



HIGH PERFORMING PEOPLE  
SELF-AWARENESS

# How to use this resource

We are really pleased to provide you with this resource on the topic of Self-Awareness.

It sits as part of the **High Performing People Framework** and aims to provide some useful information on one of the framework's 13 identified characteristics. A resource will be available for each characteristic.

**The recommendation is to use this resource to help you to understand the key theories that underpin Self-Awareness and to provide you with practical recommendations as to how to apply the theories.**

The resource isn't designed to be directly used by athletes, but instead to be used by the coach, to think about how the information might be best applied with the specific group you coach based on their age, experience, and unique characteristics. If you have access to a performance psychologist, then involving them in the conversation would be beneficial.

Enjoy the resource; we hope it stimulates some new ideas and, most importantly, actions.

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[Click to read about the High Performing People framework](#)



**Self-awareness** is the ability to make oneself the object of one's own attention.

- Able to demonstrate a good awareness of their own strengths, weaknesses, values, motivations, emotions and learning preferences.
- Able to use this awareness to realistically evaluate their own performance and development.



# What is self-awareness?

Anthony K. Tjan states “**without self-awareness, you cannot understand your strengths and weaknesses, your super powers versus your kryptonite.**”

Athletes who can become honestly self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses, thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, motivation, habits, values and beliefs can develop their ability to be consistent and ultimately control performance.

At any one time, attention may be turned outward toward the environment or directed inward towards the self but may not be focused on both at the same time.

Unfortunately, many athletes are not very self-aware. Younger and less experienced athletes may find it difficult to recognise certain aspects of themselves and their performances.

Increased self-awareness has been shown to lead to a number of predictable consequences.

Individuals who are self-aware have been found to be more likely to:

- conform to standards of correct behaviour
- help others and to decrease the urge to cheat
- recognise bodily states, attitudes, and feelings
- give better feedback
- attribute personal responsibility to themselves
- make behavioural attempts to reduce discrepancies between one's self and one's values and standards



# Factors influencing self-awareness

Any stimulus or situation that reminds an individual of himself or herself can lead to a heightened salience of self. For example, seeing oneself in a mirror, photograph, or video can lead to increased awareness of particular self-dimensions that are most relevant at that time.

Dependent on the situational factors, the relevant dimensions may be related to task performance, attitudes, beliefs, or physical appearance.

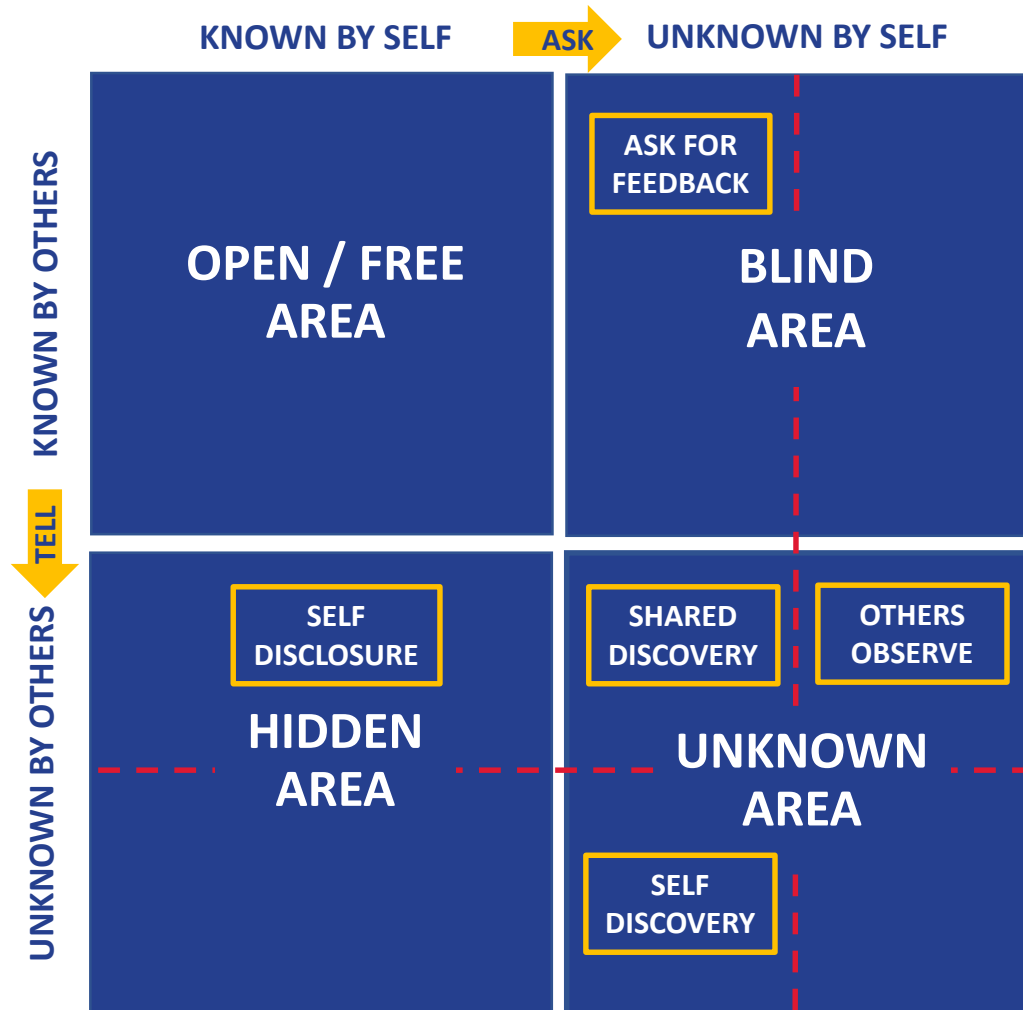
While any number of situations could potentially lead to heightened self-awareness, four situational factors have been demonstrated to consistently lead to increased self-directed attention, arousal, and increased pressure:



These can be influenced in our coaching to develop appropriate self-awareness



# Johari's window



In developing self-awareness, we can consider a number of sources and approaches to increase it. Johari's window (Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham, 1955) is a model that explores this.

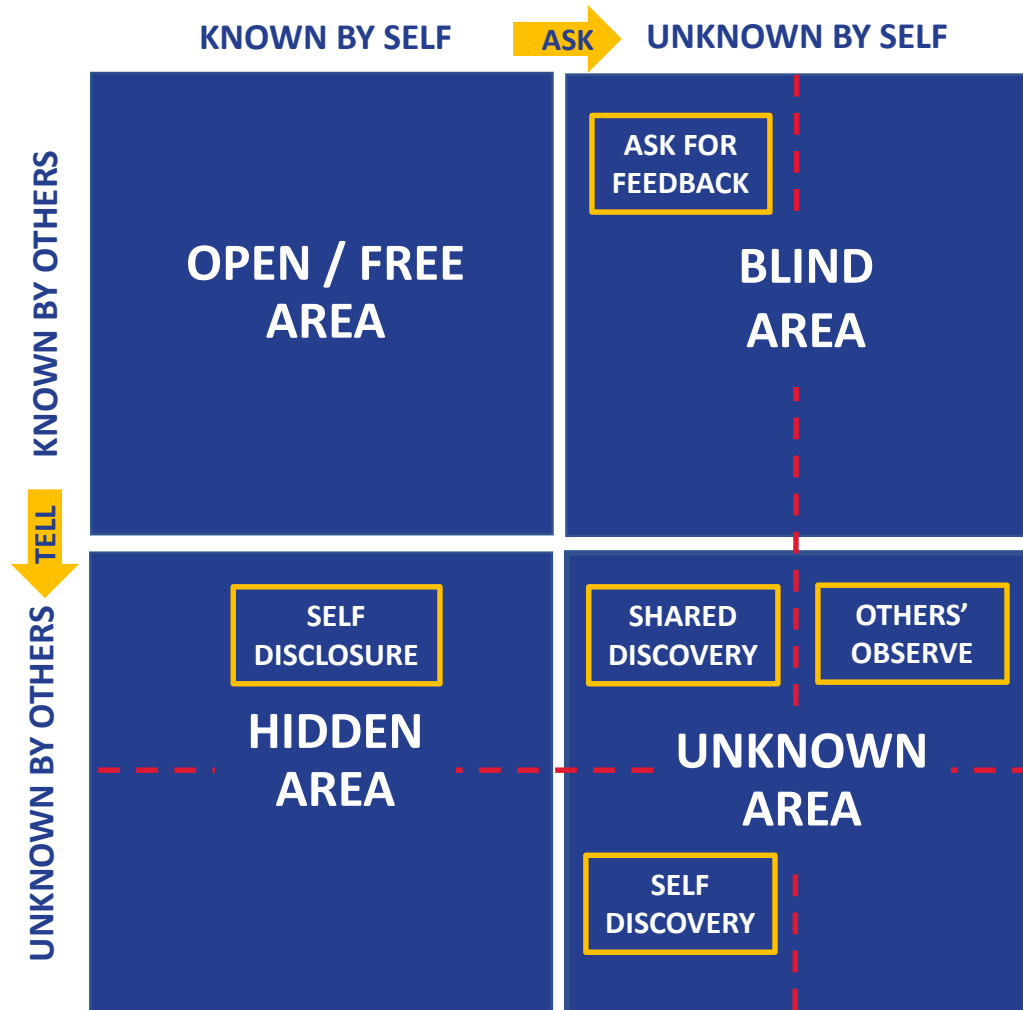
The model works using four area quadrants. Anything you know about yourself and are willing to share is part of your **open area**.

Individuals can build trust between themselves by disclosing information to others and learning about others from the information they in turn disclose about themselves.

Any aspect that you do not know about yourself, but others within the group have become aware of, is in your **blind area**.

With the help of feedback from others you can become aware of some of your positive and negative traits as perceived by others and overcome some of the personal issues that may be inhibiting your personal or group dynamics within the team.

# Johari's window



There are also aspects about yourself that you are aware of, but might not want others to know; this quadrant is known as your **hidden area**.

This leaves just one area which is unknown to you or anyone else – the **unknown area**.

The balance between the four quadrants can change. You might want to tell someone an aspect of your life that you had previously kept hidden. For example, maybe you are not comfortable contributing ideas in large groups. This would increase your open area and decrease your hidden area.

It is also possible to increase your open area by asking for feedback from people. When feedback is given honestly to you it can reduce the size of your blind area.

# What coaches can do

## LEARNING TO PAY ATTENTION

Encourage athletes to observe and pay more attention to their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Athletes can be taught to be more aware and focused in the present moment.

A simple exercise would be to ask the athlete to close their eyes and observe their normal breathing pattern. Ask them to notice the rhythm, rate and depth of their breathing.

## POST-TRAINING & POST-REGATTA REFLECTION

After every training session take a few minutes to evaluate what happened in a journal.

- Ask yourself, did you achieve your goals?
- Did you follow the plan?
- What went well and not so well? What should work on in training based on this performance?

## WATCH FOOTAGE

Watching footage of past performances can open your eyes whether it is during a slump or just to become more aware of your patterns of behaviour in competition.

When you watch footage it allows you to spend time looking at body language, eyes, and routines especially before and after big points and critical changes in momentum.

## LOOK FOR SIGNS DURING COMPETITION

When and how does the athlete get down on themselves?

What are the trouble spots when performance drops?

Knowing this allows a coach to develop a plan to overcome it.



# What coaches can do

## Becoming aware of more than just strengths and weaknesses

Some sports coaches may be aware of the performance profiling tool used to help athletes become better aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

To expand upon this tool, use a **S.W.O.T analysis** as a follow-up discussion on how an athlete can use their strengths, overcome weaknesses, and consider their opportunities and threats.

### STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strengths and weaknesses can be systematically identified via a performance profile or through brainstorming exercise.

Ask the athlete to describe how others would see their strengths and weaknesses (e.g., how would your coach and/or team mates describe some of your strengths and weaknesses that you may not be aware of?)

### OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Ask the athlete to reflect on what opportunities exist for them in the future. These could be potential future strengths.

Similarly, what are future threats? These are potential goal-busters that might be challenges that hinder the athlete from achieving their goals.

### CREATE STRATEGIES THAT WILL GET USED

Ask the athlete to reflect on the 4 areas and what they have learnt about themselves from the above task.

Next, encourage the athlete to think about how they will use this information.

The following questions may support developing useful strategies:

How can you **Use** each strength?

How can you **Stop** each weakness?

How can you **Exploit** each opportunity?

How can you **Defend** against each threat?

# What coaches can do

## Core beliefs and values

Helping athletes to become better aware of their identity as well as core beliefs and values can be a useful exercise.

### ASK AN ATHLETE TO WRITE THEIR OWN 'MISSION STATEMENT'

It will help them understand what's important to them and remind themselves of the reasons why they participate in their sport.

This activity may be particularly helpful for athletes who are struggling with their motivation or facing difficult decisions about their future.

Some questions that may help in writing their final mission statement are:

- What values are most important to you?
- What are your contributions to various areas of your life (the world in general, family, friends, team mates, community, etc.)
- What are some of your successes that you are most proud of?
- Identify some goals (short-term and long-term)

