



Thrive in Ministry

Removing the Plank

Three Questions:

What are the areas of your ministry that give you the most joy and energy? How can you do more of these things?

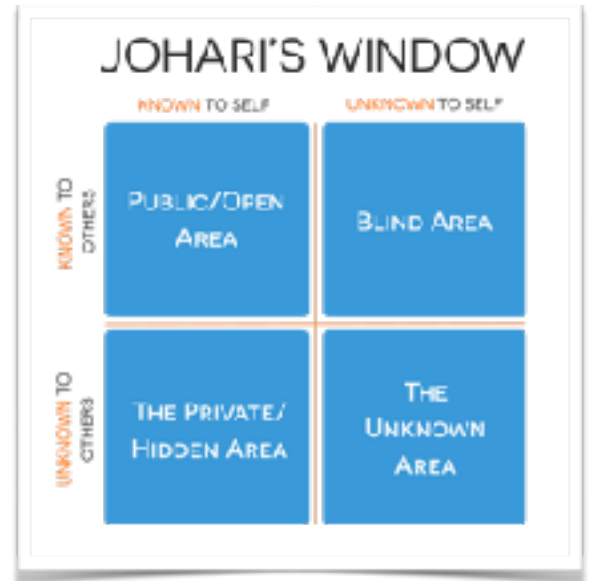
What are some specific actions that you do to can push back on the "blind area" from the Johari Window?

Does your church give you any regular feedback? What would make this feedback more helpful?

Jesus asked his followers a simple question, "How can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye?" (Matt. 7:4 NRSV).

This is the work of self-awareness. We have all known people who are walking around with planks in their eyes, all the while judging others' actions and motives. Perhaps we have even had to remove a plank or two.

Self-awareness researcher Tasha Eurich states that 95% of people believe they are self-aware, when in reality only 10-15% are self-aware. (Eurich, 2017, Kindle Loc. 195–196) Eurich states that self-awareness "is the ability to see ourselves clearly—to understand who we are, how others see us, and how we fit into the world." (Eurich, 2017, Kindle Loc. 135) Daniel Goleman has a simple definition of self-awareness as it relates to leadership, self-awareness is "understanding one's emotions and being clear



"The big catch-22 of self-awareness is that the people who need it most are usually the least likely to know that they need it." Eurich

about one's purpose." (Goleman, McKee, & Boyatzis, 2002, p. 45) Brooks and Goldstein write, "many individuals adhere to self-defeating scripts, projecting their anger and frustration outward, waiting for others to change." (Brooks & Goldstein, 2004, p. 137)

Self-Awareness Blinders

Why are people not more self-aware? (Why am I not more self-aware?) Many people simply wear

blinders about their motivations and emotional triggers that impact their relationships at work and home. We will mention three of these blinders.

Fixed Mindsets: Remember that those with a fixed mindset do not want or seek feedback from others. If a person does not believe that they can really change, why go through the pain of getting feedback. The fixed mindset also whispers in our ear that "we are not good enough."

Family Systems: We often develop our most powerful and crippling negative scripts in our family of origin. We are taught to maintain the family (or personal) secrets at all costs. Friedman points out that emotional processes are often passed through generations without anyone being aware of how these processes impact their daily functioning. (Friedman, 1985, pp. 250–251)

Leadership Blinders: Goleman et al. argue that leaders often struggle to get helpful feedback. Intentionally or unintentionally, leaders build an information vacuum around themselves. Either they do not seek information or people are afraid to share important, especially critical information, with leaders, even pastors. (Goleman et al., 2002, pp. 92–94)

Seven Pillars of Self-Awareness

Eurich describes the seven pillars of insight: values, passions, aspirations, fit (what they need to be happy, energized, and engaged), patterns (consistency in the way they think, feel, and act), reactions, and impact. (Eurich, 2017, Kindle Loc. 460–464) Eurich argues that asking the question “why” actually reduces our self-awareness, instead she contends that we should be asking “what.” In her book, Eurich offers several exercises that help develop self-awareness including a 7-day self-awareness challenge. I have adapted some of her questions below.

What are the values that shape your life? Your ministry? What projects give you the most energy as a pastor? The least? When you leave your current position, what do you want people to say about you at your going away celebration? Do you have a dream about what you want to do in the future? How would you describe your ideal work environment? (Eurich, 2017, Kindle Loc. 4444ff.)

The Johari Window

Since the 1950’s, the Johari Window has been an excellent instrument to help us understand the importance of receiving feedback. It provides a visual model for understanding our blind spots. (Morris, 2014, pp. 20–21)

The Johari Window explores four areas of who we are. The **Open Area** are things that are known by the person and known by others. The **Blind Area** reflects what others know but is unknown to the person. The **Hidden Area** is known to self and but not to others. The **Unknown Area** is unknown to self and others.

Conclusion

Self-awareness is important because it enables us to expand the open area and reduce the blind area. Ideally, pastoral reviews would help pastors understand how they are perceived and how their ministry is evaluated by the congregation. Unfortunately, many churches use the evaluation as a “gotcha” or “axe grinding” session. Eurich states, “To gain true insight, we also have to learn how to hear that truth—not just *listen* to it, but really *hear* it.” (Eurich, 2017, pp. 2911–2913) Transparency is also important, because it helps reduce the hidden area.

People want to follow self-aware, authentic leaders, not leaders who lead from a position of charisma, authority, or power. (Goffee & Jones, 2006, pp. 24–26) Authenticity means that “a leader’s behavior must be consistent with felt, and espoused, end values, identities and beliefs.” (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, n.d., p. 357) This would seem to be self-evident for pastors, but we have all seen pastors who violate their values and beliefs.

It is exhausting to maintain facades. It is also exhausting to constantly deal with fallout from our negative scripts and blindness to our emotional triggers. If we are to be more resilient as pastors, we must seek to develop a deeper level of self-awareness.

Journaling Assignment:

How can you help your pastor gain insight by using the Johari Window? What questions should you ask?