



Besides our opposable thumbs and use of language, the relationship between our emotions (feelings), thoughts (cognition), imagination and actions contributes to our uniqueness as an animal on this planet, as well as our complexity as spiritual-material beings.

The "mind" as discussed previously (see references), can be thought of as a set of functions, like the functions of a computer. The user of the mind is consciousness (spirit), and the purpose of the mind, at the very minimum, is to enable us to interpret, utilize and survive the environment so that we can procreate.

However, like a computer getting stuck in a loop, the mind can also get stuck in a rut. And the solution is not to "blame" the computer but to learn to turn it off, re-boot it, and improve the software and hardware.

The study of thoughts, feelings, behavior and mental processes is called psychology. However, in addition to these functions there is spirit, which is different, remains controversial and is neglected by many schools of psychology. Recently, there have been advances in our understanding of these interactions, with new techniques such as journaling, meditation and coaching to move us out of our ruts, discussed below. Before discussing getting out of our ruts, we need to explore in greater detail how they get created.

The main issue in our stuck-ness is losing the balance between the details and the big picture, similar to the "forest for the trees". For example, people who are anxious find things to worry about and dwell upon—they can always fill the Anxiety Basket. However, what is more important is the Anxiety itself—the question of why they have weaved the Anxiety Basket in the first place, and how they maintain it. Similarly, the Depression Basket always finds negative thoughts to fill itself. With Anger, it is easy to find something large or small to piss us off. With Obsession, there are always tasks or issues to ruminate about. These Baskets or ruts develop for several reasons—a combination of heredity and environment ("nature and nurture"). Nature gives us our genes and brain chemistry. Nurture involves how we've fed our brains, how our families operated, our positive and negative experiences, and what we've learned, intentionally and un-intentionally over the course of our lives. Some of these experiences are available to our consciousness; others are less available, what we call sub-conscious or un-conscious. These can either create a rut or prevent one.

**Johari's Window**

One way of understanding the parts of our awareness is through a model called Johari's Window (see diagram). In this model, awareness is divided into four areas based on what is Known or Not Known. The region of awareness that is Known to ourself and others is called the Public self. The region that is Known to us and Not Known to others is

called the Private self.

The other two regions, the areas of which we are not aware, are the more interesting and subjects of psychology and yoga. The first is the region of awareness that is Not Known to us but is Known to others. That is called the Blind Self. A humorous example may be a "Kick Me" sign on our backs that friends laugh about. A more subtle example would be a person that scares others with their angry facial expressions and tone of voice, but truly does Not Know that they are angry. Many people look and act depressed but deny feeling it.

The last region, the Dark Self, is the part of ourselves that is Not Known to ourselves or others. Like the Dark Force, it often drives us in directions that we are, by definition, not aware, but still cannot resist. Examples include self-sabotage, when we consciously set a goal and yet another stronger part of ourselves stops us. Anxiety-producing Obsessive and Negative thoughts come from this region as well. We experience the thought, experience the emotion, but can't stop it at the source.

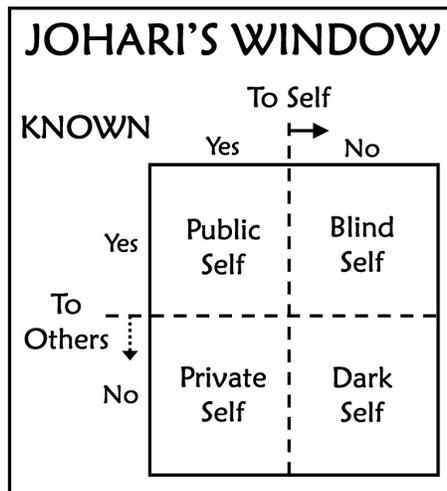
Self-delusion and self-deception often come from these Unknown areas of our being, as do the rationalizations and justifications that occur after we have feelings, thoughts, images or behaviors that we know are not right.

The goal of psychotherapy, yoga and philosophy is to increase the region that is Known To Self and decrease the region that is Not Known; to seek the truth about ourselves; decreasing the Blind and Dark selves. Whether one also wants to increase the region Known To Others is a personal decision—some people prefer privacy, while others believe that to be fully authentic, we

should always be who we are and not need to hide.

**Understanding the Dark Self**

Since this Dark Self is often a large source of our persistent dysfunctional feelings and thoughts, we must understand this region. Freud is the modern genius who identified this region of our minds called the Unconscious. He developed psychoanalysis, where one lies on a couch and "free associates", speaking out whatever thoughts, feelings and images come to mind as a means of accessing and learning about the Dark Self. He believed that once these core images and emotions, from early childhood, were captured and understood, the dysfunctional behaviors would cease. While this worked partially well for many people, and was the rage in the 1950's (think of the "Id Monster" in the 1956 cult movie Forbidden Planet), this model of the mind proved insufficient. This is because our current thoughts and actions also have a role in how we feel. Cognitive-behavioral therapy, developed by Albert Ellis successfully showed that by identifying and intentionally changing our thought patterns and behavior, we can change our emotional patterns. Further advances by Martin Seligman proved that we can learn to be optimistic



or pessimistic as children, and can change that programming as adults if we do the work. EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), developed by Francine Shapiro, demonstrated that some very intractable ruts, including those caused by trauma, can be healed by re-integrating the right and left sides of the brain through special movements or stimuli.

### The Contribution of Yoga Psychology

Yoga psychology and meditation offers a different spin on this issue of the mind's ruts. It explains that the mind's job is to constantly provide a narrative, providing explanations and justifications which often are simply not true. More importantly, yoga psychology distinguishes between mind and spirit—which are not the same. The spirit can observe the mind, and has the choice of listening or not listening to it. By simply watching the mind and its ruminations, we can learn to not fall for its creations. It's similar to remembering a crazy dream, also a product of the mind, being curious about its content, but knowing it is not true. Though the daytime mind seems more rational, and at first we believe that it is who we are, through this practice of yoga and meditation, we learn that the mind is just a computer that has inherent limitations and must be properly utilized. Even with a computer, we can't assume that the answer is right. We must double-check the results. Byron Katie has developed a very simple and powerful method of checking the truth of the mind's misconstructions of reality. Eventually, our spirit can learn how to better use the mind, and ultimately change it. The books by the Aringer Foundation also explain how we get trapped in self-deceptions. Coaching is a new spin on psycho-spiritual processes that focuses on the positive forces of love, inspiration and goal-setting—that helps us overcome our stuck-ness. Pema Chodrun, a master of meditation, has also shown us how by quietly observing our mental ruts--not immersing nor retreating, changes its nature. The emotions and behaviors that result from our mental constructions--anxiety, anger, depression and compulsions—memory and imagination at its worst—can dissipate with this work. Many psychologists are now incorporating yoga, meditation and coaching into their process of psychotherapy as it can be very efficient and effective. Rather than getting caught up in the contents of the Basket, through these methods, we learn to un-weave the Basket itself.

### Checking the Fuel Tank

If the mind is the software, the hardware of the mind, the brain, also needs to be functioning optimally. A brain that has all the materials it needs is going to work better than one that is deficient or toxic. Therefore, to optimize this process of learning about the mind, checking that there are adequate quantities and quality of important nutrients such as fish oils and B12 can be very helpful, as can testing for toxicities such as lead and mercury. Eliminating known dietary brain toxins such as aspartame, hydrogenated oils, sugar and other processed foods is becoming easier with the organic food movement. Yoga, acupuncture, and modern "Energy Psychology" techniques which tap our mysterious but powerful energy systems, can also modulate brain, hormonal and other systems of the body to remove blocks in the psycho-spiritual system.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This general information should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of an experienced practitioner.

### For More Information

- See Dr. Cheikin's related articles on: Violence of the Mind, What We Really Need, Simplification, Colluding to Not Heal and others
- Dr. Cheikin's website, [www.cheikin.com](http://www.cheikin.com), has more information
- Dr. Cheikin offers workshops in several holistic health topics. Please call for more information or to host a Workshop.
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