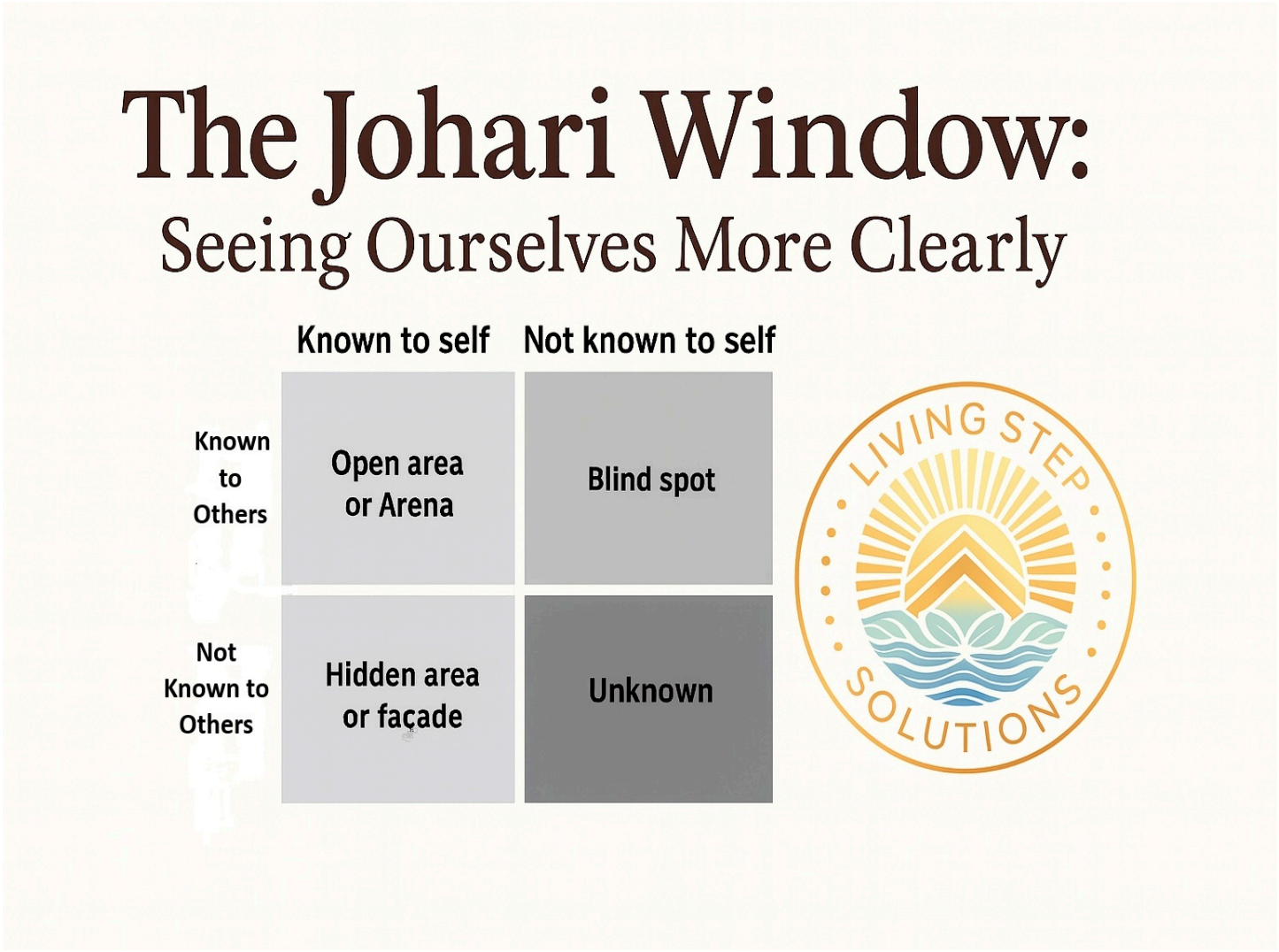

The Johari Window: From blind spots to breakthroughs in coaching

How the Johari Window can reveal blind spots, hidden strengths, and next steps in life coaching

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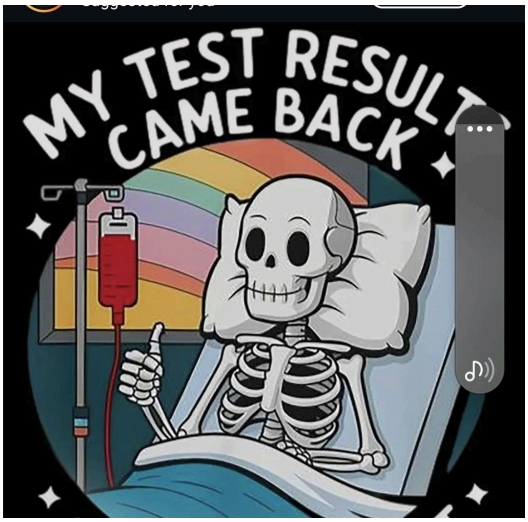
The Johari Window showed me…

Take a moment to look at the famous image above. You'll see that the Johari Window lays out four simple descriptions of the character attributes we have. It explains, in simple terms, a model that helps explain how we

understand ourselves and our relationships with others. It reveals what's open - people know about us, what we know and try to keep hidden - what others notice about us that we don't know or won't admit to ourselves, and what's still unknown about us by others or ourselves.

Personally, for me, the window reflects back to a time in my life where I was blind to what was known clearly about me by others. It was so well known to others that there wasn't a single look of surprise among my friends, relatives, and co-workers when I came to see the truth that I suffer from alcoholism. Everyone knew.



I couldn't see the fact that it was killing me. Doctors told me, but I couldn't see through to the truth. It took a complete failure of my liver until I saw the truth.

In my alcoholism, I did manage to keep one thing unknown to others. The big lie I lived with was that I had to drink for my job as a wine salesman. Yes, there was drinking in that job, but I built a career so I could drink at work and play without any repercussions. It is two very different things: having to *drink some* to sell wine and hiding your *disease* in your success.

But there is great news too. What was unknown to me and others?

One of the things I had hidden away so deeply I didn't even know it was inside me is the wonderful joy I could find in being of service to others. People, including me, never saw me as a sponsor of men, the guy who would go out of his way to give a guy a ride to a meeting, someone volunteering to be a secretary at weekly meetings, and volunteering to be the supply guy. A role that rarely gets praised, but God forbid there isn't enough flavored creamer. A guy who would also freely give his time to sit on any panel he is asked to join.

I never knew that was in me, let alone that I'd be grateful for the opportunity to do it. And no one ever saw me as a guy who would drive around with three A.A. Big Books in my car, waiting to give them away to

the next person I meet who needs one. That hidden self became one of my greatest gifts.

Here's why it matters: growth happens when we expand those areas. That might mean asking for feedback to shrink a blind spot, sharing more of what we usually keep to ourselves, or exploring the unknown parts of life where our potential is waiting.

I like the fact that this model is self-contained — everything is within us. That's where I believe great coaching works best: when we uncover the answers already inside of you.

Our Living Step Solutions CoachingSteps model is self-contained, as well, and always focused on moving you forward with what matters most. The past and your story have their place — therapy can do powerful work there — but in coaching, we use those insights as a foundation and then focus on uncovering more and opening up the future.

In coaching, I use this tool to help clients find that next step. Sometimes the next step is being brave enough to listen to feedback. Sometimes it's being honest about something you've been holding back. And sometimes, it's simply trying something new to see what opens up.

The Johari Window is a reminder that rewarding change starts with being willing to see — and be seen.

An out-of-the-box example

Let's say one of your core values is spending more quality time with your spouse. Where is that in the Window? To answer this question, Core Step → Goal Step → Action Step → Next Step.

- If it's in the **"Not Known to Others" box**, you'd better make sure your spouse knows you want that time together.

- If it's in your **Blind Spot**, and you don't realize the time is less than it should be because you're too busy with work, philanthropy, or solo hobbies, that could be trouble waiting to explode.

- And what if the desire to carve out more time isn't even known to either of you? Ouch.

Sooner or later, you might uncover that desire. You might realize your deeper need for love and attention. Hell, you might already know you need to do something, but wonder: How? What?

You will hopefully eventually figure it out, but if you can recognize what sits in those boxes with Coaching, you can start working on a plan to make the change. Make it happen sooner rather than later. At Living Step Solutions, we know the answers *are in you*. We want to help you shine light on your boxes. Then we start to answer critical questions. Core Step → Goal Step → Action Step → Next Step. With those answers, we start filling in the details. What are your steps? What's your timeframe? How will you know you're on track?

My own lesson from the Unknown Box

I learned that I needed more time with my wife.

- **Core Step:** Be a great husband
- **Goal Step:** Find an activity we can do together
- **Action Step:** Research SCUBA lessons and narrow down three courses
- **Next Step:** Book a SCUBA certification course

Today, my wife and I go on dive vacations every year. We've logged over 125 dives together, and in September 2026, we'll spend nine days in Indonesia on a liveaboard dive boat.

That liveaboard experience had been a bucket list item for me for over a decade. It lived in my “Unknown Box” until one turtle, swimming alone, minding its own business, put both of us in a state of awe.

Finding “Your Next Step”

Awe is a gift. While I can’t guarantee coaching will give you that same feeling, I can promise this: if you step into the process, you’ll discover action steps that move you closer to living fully in line with your core values. And you don’t have to wait for a turtle moment — you can begin the journey now.

Ready to explore what box your next step might be hiding in? A CoachingStep session with Living Step Solutions can help you uncover it and move forward with what matters most.