You often here Sport Psychologists speaking about self awareness as a mental skill to develop but perhaps you are not sure why it is important in sport. In order for us to be able to predict our performance and responses to situations, we need to be as self aware as possible. The better you know yourself the more chance you have of remaining focused during training and competition. By getting to know yourself you will be able to know **what** affects you, **when** it affects you, **how** it affects you and **why** it affects you. Once you have this understanding of yourself, you will then be able to decide whether you would like to do something to change it, or whether you would like to use it to your advantage.

There are many tools we can use to help us in the discovery of ourselves:

Self exploration
• By asking questions such as, "what am I good at? When do I feel scared? What skills do I still need to develop?"

Psychometric Assessments.
• These assessments provide a useful tool for gaining insight into one's personal strengths and development areas.

Feedback
• If you seek feedback from people, then you will learn things about yourself that you didn't know before, but that others were aware of. This all involves self-disclosure, and a willingness to put your trust in others.

A simple place to start the process of getting to know yourself is by using the **Johari Window**. The Johari window is a way of showing how much information you know about yourself and how much others know about you. The window contains four panes, as shown below.

	Known to self	Not Known to self
Known to others	**OPEN**	**BLIND**
Not Known to others	**HIDDEN**	**UNKNOWN**

The Johari Window, named after the first names of its inventors, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, is one of the most useful models describing the process of human interaction. This four paned "window" divides personal awareness (self-awareness) into four different types, as represented by its four quadrants: open, hidden, blind, and unknown. The lines dividing the four panes are like window shades, which can move as an interaction progresses.
Let's have a look at what the four quadrants mean:

The "open" quadrant represents things that both you know about yourself and that others will know about you.

For example,
• You know what sport you play, and so do others in your environment.

• You know that you like to win, and so do others.
• You know that you often get nervous before a competition, and so do others.
• You know that you get irritated when losing, and so do others.

The knowledge that the window represents, can include not only factual information, but also your feelings, motives, behaviours, wants, needs and desires... indeed, any information describing who you are.

The "blind" quadrant represents things that others know about you, but that you are unaware of. So, for example, if you eat something and some food stays on your face, you wouldn't know, but other people would be able to see it. This information is in your blind quadrant because others can see it, but you cannot. If someone tells you that you have something on your face, then the window shade moves to the right, enlarging the open quadrant's area. Now, you may also have blindspots with respect to many other much more complex things.

For example,
• Someone may notice that you usually start to get moody or snappy before a competition. You may not realise this about yourself. So here, they know something about you that you are unaware of.

As ones level of confidence and self-esteem develops, one may actively invite others to comment on one's blind spots.

The "hidden" quadrant represents things that you know about yourself, which others do not know. So for example, you may not have told someone what your favourite song is that get's you in the zone. This information is in your "hidden" quadrant. As soon as you share this information you are effectively pulling the window shade down, moving the information in your hidden quadrant and enlarging the open quadrant's area. Sharing information with others can be vital in yourself discovery and growth. Examples of information in your hidden quadrant can be:

• I don't know what to do with my fear before a match.
• I get so scared before a competition that I want to throw up.

Improve Your Performance by Discovering Yourself

Using the Johari Window

Text: Melissa Lawrence and Monja Muller

- If I know that another athlete is going to compete in the competition, I don't want to participate.
- I love it when another athlete gets hurt.
- I sometimes cheat.

The "unknown" quadrant represents things that neither you know about yourself, nor others know about you. For example, you may tell someone about a dream that you had, and as you both attempt to understand its significance, a new awareness may emerge, known to neither of you before the conversation took place. Being placed in new situations often reveals new information not previously known to yourself or others. A new situation can trigger new awareness and personal growth. This also forms an important part of self-actualization.

For example:

- You have never swum the 400m backstroke before; therefore you do not know what this experience will be like and how you will respond to it. Only once you have done it will you have a greater understanding of yourself.

The aim of this tool and exercise is to make sure that your open quadrant is as large as possible. You will find that elite athletes will have relatively larger open quadrants than any other quadrant. You can use the Johari Window to increase your self knowledge and to help with this process of exploration. This will ensure that you know yourself as well as possible and that you or others will not catch you off guard. You will be able to predict your behaviour, and your feelings and motivations will become more accessible and beneficial to you. Knowing yourself can enhance your performance