

The Awareness/Competence Grid

(adapted from Wilson Learning Corporation's "Four States of Knowledge/Skill")

	incompetent (unskilled)	competent (skilled)	
conscious (partially aware)	conscious incompetent <i>"Those who don't know and know that they don't know; teach them for they are ready to learn."</i>	conscious competent <i>"Those who know and know that they know; follow them for they know the way."</i>	conscious (partially aware)
unconscious (unaware)	unconscious incompetent <i>"Those who don't know and don't know that they don't know; ignore them for they are not worth your time."</i>	unconscious competent <i>"Those who know and don't know that they know; lead them for they are ready for direction."</i>	unconscious (unaware)
	incompetent (unskilled)	competent (skilled)	

The words in *italics* above are translated from Confucius, about 500BC.

Levels of Awareness Never Stop Increasing

(adapted from an article by Dennis Hooper, published January 28, 2003, and Anne Wilson Schaefer's [Women's Reality](#))

1. There are multiple levels of awareness on virtually any issue or subject. The levels of awareness are progressive. As we grow and increase in awareness, our levels of understanding move from a rudimentary level to increasingly more profound levels.
2. Until we become aware that no one "sees" situations exactly as we do, we think everyone does. We may be confused and even angry that others don't see what we see. (It's a common human experience.) When we operate at any particular level of awareness, that level seems "true" to us, and we will typically defend our perspective.
3. The right piece of information, received at just the right time, creates an insight (a paradigm shift) that pushes us to the next level of awareness. That "Aha!" moment of new insight is also a common human experience.
4. As we move to a higher level of awareness, we may feel curious or guilty that we were wrong in our previous thinking! We were probably not "wrong," but we were certainly incomplete in our understanding, and we feel more perceptive with our new awareness (and maybe feel that NOW we understand the truth--though we still don't!).
5. We often can't relate to or sympathize with individuals who are at levels of awareness beyond our current level. Their perspectives baffle us. However, those individuals can help us expand our awareness if we will genuinely seek to listen and learn from them, and they take the time to explain their perspectives to us.
6. It is difficult, if not impossible, to return to lower levels of awareness after attaining higher ones. Though we can relate to and sympathize with individuals at lower levels of understanding, we cannot force on them the paradigm shift that we experienced. We can offer the potential, but they must experience and accept the new insight themselves.
7. As we increase in levels of awareness, we tend to be more gracious and patient with others' understanding—we remember the levels we have passed through and imagine there will be other levels in the future awaiting our increased awareness, even if we don't yet know what they will be.
8. It is difficult to accurately judge our particular level of awareness. Those quite ignorant, for example, are often deceived, believing they (and yes, often "I") understand far more than they (I) do. That can be a perplexing dilemma for those at higher levels of awareness. Pushing others to confront their ignorance may backfire, stimulating resistance and offense, and potentially slowing the growth of those less aware. As role models and mentors, we should look for opportunities to invite and encourage those who want to learn. But forcing them likely won't help!
9. People at the highest levels of understanding (experts in a given subject) are quite alone in their outlook, because the further we move up the levels of awareness, the more people we leave behind. Further, experts are quick to tell you how little they know—and that more intentional exploration is required in that particular subject matter!
10. Only if we comprehend this concept of different levels of awareness can we expect to communicate effectively with others (who are likely at either higher or lower levels of understanding). As we share this "levels of awareness" concept with others, we increase the probability of better communication through more compassionate listening.