

## Stages and Labels of Learning

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Over the years, many people have seen, or been taught, the learning labels in the table below. While they may be accurate, the labels (language) used, is not consistent with Dr. Glasser's Choice Theory®.

Unconscious	Incompetent
Conscious	Incompetent
Conscious	Competent
Unconscious	Competent

The premise is that if you aren't aware of something you can't do the associated requisite skill or task. The stages progress until one becomes proficient enough that s/he does not require a great deal of thought in order to do the required skill or task.

The author proposes that using the labels of unaware, aware, skilled and unskilled serve a more useful purpose.

Unaware	Unskilled
Aware	Unskilled
Aware	Skilled
Unaware	Skilled

In addition to these labels, the Johnsons (Roger, David and Edye Johnson Holubec) though their work with Cooperative Learning, found that learning a skill includes four stages of learning. They are: Awkward, Phony, Mechanical and then Genuine. These stages are applied to the above diagram.

Unaware	Unskilled	
Aware	Unskilled	Awkward / Phony
Aware	Skilled	Mechanical
Unaware	Skilled	Genuine

It is the author's contention that both the "Awkward" and "Phony" stages occur in the Aware/Unskilled category. They stages imply a desire to learn and improve, but a lacking of a competence level that would allow a person to feel comfortable with their skills.

Why is this information useful?

For anyone that teaches or finds him or herself in a leadership position, the labels or stages (whichever makes the most sense to you and the people you work with) reminds us that skill development takes time. Even with good instruction, an encouraging environment and successful practice situations, everyone will have an awkward phase or perhaps seem mechanical and possibly less than genuine. The key word in the last sentence is "seem". Our role as teacher or leader includes answering the following questions ourselves:

- Does the person clearly know what is being asked of them?
- Did the person have any prerequisite ability or knowledge for this skill?
- How long has it been since they were introduced to this skill?
- How much coaching / supervision and feedback have they received?
- How much progress has the person made?

Finally, when a student or employee is asked a question, they may or may not be skilled at "knowing what they want" or "how to evaluate their choices. They too, need to be taught and given time to learn the process.

#### **References:**

Hoglund, R. *The Language of Choice Theory*, Bob Hoglund, Inc., 1992.

Johnson, D., Johnson, R. Johnson-Holdback, E. Cooperation in the Classroom Minneapolis, MN: Interaction Book Company, 1998.