avoid failure). These dynamics might have been activated by the award ceremony that triggered not only Dianne's fears about growing older (and eventually dying), but also her fears about being an imposter (a fear that is all too common among women). The graduation ceremony might have activated her regrets about pathways not taken. Though she ended up choosing a path that led to great success—there is always a path not taken.*

*As Truman Capote would note, there are voices from other rooms that still wish to be heard. Joe Luft would nod in agreement with Truman and would add: "Dianne, these other voices should be heard and you should acknowledge your own fears--while also acknowledging your remarkable accomplishments as an executive and as a mother. All of this will enrich your life and help you prepare for the next stage in your life. It is important to remember that your quad four material is there to guide and inspire you. It is not your enemy—unless you keep denying its access to your active life."*

## **9. Sensitivity means appreciating the covert aspects of behavior, in quadrants two, three, and four, and respecting the desire of others to keep them so.**

Sensitivity requires appreciation for the diverse of perspectives, motives, values and practices of other people. This is especially important in our increasingly diverse and globalized environment.

We must recognize that psychological defenses are there for a reason. They help to protect us from that knowledge about ourselves that we are not yet ready to receive or at least not yet ready to fully assimilate. When interpersonal and group "technologies" are designed to either bypass or overwhelm defenses, then they are likely to be counterproductive or even destructive. The defenses increase and strengthen themselves in confronting the threat, or our psychological "fortress" is breached and we are left in a state of defeat and personal despair. Nothing is learned other than what is often called "learned helplessness."

When the defenses are respected and when new material is being presented or revealed in a sensitive manner, then a condition of "flow" can be realized. A learning-ful threshold is crossed and maintained between overwhelm (anxiety) and underwhelm (boredom).

*Case Example: Michael (his English name) was born in Singapore and with his family immigrated to the United States when Michael was ten years old. While Michael is fully fluent in English, there are many ways in which he still feels Asian in his attitudes and the way he relates to other people. Michael is now 32 years old and works in the hospitality industry. He is the Assistant Manager in the international travel division of a large hotel chain. His early life experiences in Singapore help a little, as does his limited skills in speaking both Mandarin and Cantonese. Mostly, however, he is valued for his ability to work smoothly with demanding customers from many countries and many cultures. These are customers who have not found satisfaction in planning for a trip with someone from the hotel where they have booked reservations. Michael is a problem-solver and helps to “cool down” the irate travel-planner.*

*Michael finds his job to be both rewarding and taxing. At the end of the day, he is quite drained and frankly tired of working with irrationality and anger. People sometimes seem to be “no damned good!” Fortunately, Michael has an understanding boss (Jacqueline) who is willing to spend time listening to Michael’s “venting”. Jacqueline can fully empathize with Michael since she had herself served in the challenging job that Michael now holds. She will tell you that this supportive relationship with Michael was very slowly and carefully built. While Jacqueline was born in the United States, she worked briefly in Bangkok for this same hotel chain. While the people of Thailand differ in some important ways from those living in Singapore, Jacqueline can fully appreciate the cautious attitude taken by most Asians regarding opening up to other people—especially those in authority and those who come from Western cultures.*

*Jacqueline found it helpful to invite Michael for a cup of tea during a mid-afternoon break. There is a lovely restaurant one block from their office where teas from many countries are served. Jacqueline and Michael both appreciate tea and always tried something new when sitting down for a discussion regarding the latest service challenge facing Michael. He slowly opened up about his true feelings. He even talked about how his experiences as a child in Singapore helps him with some of his Asian customers. Michael holds Jacqueline in high regard and hopes that he might soon be in a position to “mentor” other young employees in this hotel enterprise.*

*Joe Luft would undoubtedly appreciate Jacqueline’s appreciation of Michael’s cultural background. He would point to the careful and thoughtful way in which she allowed and even encouraged Michael to begin to share his quad three feelings and thoughts. Jacqueline probably also offered some feedback to Michael regarding reports on his skillful handling of difficult customers. I would add to Joe’s appreciation, the way in which Jacqueline chose an environment (a sanctuary) in which to meet with Michael. They chose a setting that was aligned with their shared interest in tea.*

*Furthermore, we know that the consumption of food (even if it is only a sip of tea) is conducive to relaxation and comradery. When we eat food, our parasympathetic system is triggered which counters the vigilance and fight/flight stance of the sympathetic system. Jacqueline helped Michael relax and reflect on his “wars” with difficult customers. With the assistance of tea and sympathy (offered by Jacqueline), Michael’s battles were softened and he was able to find both “forgiveness” (for his anger) and new learning (with Jacqueline’s mentoring). The perfect positive storm of sanctuary washed over him, and left Michael refreshed for another day of challenging work.*

**10. Learning about group processes, as they are being experienced, helps to increase awareness (enlarging quadrant one) for the group as a whole as well as for individual members.**

The group has its own four quadrants. We often must engage changes in the group’s dynamics before attempting changes in the dynamics operating in the psyche of individual group members. Role suction, in particular, is likely to operate--with dynamics of the group playing out in the personal psyche of specific group members.

Group processes are most effectively engaged when there is respect for and openness to three different perspectives regarding these processes. For the American school perspective, the individual members of a group each makes a judgment from moment to moment regarding the extent to which the overall level of trust in the group is sufficiently high to warrant their disclosure of certain information (Quad Three) and their openness to receiving certain information from other group members (Quad Two).

The British/Tavistock perspective provides insight into how the group as a whole tends to operate. Individual members of the group collude with one another in supporting certain “myths” and assumptions about the purposes of the group, the role to be played by specific group members, and the way in which and purposes for which leadership should be engaged. This second perspective is particularly valuable as a key that opens the fourth quad of each member and brings about the movement of quad four content into quad three.

Under the effective facilitation provided by a Tavistock trainer, there can even be the movement of quad three material into quad one (to be shared with other group members). Effective facilitation also enables members of a group to gain insights about how other members see them (accurately or inaccurately) in specific group-constructed roles. If shared, this quad two material can be unique and valuable for those participating in a Tavistock session – especially if they are subject to bias and stereotyping in their relationships out in the “real” world.

An even broader view of group functioning can be gained when the third perspective (Continental) is engaged. There are dynamics playing out in the group (and in the community and society) that concern social class, money, control and social/structural freedom. Frequently, the Continental perspective can effectively complement the Tavistock analysis of group projections concerning the role(s) forced on (or grasped by) specific group members as a function of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or physical abilities. While the insights gained by all group members can be quite painful when it comes to the injury inflicted on individual members of the group, these insights can also be liberating and motivating with regard to taking action outside the group to bring about justice and reduce restrictive and dehumanizing “role suction.”

*Case Example: Sonia has signed up for a Tavistock workshop in part because she was intrigued with the theories being offered by Tavistock authors—especially Wilfred Bion. She was not fully prepared for the further conceptual insights she gained from participation in one of these workshops. She also was not prepared for the deeply disturbing and transforming feedback she would get from other members of the Tavistock group.*

*Sonia is typically a rather quiet member of a group. She works in a large bureaucracy and usually doesn't feel that anyone will listen to what she has to say—or will not take any action on the recommendations she might make. Sitting back and watching what was happening in her small group as well as the large group in which all workshop attendees participated was valuable and reaffirmed the Tavistock theories she had read. There was a strong pull in her small group toward dependency and searching collectively for someone on which members of the group can rely and from which they would gain “nourishment” (of some elusive kind).*

*There was a moment, however, when the small group turned specifically to Sonia. She was “not a caring participant.” Members of the group noted that she often didn't respond when they talked to her. She was a “cold” person who was “standing-off” from other people. What suddenly became apparent to Sonia was that all of this related not to her role as a quiet member. Rather, it had to do with her hearing disabilities. While Sonia wore hearing aids, they were not readily visible to other group members. Furthermore, Sonia had not shared the fact that she had a very hard time hearing other people—especially in a group setting.*

*The moment came for Sonia to move her quad three “secret” about being hard-of-hearing to quad one. She shared information about her hearing challenges and eventually also felt free (and safe) to disclose her sense of shame about this disability. She became aware that some of her reticence about participating in groups related directly to this sense of shame and to the difficulty she experienced in hearing what other people were saying. It seems that it was not always the case that Sonia was listening carefully to the words spoken by other people and*

*observing the behavior that related to these words. Sometimes, Sonia was just tuning out other people.*

*For Sonia, there were several important lessons to be learned. She needed to determine when to share her hearing impairment with other people (American school). Sonia also came to recognize that when her disability is not shared, people might begin reading all sorts of motivations into her behavior (or non-behavior) (British school). Most importantly, Sonia began reflecting on her own sense of self and began to “forgive” herself for not being perfect. One of the outcomes of her participation in the Tavistock group was her determination to become an advocate for new disability policies in her own organization (Continental school). Sonia immediately asked the head of HR to place her on a task force regarding disability-related discrimination and review of facilities accessibility. This was a painful storm for Sonia, but one that led her to a new harbor and to a new sense of being her own captain.*

### **11. The value system of a group and its membership may be noted in the way unknowns in life of the group are confronted.**

Ultimately, members of the group must find a way to create and maintain a level of collective competence that leads to legitimate levels of trust regard this competence. The group must also find a compelling vision of its own collective future that leads to legitimate levels of trust regarding shared intentions.

All of this must be done based on a foundation of appreciation for the diversity of perspectives found among members of the group (society). This appreciation is, in turn, based on a foundation of self-esteem and self-mastery in the midst of a very challenging world. It is also based on a shared sense of a preferred future—both in the lives of each member and in their collective future.

*Case Example: I close this essay and this book with a reference to my own work in groups. I find that the spark of adventure is to be found in any group I have facilitated over many years. There is always something new to be learned from a new group that has been convened primarily for the purpose of discovering its own collective process as well as the processes engaged by each participant in their personal heart and soul. I watched a video recording several years ago of an interview with Irving Yalom, the noted psychotherapist and group facilitator. He was asked if he ever gets “bored” conducting another group therapy session. Yalom indicated that every group is a whole new experience for him. Each group challenges his own insights about how people interact with one another. I frame this appreciation as attending an outstanding play that is both realistic and thrilling.*

*The groups I have been fortunate to facilitate with someone from the Tavistock school have been particularly exciting for me. Coming out of training in the American school, I tend to focus on the experiences of each individual member of the group. My co-facilitator would focus, instead, on the collective behavior of the group and on the collective assumptions being made by the group. We often switch the group’s focus between the individual and the collective. Each switch brings about new*

*insights. Furthermore, there are often additional insights to be gained from the feelings that arise from a shift from the individual to the group (“I lose my independence!”), as well as from the group to the individual (“I lose my sense of belongingness’). These “transitional” insights are often of great importance and are only found when both the American and British (Tavistock) perspective are being engaged.*

## **Conclusions**

With all of this gratitude regarding the opportunity to facilitate groups of all sorts, engaging many different strategies, my greatest expression of gratitude is reserved for Joe Luft, my mentor and colleague. While Joe passed away quite a few years before this book was completed, I feel like he is sitting on my right shoulder and is offering not only encouragement but also wisdom.

While I know that Joe is not there, his right shoulder advice is coming from my reflections back on the groups he conducted with the students at my graduate school. I was given the opportunity to co-facilitate these groups with Joe. Though I uncharacteristically remained rather quiet during these sessions, observing Joe Luft in action, I was enthralled in watching the very open (Quad One) way in which Joe worked with the group and realized that his reservoir of wisdom (Quad Three and Four) was very deep and was freely shared with everyone with whom he was in contact.

I thank you Joe and hope that you would find my work to be worthy of your foundational model of interpersonal relationships. I would like to think that you and I might dance gracefully together in our own collegial relationship.