

# **... As Others See Us:**

A Look at Interpersonal  
Relationships

Leader's Guide

# ...As Others See Us: A Look at Interpersonal Relationships

## Film Synopsis

Successfully managing people depends upon developing and maintaining effective interpersonal relationships. When people see themselves as others see them, they function better with those around them. Sometimes, however, our self image differs from the image others have of us, causing conflicts which result in anxiety, confusion, defensiveness, and other inappropriate behavior.

The animated film, ...AS OTHERS SEE US, illustrates some of the problems managers face as a result of these conflicts. It offers us an opportunity to examine our own interpersonal relationships and shows how a simple model, THE JOHARI WINDOW, can help us to understand and improve them.

## Film Objectives

- 1) To help managers recognize the importance of understanding themselves and others in order to achieve more effective interpersonal relationships.
- 2) To show how the model, the Johari Window, can be used as a tool to improve interpersonal relations.
- 3) To help managers become more aware of the importance of giving and receiving feedback for more effective communication and interpersonal relationships.
- 4) To show people how to begin to resolve conflicts between their self image and the images others have of them.
- 5) To suggest ways to reduce the anxiety, insecurity, and inappropriate behavior which may result from image conflicts.
- 6) To help managers recognize the problems inherent in effectively managing the communication process and to show some ways to eliminate them.

## Package Content

One 16mm film or videocassette, 10 minutes

One Leader's Guide

## Introduction

As a popular model of interpersonal dynamics, the Johari Window\* is applicable for any discussion on interpersonal communication and the issues which accompany it: openness, feedback, trust, defensiveness, etc. It illustrates some of the reasons behind effective and ineffective communication and describes some of the problems managers have in managing the communication process.

The Johari Window is central to the discussion of such intra-personal dynamics as the development of one's self-image and the role our perceptions play in communication.

The animation in the film serves as a highly effective medium to highlight the key points of the theory underlying the Johari Window. The film can be used as a springboard to discuss the theory itself and/or its usefulness in understanding interpersonal relationships.

---

\* Developed by Joseph Luft and Dr. Harry Ingham. Described fully in Dr. Luft's book, *Of Human Interaction*, Mayfield Publishing Company, 1969.

## How to use this film

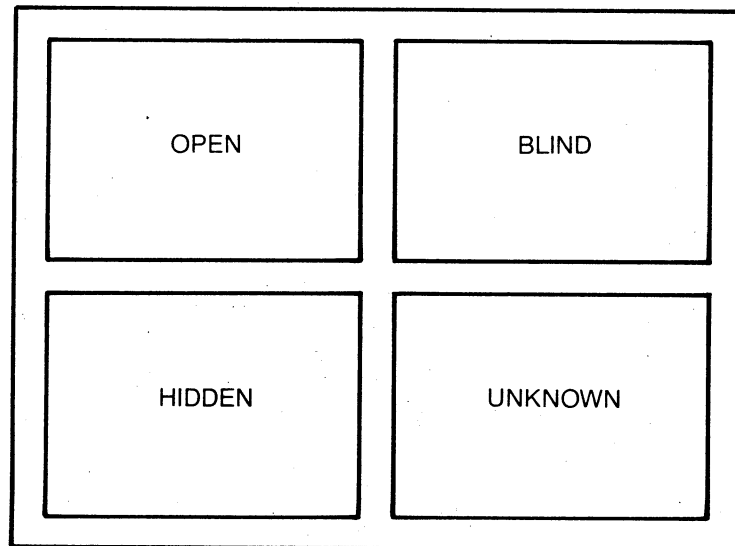
- 1) Introduce the session by briefly discussing the fact that a manager's effectiveness often depends upon his/her ability to communicate successfully with others.
- 2) Before showing the film, have the participants describe (either by writing it down or discussing orally with the group) one of their professional relationships which they feel is ineffective. Use the ROLE RELATIONSHIP ANALYSIS (see page 9 of this guide) as a framework for evaluating it. You may wish to write the 3-part ROLE RELATIONSHIP ANALYSIS on a flipchart or chalkboard, or xerox a copy for each participant.
- 3) SHOW THE FILM.
- 4) Explain in depth the four areas of the Johari

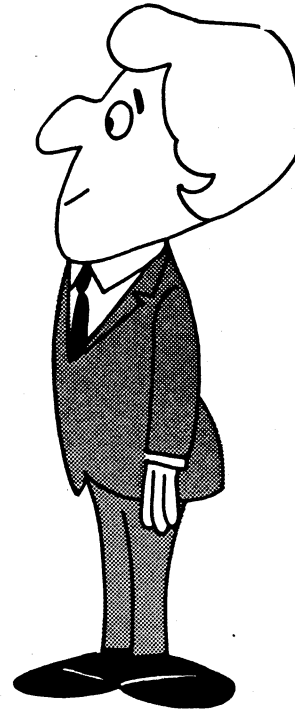
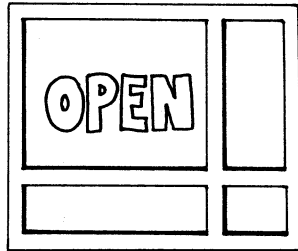
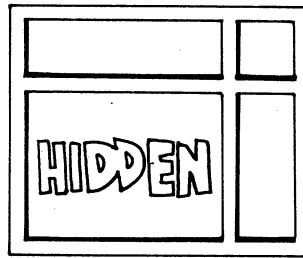
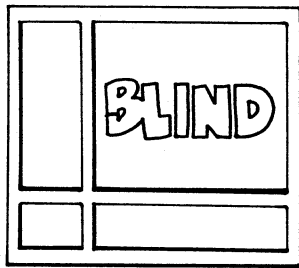
Window (based on the information provided in the "Background" section of the Leader's Guide). Initiate a group discussion and have the participants describe the relationship they examined in step 2, or, if they prefer, a relationship they have with their superiors, subordinates or colleagues in terms of the Johari Window.

- 5) After the discussion in Step 4, have each of the participants draw as complete a Johari Window as possible for the relationship they described in Step 2. Explain that the dimensions of the four "panes" of the Johari Window depend upon the nature of each relationship.
  - 6) Break into small groups. There are many ways the discussion can proceed. As a facilitator, you should choose topics that make sense for the particular group you are leading. Suggested topics for the group to discuss are:
    - a. What is the desirability and what are the risks of increasing the open areas of communication? What are the most effective ways of increasing the open area?
    - b. When is it advisable and effective to be open? Always? Some of the time? With everyone? With whom?
  - c. How does one effectively give feedback to others without making them feel defensive? What are some of the things we can do to encourage others to give us feedback?
  - d. How does one effectively use self disclosure without making the other feel threatened, manipulated, or "dumped on?"
  - e. Have the participants analyze and discuss the area of the window they drew in step 5 which most characterizes their relationship. In other words, which area is the largest in their Johari Window? What, if anything, can they do to change it? Should it be changed?
  - f. What, if anything, is gained by understanding the particular Johari Window construction for the relationship between two people?
  - g. Have each participant discuss how he/she, personally, can become more effective in interpersonal relationships.
- 7) Wrap up the session by reviewing with the group the purpose of the Johari Window and summarize how it can be an effective tool in improving interpersonal relationship.

## Background on the Johari Window

Developed by Joe Luft and Harry Ingham, the Johari Window is a model which describes interpersonal relationships based on the simple notion that any relationship is comprised of things known and things unknown. The interaction of what is known or unknown to ourselves with what is known or unknown to others leads to four areas that impact on the relationship. These areas are: the OPEN area, the BLIND area, the HIDDEN area, and the UNKNOWN area.





## The Open Area

The OPEN area consists of information mutually known and shared by both people in a relationship. This area includes those things others see in us and that we also see in ourselves. If, for example, others see a person as a hard worker, and the person sees himself/herself as a hard worker, this mutually shared knowledge falls into the open area of this relationship.

## The Blind Area

Unlike the OPEN area, the BLIND area contains those things that other people know about us that we, ourselves, are unaware of. The major source of information about ourselves, who we are, comes from other people. It is through the eyes of others, through their judgement and feedback, that our self concept is molded. We are social creatures, and it is other people who serve as mirrors of our own identity and what we know about ourselves. Through our nonverbal and verbal interactions with others, we convey messages that allow others to know us. A slip of the tongue or a look on our face may reveal to others thoughts or motives of which we are unaware. Even the words we use to describe something may reveal our biases or prejudices. There are always those things that "even our best friend won't tell us." For example, our own frustration or anxiety about a task or upcoming event may be easily apparent to others but blind to our own consciousness.

## The Hidden Area

A third, and totally different, area of any interpersonal relationship is the HIDDEN area. This includes those things we know about ourselves but which we choose to hide, or keep private, from others. Others see a false and possibly purposefully "disguised" person. Most of us spend years developing a front we can present to others to hide such things as our insecurities, our shyness, our lack of confidences in areas in which we feel we should be confident. We may feel that by revealing something about ourselves, we will be judged negatively. An example of a hidden part of a work relationship would be an employee who is hiding that he/she is working on a job only until a better job comes along. Because of a real, or imagined, fear that the boss would not approve of such an attitude, the person keeps this information to himself/herself as a "hidden" part of the relationship with the boss.

## The Unknown Area

The last area of any relationship, the UNKNOWN area, includes those things that are unknown to both ourselves and others. This undiscovered aspect of a relationship forms the "potential" area. Thus, one member of a relationship may discover something new about the other; this information may enter the blind or hidden area of the relationship, or it could be mutually shared and become part of the open area.

## Summary

The Johari Window serves as a valuable model for understanding interpersonal relationships and the communication process. It is generally accepted that people communicate most effectively in the open area. In the open area, people do not have to spend psychic energy maintaining false impressions or "masks," nor deal with the problems of communicating information that is new, novel, threatening, or in any way stressful to the other person. The open area is the area of mutual understanding and agreement. And, usually, the larger it is, the more successful the relationship.

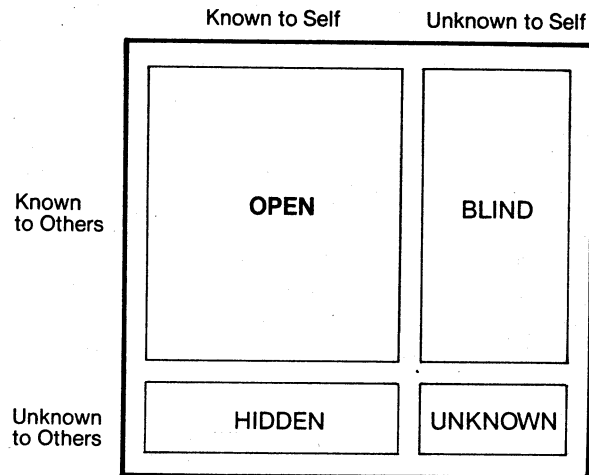
Every relationship has an open area, a blind area, a hidden area, and an unknown (potential) area. The degree of openness, blindness, etc., changes with each relationship we have. And, due to the conservative nature of interpersonal communication, each person's Johari Window is relatively constant. However, we all have some ability to shift or rebuild these various areas of our relationships.

## The dynamic nature of the Johari Window

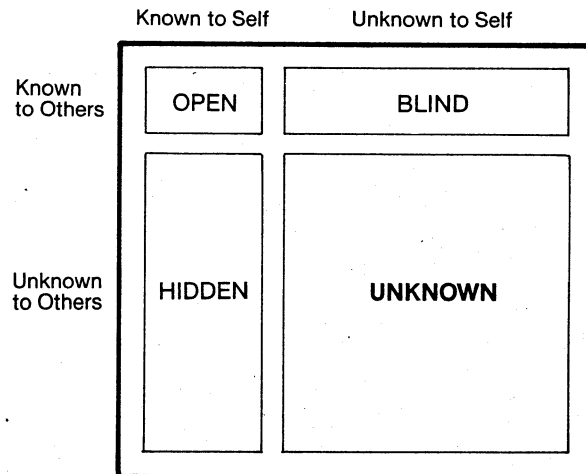
The graphic representation of the Johari Window appears rather static until we consider how information may travel from one area to another. The film in this training package allows the audience to see the dynamic quality of the Johari Window for any relationship. The major processes that allow for the reshaping of the Johari Window are: self-disclosure and feedback. The process of self-disclosure, in which a person shares information about himself/herself with others, is the mechanism for moving information between two people from the HIDDEN area to the OPEN area. The process of feedback in which a person offers information about the other person is the mechanism for moving information from the BLIND area to the OPEN area. So, the window moves and changes with each relationship we have. And, it is through the give and take of these two processes that, over time, leads to a relatively consistent view of any relationship through the four areas of the Johari Window.

Some interpersonal relationships are characterized by a large OPEN area. In such a relationship, two people have been successfully open and candid with one another and developed trust and concern in their relationship so that openness is the dominant characteristic of it. Through disclosure of

appropriate information, and the acceptance of feedback from others, a person can develop a relationship in which most of the information about both people becomes a legitimate source of discussion and shared understanding. This type of relationship is illustrated in the following figure.



Many relationships, however, for one reason or another, fail to achieve such a large OPEN area. Some relationships may be characterized by the opposite conditions, where the UNKNOWN area is the dominant one. This is depicted in the following figure.

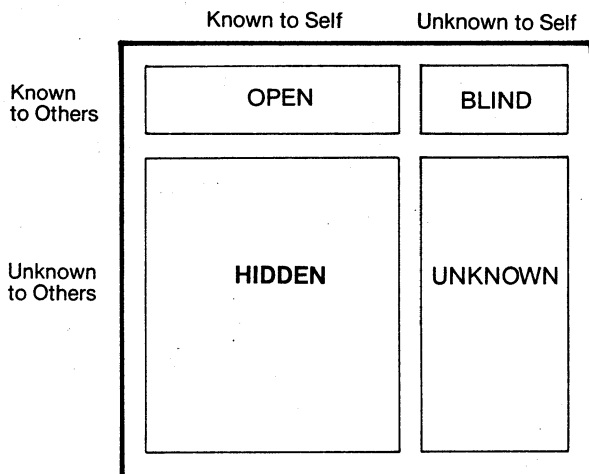


In organizations, such a relationship is common when the organization is highly bureaucratic and the overall management philosophy is that managers should not become emotionally involved with subordinates. In any relationship, it only takes one member who believes in remaining aloof and impersonal in dealing with the other person to determine the quality of the relationship. In such a situation, it becomes quickly apparent that neither self-disclosure nor feedback are worth the risk or the effort. Since members of the relationship

choose to be uncommunicative and rigid, over time, they tend to actually become rigid and uncommunicative. Little trust develops in the relationship, and communication is restrained and predominantly one-way and task-related.

Because it's undiscovered, however, the UNKNOWN area also offers potential for developing constructive relationships. Since many professional relationships begin in the unknown area, there is opportunity for constructive relationships to develop through mutual feedback and input. This area is one in which people can use their interpersonal skills to enhance their opportunities for personal and professional development.

Besides being extremely open or closed, there are relationships that fall somewhere in the middle—relationships that stress certain forms of communication but downplay others. If we use the Johari Window to characterize these relationships, we can see that a relationship could be dominated by a person's HIDDEN area. This situation is shown in the following figure.

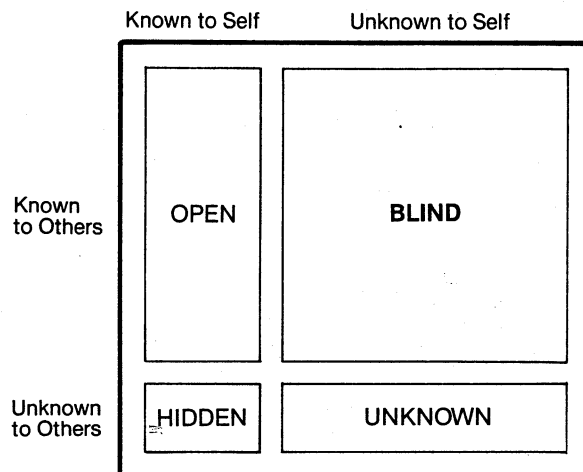


In this type of relationship, a person finds it legitimate and appropriate to listen to feedback from the other person, but keeps most things about himself/herself private or hidden.

This may be because the person does not trust the other person enough to share anything personal or he/she may be insecure, having a very negative self concept, or feeling that the other person would not understand or appreciate knowing the "truth." On the other hand, the person would have no difficulty expressing himself/herself to the other person when it is the "other" person who is the subject of the conversation. Over time, however, unless this person is highly attractive to the other person or holds some other form of power over him/her,

this unbalanced method of taking in feedback without reciprocal self-disclosure is likely to wind up with a breakdown of communication and a build up of distrust and anxiety.

Finally, there is a type of relationship where a person is more than willing to disclose information about himself/herself, but unwilling to listen to feedback from others. In this type of relationship, the BLIND area predominates. There is an abundance of self-disclosure and minimal listening: it is illustrated in the following figure.



People who engage in this type of behavior generally feel their own opinion is worth more than others. Such people see themselves as valuable resources to others, as worthwhile to know, and as people worth listening to. On the other hand, they seem to have little time to hear what others have to say and may actually distrust the information others possess. By being unwilling to listen to others, unwilling to find out how others see them, such a person is subject to "blindspots" in which they are unaware of how they come across. Frequently, other people learn to behave toward them in such a way as to perpetuate this blindspot. Important information may be withheld from them, giving them only selected feedback. Such relationships generally end up characterized by anxiety, resentment, and defensiveness on the part of both parties involved.

By understanding how the Johari Window reflects our interpersonal relationships, we can learn how to assess and improve them. We can learn to work toward more effective, open communication and experience more successful personal and professional relationships.

# Role Relationship Analysis

Describe **one** of your professional relationships which you feel is ineffective by completing these statements:

## Part 1. Compare your self image with that person's image of you.

a. I see myself as: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Whereas that person sees me as: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Why do I think we have arrived at different images? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2. Compare your "ideals" regarding your role with the "ideals" that person has.

a. I believe that an **ideal** person in my role should: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Whereas, he/she believes that an ideal person in my role should: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Why do I think we have developed these differing beliefs? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 3. Bring the images into harmony.**

a. I have tried the following to bring these images into harmony: \_\_\_\_\_

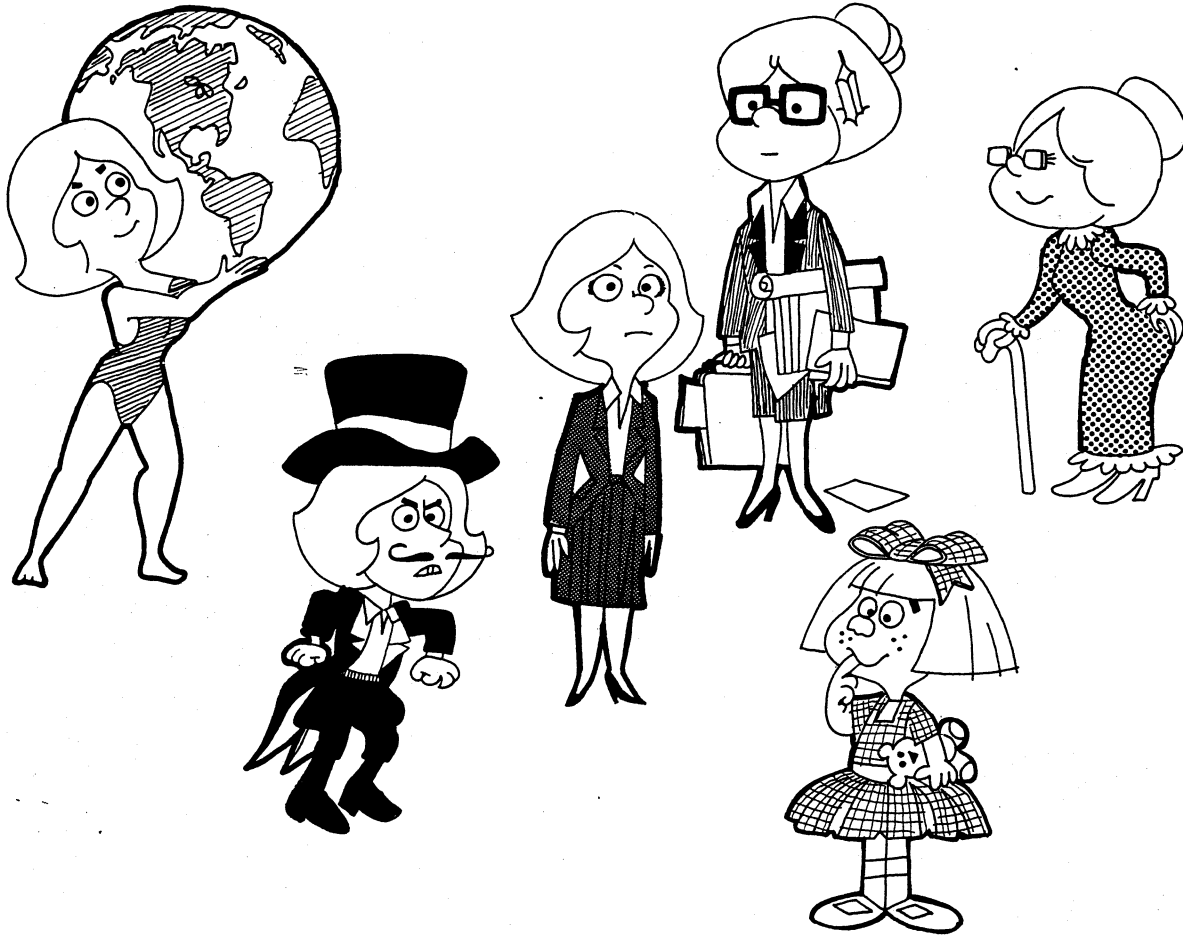
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. What also might I try? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**Bibliography**

Gibb, Jack. "Defensive Communication," **The Journal of Communication**. vol. 11, no. 3, September, 1961, pp. 142-143, published by the National Society for the Study of Communication.

Hebb, Donald O. "The mind's eye." **Psychology Today**. May, 1969, pp. 55-57, 67-68.

Laing, R.D. **The Politics of Experience**. New York: Pantheon Books, 1966.

Luft, Joseph. **Of Human Interaction**. Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1969.

Luft, Joseph. **Group Processes**. Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1970.

## Related Materials

### CASE STUDIES IN COMMUNICATION

This FILM presents two dramatized case histories illustrating the major barriers to effective communication: (1) The way we see ourselves (our self-image); (2) the way we see others (perceptual screen). It demonstrates some of the ways in which our assumptions distort our perception of people and situations, resulting in a breakdown of communication. This program will help its participants become more aware of the need for feedback and active listening in order to avoid potential blocks to communication.

### LISTENING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Listening is an important element in effective communication. If we want to be successful at home, at work, or in business, the ability to listen carefully will help us communicate more effectively. Through the use of retail sales situations, this FILM demonstrates the importance of active listening. By listening to prospective customers, by asking questions, we have an opportunity to discover our customer's needs and wants. Listening will help us make suggestions that result in sales. The message is for everyone: Listening really makes the difference!

### NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal language, if we are aware of it, may tell us what people think before they say a single word. This new training film program will help your audiences become more aware of the non-verbal messages others send and more conscious of their own. The program presents an easy and simple way to put non-verbal communication to work. Your audience will be able to communicate more effectively by using this program.

### PERCEPTION:

#### THE TRAGEDY OF THE FRIENDLY BREAKFAST

This SEM session starter gives the audience a brief look at the different ways people view the world around them. In the film, a fatal shot ruins an otherwise friendly breakfast. Ernst Felz-Fooden dies, and three eyewitnesses offer three different views of the tragedy.

### MANAGING CONFLICT:

#### HOW TO MAKE CONFLICT WORK FOR YOU

How do your people handle conflict? This TRAINING FILM identifies and illustrates several strategies for dealing with conflict. It analyzes these strategies in terms of their advantages and disadvantages. With this program, your people can learn to select and apply the most appropriate strategy for any particular conflict situation. They can make conflict work for them!

### DEALING WITH PEOPLE

#### A PROGRAM ABOUT EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

With this TRAINING FILM PROGRAM, your people will learn the basic skills of good customer service. They'll learn that effective customer service is effective *only* when the customer thinks it is! They'll learn that job satisfaction is an important by-product of giving good service. They'll learn that better communication means better customer service.

### MEET YOUR PARENT, ADULT, CHILD

#### A FILM ABOUT TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

According to transactional analysis theory, or "T.A.," each of us has three ego states: a parent, a child, and an adult ego state. How we manage them—and how they manage us—determines how well we relate to (transact with) our friends, relatives and business associates. This animated film is designed primarily as a discussion starter for any group interested in more effective interpersonal relationships. This film will help to improve interpersonal and intergroup communication.

